

Larissa D'Angelo / Stefania Consonni (eds.)

New Explorations in Digital Metadiscourse

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Volume 10

Larissa D'Angelo / Stefania Consonni
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New Explorations in Digital Metadiscourse

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CINZIA SPINZI

Voicing otherness: A metadiscoursal analysis of digital campaigns across English and Italian

1. Setting the scene

Social media and digital platforms have become a primary source of news in the digital age in that they expand our reach more quickly, and on a much bigger scale than previously, through words, pictures, and videos, thus empowering individuals to disseminate their experience, share their voices, and shape their own stories. Ranging from self-narrating stories to videos, digital campaigns, and short documentaries, migration is one of the main topics fueling digital platforms (for narratives in digital museums see Spinzi/Zummo, forthcoming; for short documentaries see Rizzo/Pensabene 2021), which are then used to counteract mainstream perceptions of migrants, where they are seen as either threatening hordes or agentless victims.¹ As a matter of fact, as a result of the first economic and consequent migration crisis, and the increase in terrorist attacks by second- and third-generation migrants, there has been a recent exacerbation of anti-immigration sentiment in Europe. Perceptions of ethnic diversity have begun to be associated with threats, notions of integration and inclusion have been problematized at their roots and, consequently, so has the very concept of citizenship. The consequences of policies or rhetoric of migrants' dehumanization is that they have then been deprived of human rights.

Against this backdrop, the present research contributes to the concerted efforts of both the United Nations Human Rights Council and the European Union to *re-humanize* the migrant figure providing

¹ For an in-depth study on the use of aesthetic discourse as a way to translate voices of migrants, refugees, and marginalized people see Rizzo/Seago 2018.

platforms for migrants to communicate their own stories as opposed to statistics and mainstream news. Digital campaigns therefore become a powerful tool for blunting the ethnic-based stigmatization of immigrants, with a view to shifting from negative feelings of hate and division to solidarity. Hence, the present research responds to the tendency towards viewing refugees as victims, and looks at digital campaigns as transnational zones, responsible for breaking down conservative inclusion and isolation dichotomies, such as ‘us and them’, ‘here and there’, and ‘inside and outside’ national borders. From this perspective, metadiscourse, intended as “the author’s rhetorical manifestation in the text” (Hyland 2005: 1) plays a crucial role in that it allows an understanding of how stories are portrayed, and the stance that is adopted, together with methods of public engagement.

The premise to the study is that a thorough knowledge of the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural variations of interpersonal meanings, and connected pragmatic features, can back up cross-cultural understanding and help comprehend links between migrants, narratives, and audiences. In brief, the research aims to identify the metadiscourse elements, if any, that give the migrants a sense of voice which narrators rely on in order to engage with the addressees. Secondly, the paper seeks to compare the English and Italian texts to verify whether the metadiscourse devices vary or not. The analysis, conducted through a small pilot corpus downloaded from the multilingual digital platform “I am a migrant”,² also draws on insights from intercultural studies (Hofstede 2001; Katan/Taibi 2021) given that culture discloses through language.

Results show how a comparative analysis of interpersonal devices in digital campaigns offers insights, not only into the way in which culture is conveyed and transmitted via migration discourse, but more specifically into how institutions construct counter-narratives across languages and how the audience is engaged in discourse. Dissimilarities which emerge in the rhetorical choices of both corpora may find their *raison d’être* in the cultural differences which are featured in each language.

² Available at <<https://iamamigrant.org/about>> (last accessed July 2021).

2. Metadiscourse, migration, and translation in the literature

Metadiscourse offers ample scope for linguistic analysis from various perspectives. To mention just a few, contributions vary from culture-based (Adel 2006; Mauraneen 2007) to disciplinary-based investigations (Dahl 2004; Hyland/Tse 2004) to its quite recent application of MD to L2 undergraduate writing (Bogdanovic/Mirovic 2018). The bulk of the literature on MD – also known as ‘metatalk’ (Schiffrin 1980) or ‘text reflexivity’ (Mauranen 1993) – mainly concerns academic discourse with a number of factors (i.e. cultural conventions and genres) affecting the choice of these tools (Adel 2006). Since Hyland’s claim for more research from a comparative perspective (2005, 124), a number of studies (Neff/Dafouz 2008; Suau 2010; Masi 2013) have also stressed the relevance of metadiscourse strategies for a thorough investigation and comprehension of rhetorical conventions across fields of specialization, genres, and languages. The common thread in this line of research is the emphasis on scientific discourse and its popularization. Following the less explored line of research in the interpersonal field of language (Catenaccio 2020), this study attempts to apply a metadiscoursal framework to migrants’ digital campaigns from a contrastive perspective.

Research in the field of migration narratives is extensive, with a focus on different aspects, such as the identification of discursive features of asylum seekers’ stories told during asylum hearings which are shaped by the institutional setting (Blommaert 2001; Zambelli 2017). Further research focuses on experiences of displacement and endurance (De Fina/Baynham 2005; Sloodjes et al. 2018); on strategies of identity construction (De Fina 2003; Catedral 2018); and, finally, on experiences of trauma compared across languages and cultures (Guido 2018). The ultimate aim of this is the development of a ‘hybrid ELF mode’ of intercultural communication that experts can utilize when working in asymmetric migration encounters. This long-standing research – as noted by Catenaccio (2020: 88) – is primarily concerned with the logical-experiential configuration of the narratives (ideational or experiential metafunction in functional grammar, Halliday 1994:

106) rather than with the interpersonal dimension. Drawing on fieldwork carried out in the southern Italian area of Salento, Catenaccio (2020) gives insights into rapport-building strategies in semi-structured interviews of refugees assumed as being encounters of reduced power asymmetry. The study shows that the discourse markers analyzed – e.g. cognitive verbs such as *know* and *understand* – perform a number of tasks. These verbs, matched by the Italian *capito?* are used to check the attention required as well as to share empathy with addressees and to build a relationship with them. An interpersonal approach is also adopted in two other studies which are relevant to this research: Kasapoğlu/Kalmus' (2020) analysis of the Syrian refugees' stance and Spinzi/Zummo's investigation of migrants' narratives in a digital museum. If the former shows that the dichotomous construction of *I* versus *them* is affected by the two categories of 'space' and 'time' in refugees' stories, the latter identifies expressions of affect in stories elicited in less hostile environments than asylum hearings. Spinzi and Zummo's research has pointed out that in both languages positive affect is foregrounded even though negative appraisal is critical to the construction of compassionate stories, above all in Italian narratives.

These studies undoubtedly opened up the strand of research on the interpersonal metatalk geared towards rapport building of migrants' narratives (e.g. interviews or stories), investigated in this study as a means to raise awareness against "threat narratives" (Dempster/Hargrave 2017), which feed xenophobia and discrimination.

3. Metadiscourse framework

Metadiscourse is an umbrella term which identifies specific language devices used by the author of a text as signposts to organize it, as well as to manage the interactions or relationships with the reader of the text itself. In other words, this approach emphasizes the essence of interaction in voice construction (i.e. stance) and looks at the author's position in the text, his or her attitude towards what is being said or

written, as well as towards the audience (i.e. engagement; Hyland 2005; 2008; 2017). Metadiscourse is related to, and varies, according to genre, i.e. the socio-rhetorical context in which it is used, which presupposes a specific purpose and audience.

Over the past years, a range of metadiscourse taxonomies has been provided which classify metadiscourse devices differently (Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland 2005, Ädel 2006 to mention a few). Starting from Vande Kopple's approach (1985), Crismore et al. were the first to offer a more comprehensive and clear taxonomy by identifying textual markers as those devices which look at the organization of the text, and interpretive markers as those tools which help "better understand the writer's meaning and writing strategies" (Crismore et al. 1993: 47). According to Hyland (2005), this classification was still imprecise mainly because of the syntactic parameters, not functionally-oriented, upon which Crismore et al. based their taxonomy. Hyland's model, considered for this analysis, foresees two macro categories, interactive and interactional, each with their own sub-categories, as displayed in Table 1.

CATEGORY	Function	Examples
<i>INTERACTIVE</i>	<i>Assists in guiding the reader through the text</i>	<i>Resources</i>
TRANSITIONAL	Indicates relations between main clauses	In addition, but, thus
FRAME MARKERS	Discourse acts, stages and sequences	Finally, my purpose
ENDOPHORIC MARKERS	Indicates information in other part of the text	As noted above,
EVIDENTIALS	Indicates information in other sources	Crawford states
CODE GLOSSES	Elaborates definitions of words and phrases	Namely, such as, e.g.
<i>INTERACTIONAL</i>	<i>Involves the reader in the text</i>	<i>Resources</i>
HEDGES	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	Might, perhaps, possible

BOOSTERS	Indicates certainty or close dialogues	In fact, definitely
ATTITUDE MARKERS	Express writer's attitude to proposition	Arguably, unfortunately
SELF-MENTIONS	Explicit reference to the author	I, we, my, me, our
ENGAGEMENT MARKERS	Explicitly builds relationships with reader	You can see that, note

Table 1. Model of Metadiscourse (adapted from Hyland 2005).

The 'Interactive' grouping comprises five types of resources which are used to maneuver textual elements to guide the receiver through the unfolding text. 'Transitional' highlights the meanings of main clauses and may set up additional (e.g. *and, furthermore*, etc.), causative (e.g. *because, thus, consequently*, etc.), and contrastive relations (e.g. *similarly, but, on the other hand*, etc.). 'Frame markers' include signalling words performing a variety of functions, i.e. to sequence (e.g. *first, to begin with, finally*, etc.), to mark moves in discourse (*at this point, in conclusion*, etc.), to state goals (e.g. *there are some reasons, my purpose is*, etc.), and to shift topic (e.g. *now, well, back to*, etc.). 'Code glosses' are the means by which receivers may understand the writer's intended meaning (e.g. *namely, for example, such as*, etc.). 'Endophoric markers' refer to pieces of information previously affirmed in the text (e.g. *as mentioned above*, etc). Finally, 'evidentials' highlight the sources of information (e.g. *according to*, etc.).

When authors want to build an addresser/addressee relationship, 'interactional' resources are mainly exploited. These devices are related to strategies of stance, the textual voice, and engagement – namely how writers present themselves and express their opinions and judgements (Hyland 2005: 176). 'Hedges' (e.g. *perhaps*) are items that mark the addresser's subjectivity about the propositional content whereas 'boosters' (e.g. *definitely, obviously*) are emphatic items which convey certainty by challenging alternatives. Boosters, together with hedges, are considered to be engagement and stance elements. 'Attitude markers' unveil affective attitude by expressing surprise, agreement, importance, etc. 'Self-mentions' uncover the significance of the author's presence in the text through the use of personal pronouns and

possessive adjectives. Lastly, ‘engagement markers’ (e.g. *see, note, you know*, etc.) explicitly involve readers into the text making it more interactional.

3.1. Data and methodology

"I am a migrant"³ is a platform developed by The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and part of the UN TOGETHER initiative, an international campaign supported by the United Nations and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, with a view to disrupting negative stereotypes of migrants by supporting diversity and integration into society. Migration digital platforms, such as is the case with "I am a migrant", a multilingual website publishing personal accounts of peoples' migratory experiences, constitute a space for intercultural encounters and experiences. They act as safe platforms for story-telling and transactional communication, and thus have the burden of ensuring non-politicized spaces for encounters of mutual respect and narratives. Given the list of open questions participants are asked to answer in the 'Call to Action' section of the website, these narratives are considered semi-elicited stories whose intention, as explicitly stated on the website itself, is to help people understand the real meaning of words such as integration, multiculturalism and diversity. These guiding questions, apart from personal information such as country of origin and host society (Italy in the case of the narratives explored here), mainly focus on opinions, challenges faced, and advice to give and, thus, involve a noteworthy interpersonal component. Furthermore, since the final aim is gaining credibility and debunking false negative myths, rhetoric becomes part of discursive persuasion. As a matter of fact, metadiscourse contributes to rhetoric in that it "promotes logical appeals when it explicitly links ideas and arguments; it implies credibility of the writer's authority and competence; and it signals respect by acknowledging the reader's viewpoint" (Gholami et al. 2015: 60).

³ Available at <<https://iamamigrant.org/about>> (last accessed July 2021).

The data for this research consists of twenty personal accounts narrated by ten migrants from different countries. Ten stories are written in English and the same stories are re-written in Italian, hence, in this research, they are considered as translated texts. The English dataset amounts to 3,335 words and the Italian sample amounts to 2,992 running words. The corpus is small but includes narratives presented in both languages and functions as a pilot corpus. The small size of the corpus allows the researcher to verify the use of a very recent web-based analysis tool for the quantitative metadiscoursal analysis, i.e. Text Inspector (www.textinspector.com).⁴ Among the utilities offered by this technological tool, the ‘MD Analysis’ function was mainly used to extract all the interactive and interactional categories starting from the English dataset. The aim was to give a comprehensive overview of the metadiscoursal devices used by migrants when describing the realities – both positive and negative – of arriving and living in the host country. Afterwards, all the occurrences of the metadiscoursal markers were checked manually and categorized according to Hyland’s framework. Finally, the focus of the research shifted to the identification of the same MD elements in the Italian-translated corpus to explore variations, if any. Since Text Inspector interrogates only English-language texts, the quantitative analysis was also assisted by Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2004), a web-based, corpus-analysis tool that lemmatizes and tags customized corpora with parts-of-speech tags. The two corpora were interrogated in terms of verbs, conjunctions, adverbs, and pronouns. Subsequently an intensive and rigorous manual and qualitative analysis was carried out in order to check the functional meaning of the metadiscoursal markers in their contexts in both languages, with a focus on the interactional markers. This was also made possible by the Sketch Engine function which reads parallel texts.

⁴ Text Inspector was created by Stephen Bax, Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Bedfordshire, and is also supported by its academic partner, The Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA).

4. Analysis

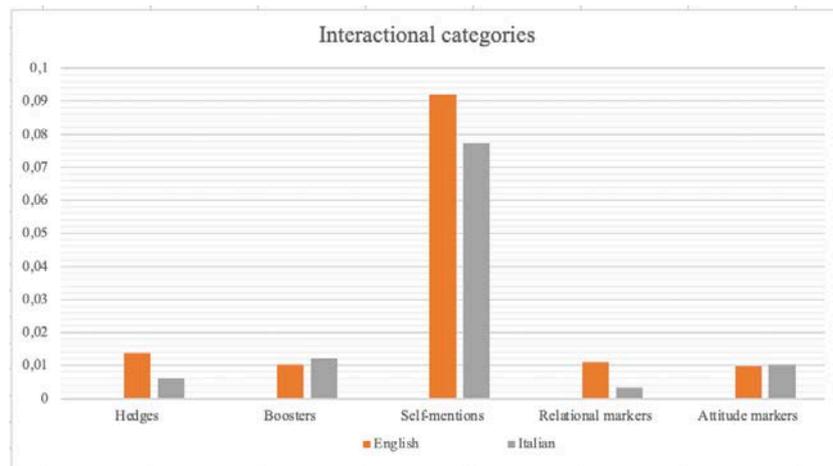
Results from quantitative analysis reveal that metadiscoursal markers amount to 19.77% of the English texts and 16.09% of the Italian ones. Within this total, the percentage of interactional markers is higher than that of the interactive devices, with a total of 13.07% in the English texts and 10.86% in the Italian ones. This is due to the major communicative functions of these texts, namely expressive and conative ones, given that these stories have the final goal of persuading addressees to change their attitudes towards migrants.

The total number of interactive tools is unevenly distributed among the different sub-categories, with logical connectives as the most frequent category. This finding was expected because the other four types of interactive tools are mainly used in those texts where quotations, explanations, elaborations, and external references are more relevant as, for example, in academic discourse. Transitionals are mainly used because they perform the function of connecting steps in the narration and, in doing so, persuade recipients through rational appeal (*logos*). If we consider sub-categories of Transitionals, such as Addition, Comparison, and Consequence, the most frequently used in both corpora are Addition and Consequence, realized through the conjunctions *and*, *but*, *so* and *then*. While the function of the first two markers is to sequence topics in the texts, the conjunction *so* is mainly used to show that decisions are the outcomes of previous reflections or external events. The expected slightly higher percentage of the occurrence of *and* in the English stories indicates that coordination is preferred to subordination – which, on the contrary, features in the Italian style of communication. The use of *then* puts an emphasis on the chronological sequence of narrated events.

The total absence of devices which add or rephrase or elaborate information in the Italian data is due to the omissions of pieces of text where these interactive markers occur in the English data. In the first example below (omitted in the Italian data), the code gloss introduces a reference to a real situation which helps better understand what the writer has explained about cultural mediation. In the second example

the code gloss serves the purpose of explaining a culture-bound term which was not found in the Italian text. The less frequent occurrence of textual connectors in Italian texts is another finding which is perfectly in line with the author-oriented communication style (Katan/Taibi 2021: 316) and, hence, less engaged in providing explicit guidance to the recipients in understanding the texts.

- (1) **For instance**, an Italian policeman tried to imitate the Muezzin’s call to prayer; he did not do it to offend Muslims, but for some it was seen as an insult. The policeman apologized.
- (2) There is a big Italian diaspora, where they are known as “Kif kif”, **which means** “look-alikes” since they were considered to be very ‘Tunisian’-looking.



Graph 1. Quantitative distribution of interactional categories on the basis of their percentage in both datasets.

Moving onto the interactional categories, self-mention is the most widespread interactional tool, followed by hedges, boosters, relational markers, and attitude markers in the English texts. As Graph 1 displays, variation is visible across both languages: hedges are more recurrent in English (1.37%) than in Italian (0.60%) and the opposite is true for

boosters (1.04% in English vs. 1.20% in Italian), relational markers are more frequently used in English (1.11%) than in Italian (0.33%), and attitudinal devices in the Italian texts (1.04%) slightly exceed those in the English texts (0.98%). All these devices contribute to constructing evaluative and attitudinal meanings, and texts inevitably take on a more hybrid shape, encompassing a persuasive scope rather than an informative one. By the use of the first-person pronoun and possessive adjectives, self-mention is mainly used to construct migrant identities with respect to, firstly, their past and, secondly, their present life. In this way, the audience is comprehensively convinced by what is told to it through the author's integrity and goodwill. In both languages, personal reference is a clear indication of the standpoint from which to unravel the meanings expressed and, at the same time, narrators are allowed to seek agreement for their contribution. The less frequent incidence of self-mentions in the Italian texts is due to the higher number of occurrences of more objective and impersonal constructions. Example (3) represents a case in point, in that it illustrates how the self-mention 'I' has been rendered through an impersonal form in Italian, namely a distancing device (*È facile/It is easy*) which confers objectivity and detachment to a general evaluative statement. Similarly, in example (4), the use of the first-person pronoun 'I' in English corresponds to a general impersonal construction in Italian, where a commonly known cultural value (i.e. *studying abroad*), which is considered to be prestigious by Italian people, has been added. The purpose is to engage the reader to share this cultural assessment through universal evaluation and is reinforced by the implicit objective modalization (*sicuramente/surely*).

- (3) When I saw Verona in Italy for the first time, I knew I made the right choice. The city is marvelous, breathtaking! Every day here is a celebration; **I feel inspired** by every building I see.
 IT: Quando ho visto Verona per la prima volta, ho capito subito di aver fatto la scelta giusta: è meravigliosa! **È facile sentirsi ispirati quando si è circondati** da un'architettura di questo tipo.
 BT: *When I saw Verona for the first time, I knew immediately that I had made the right choice: it is wonderful! **It is easy to feel inspired when people are surrounded by such architecture.***

- (4) **I** invested all **my** savings in this opportunity.
 IT: Studiare all'estero è **sicuramente** un'opportunità da non farsi scappare, ma è anche un investimento notevole. [ADDITION]
 BT: *Studying abroad is **surely** an opportunity not to be missed, but **it** is also a considerable investment.*

The hedging tools retrieved from the corpus include epistemic possibility modals, modal adverbs, and epistemic nouns which allow “information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact” (Hyland 2011: 99) and which tend to temper its impact. In English texts the higher usage of hedges, rather than boosters, allows narrators to gain credibility by cautiously positioning themselves and by constructing an accommodating and conciliatory stance. This is illustrated by (5) (6) where the epistemic-subjective *I think* and the softener *kind of* have not been rendered in the Italian text where, on the contrary, the use of modalization of usuality (*sempre/always*) confers more assertiveness to the statement. Similarly, in (7) the use of the conditional (*would rather*) in English is replaced by the mode of certainty, i.e. the Italian simple present (*preferisco/I prefer*). By constructing statements as provisional, through hedges, writers engage readers as participants in their endorsement conveying deference.

- (5) My father is of Mexican descent, and **I think** that that has **kind of** shaped my need to work with marginalized populations.
 IT: Ho origini messicane e ho **sempre** vissuto negli Stati Uniti: questa condizione mi ha **sempre** spinto a entrare in empatia con le comunità più emarginate della società.
 BT: *I've got Mexican origins and have **always** lived in the United States: this situation has **always** pushed me to empathize with the most marginalized communities in society.*
- (6) However, **I think** it is very important to never give up hope and to try to do our best to build a future.
 IT: [DELETION]
- (7) I am Ivorian, but **I would rather** define myself as a world citizen.
 IT: Sono ivoriano, ma **preferisco** definirmi cittadino del mondo.
 BT: *I am Ivorian, but **I prefer** to define myself a citizen of the world.*

- (8) Arriving in a new country is always more difficult than **you could possibly imagine**.
 IT: **È impossibile** prevedere quanto sia difficile cominciare una nuova vita in un paese straniero.
 BT: **It is impossible** to foresee how difficult it is to start a new life in a foreign country.
- (9) After Bulgaria I returned to Georgia with my wife and child, a PhD degree in Conservation and Restoration and the **will** to start my career.
 IT: Una volta completato il dottorato in “Conservazione e Restauro” in Bulgaria, sono tornato in Georgia insieme a mia moglie e a mio figlio, con **tanta voglia** di cominciare la mia carriera.
 BT: *After completing my PhD in “Conservation and Restoration” in Bulgaria, I returned to Georgia with my wife and son, **with a great desire** to start my career.*

The two boosters found in the Italian example (*sempre/always*), in place of the English hedges, have thus rendered the propositional content more assertive with respect to the vagueness conveyed by the English citations, whereas the expression of hope, even though hedged in (6), has been deleted. Deletion may be explained by the Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR) cultural orientation that refers to the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, where relatively weak control is called Indulgence and relatively strong control Restraint. Countries with higher levels of restraint such as Italy (with respect to the UK and USA), are significantly interrelated with a feeling of pessimism and negativism, in that restrictions tend to foster negative feelings and a lack of trust (Hofstede et al. 2010).

As Hyland (2005: 53) notes, the use of boosters emphasizes certainty and aids the construction of rapport by marking involvement with the topic and solidarity with the audience. Assertiveness is also achieved by the less thoughtfully construed modality (8) in Italian with respect to the epistemic modality in English, furtherly softened by the hedge *possibly*. Boosters also include the use of the future tense in Italian which matches the English *will*, lexicalised as a noun in both languages (9), but intensified in Italian by the quantitative *tanta/great*. Even though the informational content is not affected by the different use of metadiscourse across the two languages, what changes is the

overall perception of the writer's stance that turns out to be more self-assured in Italian. The greater assertiveness established through the use of boosters in Italian, even where in the English data hedges are used, might reflect a higher degree of resistance and mistrust in Italian society when faced with the topic of migration. This is reinforced by the lack of the authorial presence in the Italian data, due to the absence of code glosses and the avoidance of cautiousness which allow alternative views for readers in the English texts. Therefore, in the Italian renditions, boosters help migrants to present their experience with assurance, prompting interpersonal solidarity against the caution and self-effacement construed through hedges and authorial presence in the English data.

The other interactional category is that of Engagement markers, through which migrants try to involve readers by openly talking to them. In (10), the author could have used a more impersonal pattern in English at the place of 'you' (e.g. *it is*) but the choice of the second-person pronoun also serves an engaging purpose which is more pervasive in the English corpus with respect to the Italian one, due again to the use of impersonal forms. In addition to claiming solidarity, these tools aim at setting up a dialogue with readers, voicing their concerns and expectations. This is better illustrated by (11): when sharing the difficulty of finding a job in a foreign country, the author calls the reader into question by means of an evaluative statement that cannot but be shared.

In the following English Example (12), the use of the second-person pronoun engages the reader in the co-creation of values such as individual initiative, which has been deleted in the parallel text in Italian. Hence, the Italian texts sound less engaging. Furthermore, in the English text more directives (e.g. *have to*) were found with respect to Italian, where the attitude marker *have to* was deleted and a rare case of a person marker adverb (*personally*) is used in the corpus to introduce the expression of a personal evaluative statement.

- (10) **You** need to go back to school as if **you** are 6 years old again.
 IT: Quando **si impara** una nuova lingua **sembra** quasi di tornare a scuola, come se **si** tornasse bambini.

BT: *When you/people learn a new language, it is almost like going back to school, as if they were a child again.*

- (11) Jobs will not come knocking at **your** door for **you**.
IT: [DELETION]
- (12) **You** come here alone, without friends, without a family. **You** have nothing, **you** have to start from the scratch. [...]
In the end, **I have to say** I don't feel Greek or Italian.
IT: **Ti senti davvero** di non avere nulla. [...] Dopotutto **personalmente** non mi sento né greca né italiana.
BT: *After all, I personally feel neither Greek nor Italian. [...] You really feel you have nothing.*

More noticeably, through the use of attitude markers narrators express their pathos, namely they tend to influence recipients' emotions, primarily through the use of adjectives (e.g. *important, eager*), attitude verbs (e.g. *wish, would like*), and attitudinal adverbs (e.g. *luckily, honestly*). These tools are significant in that they transmit the writer's attitudinal position which is mainly expressed in the corpus through meanings of importance, desire, and luck, as demonstrated in the following Examples:

- (13) I am studying Political Science because **I would like** to become a diplomat, and work on relations between Italy and Tunisia.
IT: Studio scienze politiche e **il mio sogno** è quello di diventare una diplomatica italiana in Tunisia.
BT: *I study political science and my dream is to become an Italian diplomat in Tunisia.*
- (14) I am really **lucky** because my husband helped me navigate life in Rome. Here I am a person with **solid support, adequate** resources, a fair knowledge of Italian and I have already a hard time.
IT: **Confesso** che, nonostante me la cavi con la lingua e abbia il sostegno di mio marito per risolvere i problemi burocratici, **trovo già molto difficile integrarmi**.
BT: *I have to confess that even though I can manage with the language and I have my husband's support to solve bureaucratic problems, I already find it very difficult to integrate.*

- (15) I have heard **so many stories** from the people I hosted in Lampedusa.
 IT: In tutti questi anni a contatto con i migranti, **ne ho sentite di storie!**
 BT: *In all these years in contact with migrants, I have heard so many stories!*
- (16) Still, the first three years in Italy were very **difficult** for me.
 IT: Non pensavo che vivere in un posto nuovo potesse essere un **problema**.
 BT: *I didn't think that living in a new place could be a problem.*
- (17) When I was in high school, we housed Burmese refugees who had been living in a refugee camp in Thailand for 10 years, which opened my eyes to **what** refugees **have to** face.
 IT: Da adolescente, i miei genitori ospitarono una coppia di rifugiati birmani che avevano vissuto in Thailandia per dieci anni. Quella esperienza mi aprì gli occhi sulle **difficoltà** che i migranti **devono** affrontare per integrarsi nel paese d'accoglienza.
 BT: *As a teenager, my parents hosted a Burmese refugee couple who had lived in Thailand for ten years. This experience opened my eyes to the difficulties migrants face in integrating into their host country.*
- (18) After such achievements and success, **I was eager** to explore new things, so I decided to move.
 IT: Dopo aver coronato una carriera di successo in Georgia, **ero pronto** a esplorare posti nuovi.
 BT: *After a successful career in Georgia, I was ready to explore new places.*

In some examples, the attitudinal position is explicitly expressed, whereas other examples call for more careful scrutiny, as in the case of the Italian Example (15), where the pragmatic implication relies on the use of an exclamative to convey the meaning of 'coming across many unpleasant stories.' Strikingly, what in English is expressed in terms of 'difficulties', such as starting life in an unknown place, in Italian becomes a heavy burden lexically realized as a *problem*. The three occurrences of the word *problema* (problem) in the Italian data correspond to the word *difficulty* in the English texts. Similarly, where in Italian *difficoltà* is used, the English text becomes vaguer as in (17). Again, in (14) the addition of the culturally loaded Italian phrase *problemi burocratici* is a clear reference to one of Italy's worst 'evils' felt by those who, day after day, encounter hundreds of obstacles to achieving their goals. Gratitude for the family support received seems to be expressed in the English text where the attitudinal adjective *lucky*,

interestingly, refers to the personal resources and competences acquired to face the challenges in the host country. All the resources are pre-modified by positive epithets (*solid, adequate, fair*). The Italian text paraphrases the same meanings by means of an attitudinal verb (*confess*) and by a concessive clause (*nonostante/although*) which emphatically reinforces (*trovo/I find*) the opinion expressed later in the same text i.e. *I already find it very difficult to integrate*. This may find an explanation in the two cultures' diversity, with Italian culture scoring very highly on the dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance, which refers to the extent to which people feel threatened by situations which are perceived to be unsafe or unknown (Hofstede 2003: 113).

5. Final remarks

By positioning itself at a crucial moment of our history in which isolation and inclusion appear as polarized and politicized tactics amidst a global resurgence of more extremist positions, this research has tried to identify how the voice of migrants is construed from a metadiscoursal perspective in digital campaigns across English and Italian. Undoubtedly aimed at involving the public, the objective of these narratives is the *re*-humanization of migrants who, through the telling of their stories, cease to be statistics and become human beings again. Digital platforms become sites of encounter, meeting points which must transcend the former colonial tendency to present a voiceless or objectified 'other'. This work has highlighted the crucial role of digital campaigns in the dissemination of counternarratives geared to reinforcing the view of migrants as individuals in search of "self-presentation, positioning, and stance" (De Fina/Tseng 2017: 384).

Starting with English texts, the study has firstly addressed the use of metadiscoursal markers and their distribution and frequency in both corpora, with a specific focus on interactional elements considered crucial to the construction of ways of engaging the public. Then, the analysis has looked at how the same metadiscoursal elements in their

context have been re-narrated in Italian. The recent technological tool used for identifying metadiscourse markers quantitatively (e.g. Text Inspector) has proved to be effective and useful in the preliminary phase of the survey but not exhaustive, especially in relation to the identification of attitude markers. Furthermore, the list of markers extracted by the software was not complete and this emerged through manual analysis. Therefore, a labour-intensive investigation has also been necessary, one which was supported by the use of Sketch Engine, i.e. word searches and parallel concordances. Thus, the limitations of this study, which further research based on larger data could address, concern the small number of parallel texts taken from a single disciplinary community and available on the website. Future research will help establish whether the rhetorical differences found in this parallel corpus of digital campaigns are relevant in this and other disciplinary areas, and in these, or other, socio-cultural contexts.

Following Hunston/Thompsons' (2000) distinction between the two co-existing planes of discourse, "autonomous" and "interactive", we can safely state that in both corpora the interactive plane, namely the intentional and pragmatic use of the language prevails over the informational intent.

Results have shown that the discursive self is central to the writing process in both languages and writers cannot eschew projecting an imprint of themselves, and how they position themselves, in relation to their arguments. This has been achieved in English, more than in Italian, through a significantly higher use of self-mentions. Despite the importance of interactional and above all engaging markers in the construction of the narrator's stance, of a precise migrant's identity other than that of an 'other' or a 'victim', the same metadiscourse expedients have been mediated in the two cultures, fully reflecting both the typical communicative style of each language and their cultural orientations. Suffice it to think about the more impersonal and detached communication style in Italian texts, although the source text aims at a more striking and overt subjectivity in English as well as at a higher degree of relationality. Or again, let us consider the presence of attitudinal lexemes (e.g. *problema*) more oriented towards pessimism in Italian. Thus, the evidence presented in the Italian data partially stultifies any room for optimism, despite need for integration and desire

for inclusion. A major difference was found in the use of hedges in the English texts which were rendered with boosters in Italian. This might reveal the construction of the Italian reader as resistant to immigration issues, unlike the English reader who is presented as someone that knows and shares the difficulties of this phenomenon.

The cross-culturally mediated rhetoric may also be attributed to the migrant's need to construct a sense of belonging. Mediating is necessary for the narrator to be recognized as a member of the social group through the respect of socio-pragmatic norms.

To conclude, it can be said that the shifts detected in the use of metadiscourse elements do not correspond to shifts at the macro-level in the global interpretation of the text, but the result is an overall different functional effect due to the intercultural mediation of the elements investigated.

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