

POSITIONING AND IDENTITY IN DIGITAL DISCOURSE

An introduction

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Abstract – The present paper provides a brief introduction to identity, positioning and ideologies in studies on digital discourse and the digital transformation. Following an overview of research on central problems relevant to knowledge communication and knowledge dissemination, the article gives an outline of the individual case studies selected for inclusion in this special issue.

Keywords: digital transformation; ideology; knowledge transfer; point of view; positioning.

1. Introduction

The CLAVIER (Corpus and Language Variation in English Research) centre¹ has been working on corpus approaches to language variation in a discourse perspective for 15 years, organizing series of conferences and seminars intended to provide stimuli and foster debate around specialized discourse. The aim of the CLAVIER 2021 conference, held in November 2021 at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, was to look into a variety of aspects related to *Exploring Words in the Digital Transformation. Tools and Approaches for the study of Lexis and Phraseology in Evolving Discourse Domains*. This special issue gathers a selection of papers presented on that occasion, which investigate identity, positioning and ideologies in digital discourse.

¹ <https://www.fileli.unipi.it/2020/05/09/in-linea-il-nuovo-sito-del-centro-interuniversitario-clavier/> (1.6.2023).

2. Setting the scene: communication, interacting identities and evolving discourse domains in the digital transformation

Digital technologies are transformational: they disrupt and transform our lives, in a fast evolving and ever-changing world. Economic and societal effects are ubiquitous, in so far as “people, firms and governments live, interact, work and produce differently than in the past, and these changes are accelerating rapidly” (OECD 2019, blurb). The impact of the digital transformation has been profound and far-reaching on communication and the transfer of knowledge too. The extended participatory framework of the web (Jenkins *et al.* 2006; Herring *et al.* 2013) has opened the way for new communicative situations and wider impact of the ideological dimension of words, for example in the social media. Online sociality has been changing with the progress from the Web 1.0 and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) to the Web 2.0 and Social Network Communication (SNC) in Social Network Services (SNSs) (Jenkins 2006). Communication on new media – also addressing as a matter of course “audience(s) that are demanding the right to participate within the culture” (Jenkins 2006, p. 24) – goes well beyond the limits of closed communities of experts and traditional expert-layman communication. The digital transformation has stimulated the development of new and evolving discourse domains, and brought in discursive strategies that appear to alter and change accordingly (Bondi, Cacchiani 2021).

As access to knowledge and domain literacy are acknowledged as a public good for all (UNESCO 2005), scholars have a duty to make their research relevant to the society at large, hence reaching out to different audiences and assisting their personal growth, e.g. promoting understanding or encouraging critical thinking. Communicating and disseminating specialized knowledge requires creating and reinforcing common ground, while constructing, presenting and communicating knowledge (Kastberg 2010; Ditlevsen 2011) in texts that effectively adjust to the knowledge background, as well as to the knowledge- and personality-related needs of the intended addressees within the relevant communicative setting.

At a time when knowledge communication and knowledge dissemination are making a significant move from traditional genres to new online communicative formats, using the appropriate discursive strategies for reconceptualizing and reconceptualizing expert knowledge presents an enormous challenge. The multiple aspects and dimensions of this challenge have been the object of research in language studies, epistemology and computer-mediated communication for quite some time now, and, more recently, of media linguistics (Bondi, Cacchiani 2021). For instance, the

extensive literature in Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) has made important contributions to the study of both ‘domain-internal’ (peer-to-peer) communication and domain-external knowledge dissemination, in traditional genres as well as genres remediated for online and new emergent genres, in several domains of expertise (Engberg *et al.* 2018; Bondi, Cacchiani 2021). Popularizing strategies that have received special attention for quite some time are, among others, metadiscourse, definitions, exemplifications and scenarios, repetitions and reformulations, analogy and metaphor, reader/listener engagement, simplification and explicitation (see, e.g. Myers 1989, 2003; Linell 1998; Ciapuscio 2003; Gülich 2003; Calsamiglia, van Dijk 2004, Garzone 2006). A parallel line of investigation has seen an upsurge of research on the multimodal co-construction of meaning through text-meaning interactions (Kress, van Leuween 2006; Unsworth 2008) and on its contribution to knowledge communication and knowledge dissemination, gradually shifting attention from traditional genres to computer mediated communication (e.g. Engberg *et al.* 2018; Bianchi *et al.* 2022).

As the title suggests, the aim of the present issue is to look into the different social practices originating from different settings of knowledge circulation and ultimately into the consequences of the (perceived) empowerment of non-experts and democratization of the Internet.

Generally, in communicative situations where online users can express their opinion freely, knowledge communication may be influenced and hampered by oppositional discourse practices, conspirational thinking, and by practices that contribute to group polarization (Sunstein 2008), confirmation bias (Nickerson 1998) and the search for affiliative relations (Nguyen 2020; Zappavigna 2012).

Key questions behind the construction of communities concern basically identity construction and negotiation, and how this is achieved in human online interaction as well as via channel and medium’s affordances (Gibson 1977), in CMC and SNSs. (See Article 2 – Petroni, on the co-deployment of semiotic resources to build and mediate identity and user agency on Facebook and LinkedIn.) Whether we look at individuals or individual communities in their self-representation or we look at how communities are defined by difference in their conflictual relationship with other communities, identity is inextricably interwoven with positioning (Harré, van Langenhove 1991). The link between the two has long been in focus in discourse studies paying attention to the resources for negotiation of social identities and intergroup relations. In digital discourse studies this has created a long-standing focus on the relationship between identity issues and community formation (see for example Garcés-Conejo Blitvich, Bou Franch 2018). When focusing then on lexical choice in digital discourse, the construction of identity is thus inextricably linked with the identification of

ideologies underlying digital discourse, with a focus on how lexical resources are employed to enact identities, activities, and somehow ideologies.

Although significant inroads are made into multimodal and semiotic aspects of the texts under scrutiny (see e.g. Article 5 – Sezzi; Article 2 – Petroni), the dominant methodological standpoints in the issue are corpus analysis and discourse analysis. This enables contributors to primarily address verbal aspects of positioning and status, credibility and trust (Petitat 2004; Luhmann 2014), as well as the expression of attitude, point of view and ideologies – which ultimately reflects different folk epistemologies (Gerken 2017) and social stereotypes (Lakoff 1987), and specific takes on old and new cultural keywords (Williams 2015/1976).

As will become visible, the complexity of the object requires discussion from a multiplicity of perspectives, in relation to a vast array of domains, discourses and genres. In fact, the relevant communicative settings are diverse and varied, ranging from situations in which experts have to accommodate the features of their intended audiences and construct common communicative ground for mutual understanding (Clark 1996, p. 92), to situations in which shared common ground is taken for granted. For instance, strong knowledge asymmetries impact recourse to knowledge mediation strategies on health educational websites for children (Article 5 – Sezzi); on the other hand, restricted communities like the Marginal Revolution blog (Article 4 – Cacchiani) are open to all readers, and yet, legitimate participation within the community requires discussants to be conversant with state-of-the-art theories and models in economics; or, to take another case study, communication is fully symmetric in interest-based communities on Reddit, where discussion about the activity of visiting abandoned places among members is fostered and encouraged (Article 10 – Cavalieri, Corrizzato, Franceschi).

Additionally, variation in the articles can be observed according to the kind of sensitive issues and cultural keywords (Williams 2015/1976) covered in the articles. Alongside explorations into oppositional discourse in face-to-face and video-mediated interviews about the many challenges faced by national governments in the COVID-19 pandemic (Article 1 – Facchinetti), and conspirational thinking in institutional podcasts about COVID-19 (Article 3 – Maglie, Groicher), health is discussed in institutional communication, in connection with knowledge dissemination about bullying on children educational websites (Article 5 – Sezzi). (In)equality and freedom are the object of debate on US economics blog (Article 4 – Cacchiani), while the webpages of Italian and British LGBTQ+ non-profit organizations concentrate on gender, diversity and inclusion (Article 6 – Zaupa). The multiple dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability in online CSRs come under scrutiny in CSR documents published on corporate

websites (Article 7 – Malavasi). Lastly, different aspects and dimensions of sustainability are also addressed through the lens of leisure and pleasure, and of promotional discourse. For instance, by focusing on discursive practices of urban exploration tourists on Reddit, vis-à-vis blogs and relatively more monologic websites (Article 10 – Cavalieri, Corrizzato, Franceschi), and by studying evaluative language on the Slow Art Day official blog (Article 9 – Nocella). Or, moving away from interest-based communities and blogs, by shifting attention to TV/YouTube commercials for environmentally sustainable food (Article 8 – Niceforo), and to wine promotion on Facebook (Article 11 – Bianchi, Manca).

3. The special issue

The proposed special issue unfolds through eleven papers. Altogether, they address our questions about identity, positioning and ideologies from different angles and complementary perspectives. Collectively, they return a cohesive picture of traditional genres remediated for online, emergent genres and new media in the digital transformation.

The opening papers focus more explicitly on the specificity of oppositional discourse and identity construction. The papers that follow explore specific case studies of digital practices that enact different forms of identity management and knowledge mediation in different digital media, positioning themselves in the context of different ideological debates.

Paper 1 – *Oppositional Discourse in the digital transformation. A contrastive analysis between face-to-face and video-mediated interviews in English* – is authored by ROBERTA FACCHINETTI. The interface between Linguistics and Conflict Studies is a relatively new but rapidly growing field of academic attention (see Evans *et al.* 2019, and references there). Indeed, the role played by language in aggression and conflict is now regularly discussed by practitioners and scholars alike in a variety of fields, including public/political debates, the workplace, the classroom/higher education, as well as the family, single communities and in cross-cultural environments.

The paper explores oppositional discourse (OD) with special attention to video-mediated communication in English. First, the author expands on work by Aijmer (2013), Jeffries (2014) and Goodman *et al.* (2017), in order to qualify the various dimensions and linguistic triggers of OD: explicit and implicit negative triggers (e.g. *no*, *not*, or *in place of*); coordinating conjunctions like *but*; contrastive/concessive conjunctions like *while* or *despite*; comparatives (*less ... than*); juxtaposition of personal pronouns (*I/we* vs. *you/they*); modal markers of commitment (e.g. *I think* and *actually*); syntactic frames of binarized opposition (*either X or Y*) or of replacive opposition (*X rather than Y*); and their interaction with ‘polarized’ words

(e.g. *legal* vs. *illegal*, *migrant* vs. *asylum seeker*) and ‘loaded’ terms in the lexicon (e.g. *aggression/attack* vs. *strike/military action/operation*).

An exploratory study is then carried out in order to test if and to what extent the digital transformation has contributed to possible changes in oppositional discourse strategies. To this purpose, the *InterDiplo COVID-19 Corpus*, developed at the University of Verona, Italy, is analyzed. The corpus covers face-to-face and video-mediated interviews carried out in English between journalists and diplomats/politicians/science experts from different lingua-cultural backgrounds, and is specifically tagged to concentrate on the question-answer interface between interviewer and interviewee. Non-linguistic and linguistic aspects are investigated using two equal modules of face-to-face and video-mediated interviews on online platforms. The findings point to differences in the actualization of oppositional discourse between the two subsets, thus suggesting that the video-mediated environment does play a role in the way interviews unfold.

It is almost inevitable, when looking into media discourse, to consider the role of technology in shaping identities, roles, knowledge, values and ideology. On these grounds, in Article 2 SANDRA PETRONI addresses the question: *Can interfaces and social profiles ‘speak without words’? Social platforms as ideological tools to shape identities and discourses*, focusing on the notion of identity. User agency has been profoundly transformed since all the new digital practices and communicative exchanges are mediated, filtered and re-modelled through digital technologies thanks to the presence of the two potentialities of interactivity and connectivity. Most of the discursive practices represented in social media platforms are focused on processes of self-profiling, with personal profiles similar to “ongoing, collaboratively written, online performances” (Sundén 2003, p. 21). Additionally, pre-packaged identities and meanings are produced by multimodal discursive patterns that are generated by social network technologies. The co-deployment of different semiotic resources is regulated by the platform design, which combines multimodal artefacts uploaded by users with those pre-imposed by the interface architecture. For that matter, the paper shifts attention from the analysis of digital profiles meant as texts created by users, to technology meant as a further semiotic system with complex resources whose meaning potential gives rise to hidden signs (metadata and algorithms) regulated by normative codes. Using examples and profiles from SNSs such as Facebook and LinkedIn, Petroni puts forth a tentative framework for analysing identity construction and impression management in social networking profiles that is grounded in an integrated view of textuality (Djonov, van Leeuwen 2012; Zhao *et al.* 2014; Poulsen *et al.* 2018). Digital meaning is conveyed through texts but also via computational actions that, in turn, are triggered not only by users but also by platform affordances and the

technologies embodied by the interfaces. That is, users are only partially responsible for their identity construction: at the hidden layer, platform designers shape users' interaction; at the surface layer, users consent to the mission stated by social media.

Article 3, authored by ROSITA MAGLIE and MATTHEW GROICHER, turns to sensitive issues as presented on social media. Particularly, the focus is on *COVID-19: Exploring linguistic indicators of conspiratorial thinking in the media. A case study of Coronacast*. Health information is fundamental during an outbreak, but viral speculation can easily bury the limited information we have. This is the situation the world was facing at the end of 2019, notwithstanding the scientific community's progress in understanding the infection, and the concerted effort of the World Health Organization and other organizations to counter the infodemic and conspiracy theories (WHO 2019).

A case in point is *Coronacast*, a podcast aimed at “break[ing] down the latest news and research to help [the Australian public] understand how the world is living through the [COVID-19] pandemic”.² Despite its aim, the podcast hosts use constructions during their daily episodes (N=475,699; P=March 2020 to March 2021), which – after cluster, collocation and concordance analysis – can be ascribed to the seven traits of CONSPIR tactic (Lewandowsky, Cook 2020). Accordingly, the study deals with questions about Contradictory logic, Overriding suspicion of official explanations, Nefarious intent to endanger people, the presumption of Wrongfulness and Persecution, narratives that are Immune to evidence, reinterpretation of Random events as part of a larger pattern. Two more traits (AC) are concerned with expressing Uncertainty in an Anxious or a Cognitive manner (van Prooijen *et al.* 2020). Using the tools of corpus linguistics, the analysis provides an evidence-based understanding of the powerful impact of the ideological dimension of words being inculcated into Australian society's belief system by emergent institutions such as podcasts. Among the prominent themes are ‘suspicion of people from outside Australia’ and ‘suspicion of the Victorian government’ – which demonstrates how nationalism was instrumentalized during the COVID-19 pandemic to increase solidarity among Australian people (see also Wodak 2021; Zhai, Yan 2022).

In Article 4 – *Talking about freedom. Figurative tropes on the Marginal Revolution blog* – SILVIA CACCHIANI looks into social engineering and positioning on the *Marginal Revolution* blog³ (MR: 2012 to present), hosted by economists Tyler Cowen and Alex Tabarrok at the Marginal Revolution University. Qualitative data analysis concentrates on the socio-

² <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/coronacast/> (30.6.2021).

³ <https://marginalrevolution.com> (1.7.2023).

pragmatic effects (Colston 2015) of verbal irony and figurative tropes like hyperbole, metaphor and metonymy. Core and active participants are found to make recourse to figurative tropes to control and communicate specialized knowledge, argue their opinions and align or disagree with discussants within the blogging community, while reinforcing credibility and trust (Petitat 2004; Luhmann 2014).

Because the blog is highly integrated into the entrenched ecosystem of the scientific community, the online and offline worlds are strongly intertwined and mutually constructed. Regarding online naming strategies, therefore, bloggers tend to use given name, family name, initials, or diverse combinations thereof for their blogging identities. Descriptive names are used to express participants' quirks and likings, or world views and perspectives that demonstrate alignment with other discussants. Turning to the discourse around the cultural keyword (Williams 2015/1976) *freedom*, verbal irony and related tropes do not appear to be a feature of posts about critical questions in economics. However, they are found in conversation starters that address smaller questions, quirks, and apparently unimportant anecdotes and events of the day, and can readily emerge in the comments, as the thread unfolds. Following from conventions in the offline academic community, MR interactions require credible participants to share opinions and debate issues frankly. This makes downright aggression and politeness inappropriate. On the other hand, facts, models and theories are required to argue one's standpoint, while figurative tropes like verbal irony, hyperbole, metaphor, and metonymy can be used for expressing emotions and enhancing meaning.

Communicating human rights and raising awareness on equal opportunities and key issues in the realms of educational equity, diversity, inclusion and social participation come to the fore in Articles 5, 6 and 7. Article 5 – *Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites* – is authored by ANNALISA SEZZI. In recent decades, bullying has received increased public and media attention. Whereas the digital transformation has magnified the phenomenon and led to new forms of online harassment (cyberbullying), the Web allows parents, teachers, and children alike to gain access to information and support more easily. With regard to younger audiences, web-based educational hypermedia are an important channel of popularization, and make sensitive topics comprehensible to children and teenagers; diverse forms of edutainment (combining education and entertainment; Buckingham, Scanlon 2004), interactivity, and multimodality are intended to develop awareness in the youth and eventually push them to take action.

In this context, the study concentrates on two institutional health educational websites for children and teenagers (HK: *Health for Kids*;⁴ KHH: *Kids Health Hub*),⁵ and on the relevant subdirectories on bullying prevention in particular. Using the lens of multimodal and discourse studies, qualitative data analysis is carried out to compare and contrast the knowledge dissemination strategies adopted in order to address a mixed audience (including bullies, victims, witnesses, teachers, and parents). Special attention is devoted to transferring knowledge via recourse to different kinds of explanation (Ciapuscio 2003; Gülich 2003; Calsamiglia, van Dijk 2004), and to the types and kinds of image-text combinations used to engage with the users and convey interpersonal meanings in terms of address, social distance and involvement (Koutsikou *et al.* 2021). Importantly, because HK caters for the needs of young addressees, recourse is made to the second-person pronoun, also in operational definitions, and to text-image combinations that construct adults as supporting caregivers. On the other hand, being addressed to an older audience, KHH provides real-life photographs, and uses the third person in definitions that are precise and objective.

In Article 6, FEDERICO ZAUPA turns to *News press releases in digital environments. A contrastive genre and corpus-based approach to promoting inclusiveness within two LGBT+ organizations*. Generally, press releases as a genre can be seen as a pre-formulation device for news reports (Jacobs 1999). Company press releases in particular have been shown to exhibit a set of standard moves and strategies (McLaren, Gurău 2005), which reveals the underlying tension between informative and promotional goals (Catenaccio 2008). However, the status of the press release as a genre has been questioned due to continuous variation in stage combinations and communicative purposes (Lassen 2006). Digital technologies have also challenged the textual structure and the participation framework of the genre (Catenaccio 2008). In the light of this, the article concentrates on non-profit organizations and examines the language and features of a pilot corpus of online news press releases retrieved from a British LGBT+ charity (*Stonewall*) and its closest Italian counterpart, the Italian LGBT+ organisation *Arcigay*. From a genre perspective, the data suggests recourse to the same (recursive) (non-linear) rhetorical moves: Heading and Subheading, Announcement, Summary, Details Account, Comment, Standpoint, Justification, Call for Action, Statement of Commitment, and Contact details. Overall, they serve informative purposes and, crucially, are primarily promotional and persuasive in nature.

⁴ <https://www.healthforkids.co.uk> (1.8.2023).

⁵ <https://kidshealthhub.ca> (1.8.2023).

Turning to the discursive representation of LGBT+ communities and people, analysis into the most significant keywords, the collocational patterns of the top-15 lexical keywords in each corpus, their concordances and extended concordances, demonstrates that both Stonewall and Arcigay project themselves as committed, diversified and still cohesive communities. They promote inclusiveness and support LGBT+ people and communities, which are discursively framed as threatened by homo-bi-transphobic violence. Related to this, cultural keywords (Williams 2015/1976) that feature prominently on the Stonewall and Arcigay pages are *intolerance*, *oppression* and *violence*.

Article 7, authored by DONATELLA MALAVASI, concentrates on *The discursive construction of equality, diversity and inclusion. Insights from an analysis of CSR reports in the USA, UK and Japan*. More particularly, the paper explores the linguistic resources adopted in CSR reports to discursively construct and communicate EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) to both internal and external stakeholders (Breeze 2013; Garzone 2014; Hofer-Bonfim *et al.* 2023). Quantitative and qualitative analysis is conducted on a small sample of 2020 disclosures belonging to companies operating in three different sectors: Banking, Pharmaceuticals, Personal & Household Products and Services, and headquartered in three countries: the USA, the UK and Japan.

Frequent words and related phraseology point to recourse to a wide array of standard and rather formulaic constructions that promote EDI in order to project an image of reliable and responsible corporate citizens. Thus, all CSR reports appear to stress corporate efforts to *improve the health of employees/people*, *help/support employees/people*, *support/support for women*, and *engage people/employees*: companies take interest in offering equal opportunities to their *employees (our people)*, and to *people* in general. The insistence on *safety* and *health* appears to be in line with concerns about the current COVID-19 pandemic. Also, in line with Jonsen *et al.* (2021), whereas all the companies appear indeed to base their EDI communication on inclusion or integration statements, North American firms seem to espouse a greater focus on diversity: they value heterogeneity and differences in organizations and in the outside world. Overall, the co-existence of discourses on equality, diversity and inclusion, moral and ethical considerations, as well as utilitarian arguments, reflect a rather comprehensive approach to EDI that is shared by the US, UK and Japanese companies, but comes to the fore more significantly in the communication of US companies.

Going green, environmental concerns and sustainability are the cultural keywords (Williams 2015/1976) behind Article 8 – *Eco-friendly language, sustainability claims, and power relations in green advertising discourse* –

authored by MARIA NICEFORO. Research in the article is grounded on the assumption that, as the global quest for sustainability and environmental commitment becomes more and more urgent, many consumers are now opting for products and brands aligned with their values (Mintel 2021). Indeed, in a survey conducted by the European Commission, 56% of average European consumers declared that “environmental concerns influenced their purchasing decisions” (EC 2021). Consequently, companies are now revising their marketing and advertising strategies in order to focus on eco-friendly claims, thus reversing the traditional image of passive consumers manipulated by advertisers (Wilke *et al.* 2021).

In this context, the article investigates eco-friendly discourse and sustainability claims in a dataset of Italian food and drinks television commercials by Italian business entities and multinational corporations. The study considers 15 commercials recently aired in Italy for a qualitative manual analysis of textual and language features, in line with traditional CDA methods (Huckin 1997): critical evaluation of environmental claims through a framework for greenwashing detection (Carlson *et al.* 1993) is also included. More particularly, key to the analysis is the ability to investigate the pairing of linguistic Claim or Explicit Message Evaluation with the analytical categories of Insinuation (how explicitly claims/messages are suggested), Foregrounding (how prominently claims/messages are presented), and Connotation (how positively/negatively claims/messages are constructed). While attention is placed on critical aspects such as power relations between businesses and consumers, the data suggests that people’s health, sustainable practices in fishing, farming and cultivating, and packaging design, disposal and recycling, are systematically exploited in advertising to provide evidence of companies’ commitment to sustainability, and to please conscious consumers asking for more responsible production.

Moving on to leisure and pleasure, the emergent interest in cultural heritage and sustainable tourism are the object of Articles 9 and 10. In Article 9 JESSICA JANE NOCELLA deals with *New concepts and meanings of slow, The case of Slow Art*. The study explores new meanings and values of the word *slow* in the context of *Slow Art Day*, a global event that takes place once a year and whose aim is to encourage both visitors and museum curators to engage with art in new and different ways. The concept of slowness is becoming a relevant and ethical topic that is often related to what is organic, local and sustainable. While the notion and impact of slowness have been studied in different areas such as food (Petrini 2003), media (Rauch 2011), medicine (Wear *et al.* 2015) and education (O’Neill 2014), museums are yet to be investigated in depth. Through the lenses of Appraisal Theory (Martin, White 2005) and corpus linguistics, the chapter provides a short-term diachronic study of the language of evaluation adopted in the *Slow Art Day*

official blog (SAD),⁶ which keeps a record of the reports of the museums that take part in the yearly event. By combining quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the study focuses on how appraisal is used to enhance and promote the new and different semantic dimensions related to slowness and SAD events and activities: Education, empowerment and learning; Inclusiveness, also accessibility and co-working; Innovation and originality; Time to engage with art; Value of (not-for-profit) Art; Wellbeing and positive effects on SAD participants. The findings reveal that slowness is no longer related to the semantic dimension of Time, but also to those of Wellbeing and Inclusiveness, while a close study of evaluative language demonstrates that these dimensions are interconnected to one another.

The special emphasis on sustainability and “good art” is also a feature of the new form of tourism known as Urban Exploration (*Urbex*), which involves discovering TOAD places (Paiva 2008: Temporary, Obsolete, Abandoned and Derelict Places) and reporting the exploration with documentary evidence on specialized websites and blogs. This is the object of Article 10 – *On the verge between Ancient and Modern Times. A linguistic analysis of Urban Exploration practices* – co-authored by SILVIA CAVALIERI, SARA CORRIZZATO and VALERIA FRANCESCHI. The paper concentrates on online discourse on Urbex (Klausen 2017; Wadbled 2020) by analysing how urban exploration is talked about in two different online spaces, i.e. interest-based communities where discussion about the activity of visiting abandoned places among members is fostered and encouraged (Reddit), and more public, monologic spaces, such as blogs and websites, where longer texts are produced with a more descriptive/commercial purpose. To this purpose, a comparative analysis of keywords and selected key terms was carried out on two ad-hoc corpora, i.e. the *Urban Website Corpus* (UW) and the *Urban Reddit Corpus* (UR).

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis reveals the existence of a tension between the core tenets and ethical principles of urban exploration in the redditor corpus and the shift towards a more mainstream type of activity in the UW-Corpus. Crucially, the UW-Corpus appears to reflect a relatively more traditional idea of tourism. Here, the identity of the ‘explorer’ appears to be something temporary, to impersonate for the duration of the tourist activity, which is sometimes carried out in special organized tours that may be booked directly from the websites. On the other hand, the Reddit community shows a distinctive use of language, which signals in-group membership. This includes, among others, recourse to zero derivation for the noun *explore*, which describes the specific sets of practices related to the

⁶ <https://www.slowartday.com> (31.12.2020).

urban exploration of “sites of haunted memory, seeking interaction with the ghosts of lives lived” (Garrett 2011, p. 1049).

The “slow” question can be also addressed from another perspective. Slow Food is synonymous with (bio-)diversity, authenticity and culinary heritage, organic and healthy food, local and seasonal produce, as well as increased attention to the economic realities of food system sustainability and fairtrade (Sloan *et al.* 2015). Yet, the ‘local’ struggles have given way to international communities (e.g. the Slow Food Movement), while the globalization of foods and the development of connoisseurship of local wines and cuisine outside their territory is a fact. In the light of this, FRANCESCA BIANCHI and ELENA MANCA conclude our reflection on the language of leisure and pleasure by reflecting on wine discourse in Article 11 – *Wine promotion on Facebook. A linguistic comparison of posts by producers from English-speaking countries*. Their research starts on the assumption that Facebook can be considered one of the main social marketing tools used by companies who decide to advertise their products online and who aim to keep in touch with customers rapidly and effectively. Social media in general and Facebook in particular are characterized by a high level of interactivity and visual, textual and linguistic features are strategically used to attract and involve potential customers and to get their feedback, thus enhancing the company’s visibility on the market as well as the company’s knowledge of the market.

The paper, therefore, analyses the language used to advertise wine and wine events through Facebook posts by producers from New Zealand, South Africa and the UK. In particular, the study applies to this set of data the same analytical methods used by Manca (2021) in her analysis on the interactive and interactional strategies employed by Australian and US wine companies to advertise their products and activities on Facebook, and also some of the analytical methods used by Bianchi (2017a, 2017b) in her studies on Facebook posts written by travel agencies to advertise their destinations. Besides describing the metadiscursive features which are mostly used on Facebook by wineries (Hyland 2005), the paper establishes that forms of interaction and the positioning of the writers depend on the medium (as one would expect), and, more significantly, on the market sector. On the contrary, the role of culture appears very limited, if not entirely absent.

4. Conclusions

Taken together, the contributions to the present issue provide ample exemplification of the type of research that is currently carried out in language studies on identity, positioning and ideologies in evolving domains and digital environments. Attention is paid to how the digital dimension adds

to face-to-face interaction, how it influences traditionally written formats or gives birth to different types of discourses by offering new media and new genres. Studies centre on how lexical choice is influenced by the new contexts and how digital debate around key ideological issues is reflected in and through words. Discourse analysis, genre analysis, multimodal approaches all contribute to the exploration of lexis and its variation according to the different contexts of use. The variety of genres and discourses discussed, the multiplicity of angles and perspective taken, and the wide array of domains covered are therefore intended to make a substantial contribution to sharpening existing knowledge and stimulating the ongoing debate among scholars in the fields of Knowledge Communication, Genre and Discourse Studies.

Bionotes: Marina Bondi is Professor of English Language at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy, where she is currently coordinator of the PhD programme in Humanities. She works on various aspects of discourse analysis and EAP, with particular reference to the argumentative features of academic discourse and to the role of metadiscourse and evaluative language. Part of her current research concentrates on knowledge dissemination in traditional genres and new genres for online. Her approach combines corpus linguistics and dialogic approaches to the analysis of language in social interaction. She has published widely on these topics and has acted as a referee for a substantial number of international scholarly journals. She is also a member of the editorial board of *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* and of the book series *Studies in Corpus Linguistics*.

Silvia Cacchiani holds a PhD in English Language and Linguistics from the University of Pisa, Italy. Since September 2019, she has been Professor of English Language at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy. She has carried out extensive research on the lexico-semantic and discourse-pragmatic aspects of evaluative language and intensifying devices in particular. Her publications are in the areas of morphology and lexical semantics, specialized lexicography and LSP (both ESP and EAP). A good part of her current research activities is devoted to fleshing out key aspects of specialized knowledge communication and knowledge dissemination in a digital world. Among her publications is the volume *Popularization and Knowledge Mediation in the Law* (2018), co-edited with Jan Engberg, Karin Luttermann and Chiara Preite. She has also co-edited with Marina Bondi a special issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics* (2021), on *Knowledge Communication and Knowledge Dissemination in a Digital World*.

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