BULLYING EXPLAINED
TO CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS
Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites

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Abstract – In recent decades, bullying has received increased public and media attention. On the one hand, recent digital transformations have exacerbated the phenomenon leading to new forms of online harassment (cyberbullying). On the other hand, the World Wide Web has allowed parents, teachers, and children to access information and provide and receive support more easily. Particularly concerning younger audiences, educational websites serve as an important channel for popularization. Not only do they make topics in various disciplines comprehensible to children and teenagers, but they also tackle challenging issues to develop awareness in the youth and eventually encourage them to take action. These web-based educational hypermedia are rooted in "edutainment" (combining education and entertainment), interactivity, and multimodality, which are exploited to make sensitive issues more accessible to young audiences. In this context, the present paper concentrates on two health educational websites for children and teenagers (*Health for Kids* and *Kids Health Hub*), specifically examining their subdirectories on bullying prevention. The analysis explores how these two subdirectories disseminate knowledge about bullying and address the different participants in this phenomenon (bullies, victims, witnesses, teachers, and parents) from a multimodal and discursive perspective. Special attention is devoted to transferring knowledge via recourse to different types of explanation, and to the role played by image-text combinations in engaging users. These strategies are shown to reflect the type of information conveyed and the different roles represented.

Keywords: discourse analysis; health communication; multimodal analysis; participants' roles; popularization for children.

1. Introduction

Bullying has garnered significant attention over the past decades, becoming a pervasive phenomenon in our culture and evolving alongside societal advancements. It profoundly affects the psychological well-being and overall health of children across all age-groups, from preschool and kindergarten children (Saracho 2016) up to adults (Rai, Upasna 2017). According to Olweus (1993, p. 9), "a person is being bullied when he or she is exposed,

repeatedly over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students". To classify behavior as bullying, three criteria must be met: (1) it involves aggressive behavior intentionally aimed at harming someone, (2) it is repeated over time, and (3) it occurs in an interpersonal relationship marked by a power imbalance (Olweus, Limber 1999, p. 31). Furthermore, bullying takes various forms: physical bullying encompasses actions like hitting or pinching, as well as other forms of physical abuse; verbal bullying is characterized by spreading rumors, gossiping, or insulting; emotional bullying involves isolating and excluding others from the group; and cyberbullying originates from online communication and electronic means.

In order to prevent and stop bullying, some measures can be taken but most importantly children, students, teachers, and parents must be educated on what bullying is and its warning signs. While anti-bullying programs have been thoroughly implemented in schools, educational websites play a pivotal role outside the school's walls to raise children's awareness and increase their knowledge.

In general, the paramount importance of the Internet in popularization for children can be detected in many fields. Knowledge dissemination for the youth is multifaceted and manifests in diverse ways. However, it is worth noting that it "has yet to be extensively investigated in terms of genres or domains" (Bianchi *et al.* 2022, p. 6). From a linguistic, discursive, and comparative perspective,[1] several studies have focused on science and ecology (Bruti 2022; Bruti, Manca 2019; Cesiri 2020; Diani, Sezzi 2020; Manca, Spinzi 2022; Myers 1989, 2003), art (Fina 2022; Sezzi 2019, 2022), tourist promotion (Cappelli 2016; Cappelli, Masi 2019), EU institutions, children's rights, politics (Diani, Sezzi 2019; Perruzzo 2021, 2022; Silletti 2017; Turnbull 2022; Vignozzi 2022), legal knowledge (Cacchiani 2022; Diani 2015; Engberg, Luttermann 2014; Peruzzo 2021; Sorrentino 2014), literature (Bianchi 2018; Bianchi, Manca 2022), and grammar (Cappelli 2022). Additionally, knowledge dissemination embraces different forms, from non-fiction to websites and TED talks (Masi 2022). However, health knowledge dissemination does not appear to have received much attention until the COVID-19 upsurge led to the need of informing children on the virus (Diani 2020; Denti, Diani 2022; Nikitina 2022).

Generally, research shows that the popularizing strategies used in knowledge dissemination for adults are also found in knowledge dissemination for children (see, for example, Diani, Sezzi 2019). In addition, different engaging strategies have been detected such as *wh*-questions and polar questions, imperatives, exhortatives, exclamations, colloquial features,

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[1] As far as we are aware, there are few studies on the translation of informative books for the youth (Puurtinen 1995; Reiss 1982), for example on history (Sezzi 2015, 2017), and of non-fiction picturebooks (Masi 2021; Wozniak 2021).

Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites

115

and personal forms to address the reader (Bruti, Manca 2019; Diani 2015; Diani, Sezzi 2019; Sezzi 2015, 2017, 2019; Silletti 2017). The multimodal analyses stem from studies on textbooks (Unsworth 2006) and mainly centre on the ideational or representational meaning (see, for example, Diani, Sezzi 2020; Diani 2020), i.e. how people, places and things and the relations between them are represented in the images (Kress, van Leeuwen 2020).

In this context, the goal of the present paper is to investigate how bullying, which strongly impacts people's physical and mental health, is dealt with in the subdirectories of the educational websites *Health for Kids* and *Kids Health Hub*. The study opens with a description of the corpus under consideration (Section 2). The methodology adopted for the qualitative analysis is discussed in Sections 3. Section 4 focuses on the popularizing strategies and the interpersonal meanings conveyed on the subdirectories on bullying, one for children and one for teenagers. Section 5 presents some concluding remarks.

2. The corpus

The websites for children under investigation are two generic websites on health: *Health for Kids* and *Kids Health Hub*.

Health for Kids[2] (HK) is a UK-based intistutional website aimed at teaching children aged 4 to 11 about being healthy and taking care of their health. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) and the Diva Creative team developed the website with the assistance of pupils from Leicestershire primary schools. As seen on the website's homepage, it covers a wide range of health-related issues, organized into four main categories: "Healthy"; "Illness";[3] "Feelings"; "Getting Help". These areas are accessible via content section icons in the form of emojis in the header menu bar. The website also includes a "Games" section and a link to a separate webpage for Grownups.

HK features a cast of cartoon-like speaking characters who interact with the child-user, often by means of speech bubbles (see Buckingham, Scanlon 2004, p. 276; Stenglin, Djonov 2010, p. 192). These fictional characters inhabit various adventure settings in which they are represented as playing: in "Health", the setting is a forest; in "Feelings", the setting is a pirate island and its underwater world; the setting for "Illness" is a space planet; the section "Getting Help" has a fairy-tale landscape. The underlying metaphor is that knowledge acquisition is akin to an adventure. The website primarily relies on visual as it is addressed to young children (see Diani

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[2] www.healthforkids.co.uk (1.1.2023).
[3] For an analysis of the ideational interplay between the visual and verbal elements on the *Health for Kids* webpage dedicated to "Illness", see Diani (2020).

2020), and it combines education and entertainment, exemplifying the concept of "edutainment" (Buckingham, Scanlon 2004).

Kids Health Hub (KHH)[4] was established by the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre (CACAC) as an online platform with the objective of enhancing the well-being, mental health, and resilience of children and adolescents. It achieves this by educating families and professionals who work with them. KHH caters to different age-groups and different adult figures: "Kindergarten – Grade 2", "Grade 3-5", "Grade 6-8", "Grade 9-12", "Parents/Caregivers", "Teachers/Professionals". The webpage on bullying is in the "Grade 6-8" area, accessible from an anchor (a clickable element) at the top of the homepage. This directory shows a picture of middle school students smiling at the web user and provides access to six subdirectories in the "Learn-More-About" rectangle: "Health and Wellness", "Relationships", "Identity", "Mental Health Concerns", "Self-Care", and "Wellness Sessions". Each subdirectory is introduced with a stylized picture evoking their content and by a short description of the related sub-sections, accessible through the anchor "Read More". The images on the website consist of photographs and graphic images, featuring a flat style more suitable for teenagers.

The qualitative data analysis in this study is limited to the HK and KHH webpages that define and explain what bullying is.[5] In particular, information about bullying can be found in the "Grade 6-8" area of the *Kids Health Hub*. This provides an opportunity to examine how bullying is described on two webpages, one for children (HK) and one for young teenagers (KHH), enabling us to identify similarities and dissimilarities based on the distinct age-groups.

3. Methodology

The qualitative analysis that we shall carry out considers both verbal and visual aspects, given that these websites are inherently multimodal. As a first step, we will account for the categories and strategies used to disseminate knowledge among children adopting a discourse analytical approach. The strategies are divided into three main categories – *explanatory strategies*, *concretization strategies*, and *reformulation strategies* – based on Ciapuscio (2003), Gülich (2003) and Calsamiglia and van Dijk (2004). (See also Cavalieri, Diani 2019, on popularizing health texts.)

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[4] www.kidshealthhub.ca (1.1.2023).
[5] https://www.healthforkids.co.uk/feelings/bullying, https://kidshealthhub.ca/2022/02/03/bullying-3/ (1.1.2023).

Explanatory strategies include *definitions* and *denominations*. *Definitions* can be either *intensional* (or connotative) and *extensional* (or denotative).

Intensional definitions are classified into three main types: "synonymous definitions", "in which we provide another word whose meaning is already understood that has the same meaning as the word being defined" (Copi *et al.* 2016, p. 96); "operational definitions", in which a term is correctly applied to a case if and only if the performance of certain operations in that case leads to a designated result (Copi *et al.* 2016, p. 95), and definitions "by genus and difference", which concern the connection between "genus", which delineates the overall class to which the object belongs, and "difference", how the object differs from other members of the group (Copi *et al.* 2016, pp. 98-100).

On the other hand, *extensional definitions* determine the extension of a term, in that they, for example, enlist the members of the class of objects to which the term is referred to (Copi *et al.* 2016, pp. 98-100): they include definitions "by example" that, as their name suggests, offer examples of the objects denoted by the term; "ostensive definitions" in which the extension of the term to be defined is pointed to or indicated by a gesture, and "semi-ostensive definitions" in which the gesture or the pointing is simultaneously "accompanied by a descriptive phrase whose meaning is assumed known" (Copi *et al.* 2016, p. 108).

Definitions are usually coupled to *denominations*, which provide the specialized term for a certain scientific phenomenon or object. These are sometimes followed by *reformulations or paraphrases*, used to explain by rephrasing the information to be conveyed, normally introduced by rephrasing markers such as "which means".

Calsamiglia and van Dijk (2004, p. 372) enlist *exemplification* among the types of explanations. It is a concretization strategy (Cavalieri, Diani 2019) that provides lay readers with specific instances of difficult concepts and notions. Another strategy is the *scenario* which is a "direct appeal to one's interlocutor by creating a possible but imaginary situation to explain a complex fact" (Ciapuscio 2003, p. 213).

Additional engaging strategies that we will consider are *wh*-questions, imperatives, exhortatives or personal forms to address the reader.

The multimodal analysis is linked to the engaging strategies since it is based on interpersonal meaning, i.e. the "particular social relation between the producer, the viewer and the object represented" (Kress, van Leeuwen 2020, p. 42).[6] The reasons behind this choice are threefold. Firstly,

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[6] There are also compositional/textual meanings that "are concerned with the distribution of the information value or relative emphasis among elements of the text and image" (Unsworth 2008, p. 383).

educational materials are expected to promote interpersonal meaning thus aligning with the socio-cognitive perspective that conceive children as agents in meaning construction; secondly, the topic faced deals with children's emotions and feelings and their involvement is then essential. Thirdly, it is interesting to investigate interpersonal meaning given the scarcity of research on this topic: for example, Koutsikou *et al.* (2021, p. 6) underline how research on science materials for children "has mainly explored the representational or compositional meaning". Therefore, the methodology integrates the previous methodological toolkit with Koutsikou *et al.*'s classification, which in turn draws upon Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). In particular, three dimensions – *address*, *social distance*, and *involvement* – are used to establish and promote interpersonal meaning both verbally and visually in multimodal science informational materials (Koutsikou *et al.* 2021):

1. *address* indicates how a reader is addressed in a text. From a verbal point of view, it is realized by the type of clause and by the person of the verb in a clause (Halliday, Matthiessen 2004): address is considered "low" when declarative clauses and the third person are used, "moderate" when an interrogative clause and a verb are combined, and "high" when there are imperative clauses and the second-person pronouns (Koutsikou *et al.* 2021, p. 9; Koutsikou, Christidou 2019, p.116). From a visual point of view, address can be expressed by showing or hiding the represented participants' gaze in relation to the reader (Kress, van Leeuwen 2006). The "Represented participants" are defined as "the people, places and things (including abstract 'things') represented in and by the speech or writing or image, the participants about whom or which we are speaking or writing or producing images" (Kress, van Leeuwen 2006, p. 45). Specifically, the address in the visual content is "low" when the participants' gaze is not directed towards the reader; it is "moderate" when participants are evenly split between those who are and are not looking at the reader, denoting a balance between high and low address, while "high address" obviously refers to all participants looking at the reader (Koutsikou *et al.* 2021, p. 245; Koutsikou, Christidou 2019, p.116).

2. *Social distance* refers to the type of social interaction that a text seeks to foster between the reader and the people it represents. Social distance is determined verbally by means of the voice of the verb (active or passive) and the kind of relationship between clauses (hypotaxis or parataxis) (see Halliday, Matthiessen 2004), and visually by the size of the frame, namely, the distance of the shot, "the choice between close-up, medium shot and long shot" (Kress, van Leeuwen 2006, p. 124). As regards the former mode, social distance is classified as "small" when the active voice of the verbs is combined with parataxis; it is "moderate" when there are

Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning
and participants' roles on educational websites
119

both the middle/neutral voice of verbs and a balance between parataxis and hypotaxis. Lastly, it is "large" when passive voice and hypotaxis are used together (Koutsikou *et al*. 2021, p. 9; Koutsikou, Christidou 2019, p.117). As to the visual, it is categorized as "small" when the represented participants are portrayed in a close shot; it is classified as "moderate social distance" when participants are depicted in a medium shot, that is, "when a participant's body was 'cut' to the chest, waist, or knees, or the full body [is] depicted occupying more than 50% of the image space" (Koutsikou *et al*. 2021, p. 9). Finally, the visual content is considered "large" when participants are represented in a long shot showing their full body and occupying less than 50% of the image space.

3. *Involvement* concerns the degree to which the reader is encouraged to interact with what is represented. It relies on the possessive pronouns: the verbal content is categorized as "weak involvement" when the third person is used or when there are no possessive pronouns; "moderate involvement" sees the use of the first-person possessive pronoun, while "strong involvement" is realized with the second person pronoun. From a visual perspective, involvement has to do with the horizontal angle of the image (frontal/oblique). When the portrayed participants are depicted in an oblique angle, the content is classified as "weak involvement", and when they were depicted in a frontal position, the content is classified as "strong involvement". When there is an equal number of participants represented at oblique and frontal angles, denoting a balance between weak and strong involvement, the visual content is classified as "moderate involvement".

Based on Painter *et al*. (2013), Koutsikou *et al*. (2021, pp. 10-11) identify several combinations of image-text relations for each dimension of interpersonal meaning: the verbal text-image relationship is one of *convergence* when the two semiotic modes are categorized at the same level of dimension. When one of the modes is classified as at one of the extreme levels and the other is classified at the moderate level (for instance, a unit of analysis involving a verbal text of high address and a visual image of moderate address), their relationship is defined as *complementarity*. The third type is that of *divergence* between the two semiotic modes: the verbal and visual parts of a unit of analysis are classified at the two opposite extreme levels (for example, a unit of analysis with the verbal text denoting "small social distance" and the image indicating "large social distance").

4. Bullying explained to children and teenagers: definitions and roles

The webpage on bullying of *Health for Kids* (HK) can be accessed through the section "Feelings".

The verbal text on this page begins with a statement about how bullying can make people feel:

(1) Bullying can make you feel scared and lonely.

This initial sentence is written in a larger font size and directly addresses the users as *you*, immediately connecting the topic with children's feelings. Following this engaging opening, a declarative sentence advises readers that bullying is a behavior that should be reported adults:

(1a) No-one should be made to feel like this, and it is important to tell a grown-up and get help if you're being bullied. (HK)

This short premise does not only capture children's attention but also emphasizes the importance of involving adults when dealing with bullying situations, setting the stage for the subsequent more informative content.

The definition of bullying is then introduced with a *wh*-question (2):

(2)   What is bullying? (HK)

This question serves as the title and is a common feature of websites designed for young audiences, as observed in prior studies (*inter alia*, Diani 2015; Sezzi 2015, 2017; Silletti 2017). Questions of this nature have a didactic purpose and help structure the text by mirroring the "traditional classroom discourse structure" (Stenglin, Djonov 2010, p. 205). As noted by Hyland (2002, p. 530), such questions signal "an imbalance of knowledge between participants" (Hyland 2002, p. 530), framing "readers as learners, and learning as a one-way transfer of knowledge" (2002, p. 535). Additionally, questions stimulate children's curiosity and interest (Webber 1994).

The resulting definition is an example of an *operational definition*, characterizing "bullying" as "a set of actions or operations" (Copi *et al.* 2006, p. 97). This type of definition is usually employed in psychology: psychological concepts and constructs are mostly abstract (e.g., mind, happiness) and they can be defined only by referring "to behavior or to physiological observations" (Copi *et al.* 2006, p. 97).

The definition of bullying is as follows:

(3)   Bullying is when someone upsets you on purpose, either by what they say or by what they do. (HK)

Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites

121

Next, a "negative" *operational definition* (4) is provided to distinguish bullying from other interpersonal conflicts. It also introduces the second fundamental characteristic of bullying. Bullying is not only deliberate but it is repeated:

(4) Bullying is different to just having an argument with someone or falling out with one of your friends because bullies set out to hurt you again and again. (HK)

In line with the use of "you" in the first paragraph, these definitions employ the second person pronoun to involve the reader.

The second person is also kept in the second paragraph entitled *Types of bullying* (5). The *denominations* of the different types of bullying behaviors are followed by their *definitions by example*:

(5) Types of bullying
There are different types of bullying, these include:
Physical
A bully might hurt you regularly by hitting or kicking you, spitting at you, throwing stones or pushing you.
Verbal
Bullies can hurt you with the words they use. They might say unkind things to you or about you, talk about you behind your back or tell lies about you. (HK)

Moreover, these descriptions are closely related to the *scenario* strategy, as seen in example (5), where an imaginary situation is described. *Scenario* is accompanied by a list of *exemplifications* (6) of what bullying behavior can be:

(6) They might whisper loudly so you can hear them to make you feel uncomfortable.
Other behaviour
Bullying behaviour can also include:
Staring or giving 'dirty looks'
Ignoring you
Hiding or taking your things
Deliberately leaving you out (HK)

Examples of emotional bullying are also provided here, even though it is not explicitly mentioned.

Perhaps it is believed that this additional distinction and its related terminology are too complex for children to grasp. In this case, concrete instances of emotional bullying serve as substitutes for its explicit definition and specialized nomenclature.

Cyberbullying, the last category of bullying, is also defined *by example*:

(7)   Cyber bullying is through a mobile phone or online – sending unkind messages, videos or photos to upset or hurt someone. (HK)

In general, concretization prevails so that abstract new knowledge is linked to non-abstract familiar concepts. In this way, children think about their experiences, recognize the detrimental behavior, and can look for help.

As a matter of fact, the last paragraph of the webpage is entitled *What can you do if you're being bullied?*. This interrogative sentence is followed by imperative statements in which the reader establishes a direct relationship with the child user by offering him/her advice on how to handle this situation, as, for example, happens in health popularization for adults (Cavalieri, Diani 2019). In particular, the text suggests telling it to teachers or parents or calling a prevention helpline (8):

(8)   What can you do if you're being bullied?
       Bullying is wrong and no-one deserves to be bullied.
       If you are being bullied or you are worried about someone being bullied, tell a teacher or talk to your parents.
       You can also ring Childline (0800 1111) if you feel that you have no one you can trust to speak to. (HK)

Interestingly, while the verbal text is focused on the victim or potential victim, as the use of "you" shows, the visual component is centered on another figure involved in bullying, namely, the adult who has a helping role (Figure 1).

Besides two decorative images of a crab and of a smiling child waving at the user, the main central image is that of an adult, probably a teacher, as she wears a badge and pair of glasses (she is also wearing flippers, a diver's mask, and a snorkel, in line with the setting of this section).
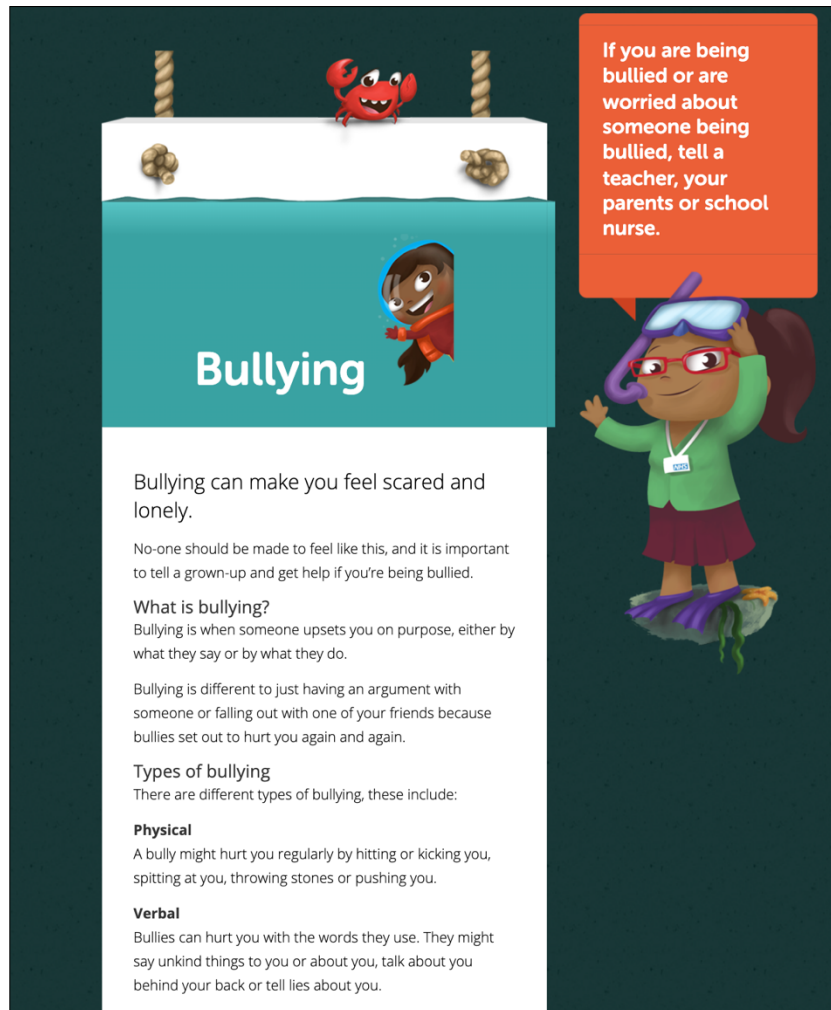
Figure 1
Bullying section from HK.

From the point of view of the dimension of *address*, there is a *convergence* between the visual and the verbal modes: they are both "high".

Indeed, verbally, second person pronouns and imperative sentences are used, and the represented character is looking directly at the child reader. It realizes a "visual you" (Kress, van Leeuwen 1996, p. 122), creating a personal relationship with the child viewer and speaking directly to him/her with a speech bubble, which says: "If you are being bullied or are worried about someone being bullied, tell a teacher, your parents or school nurse". As Buckingham and Scanlon (2004, p. 279) underline, "these visual characters reinforce and complement the message of the written text".

In terms of *social distance*, the image-text relationship is that of *divergence*. As a matter of fact, while social distance can be classified as "small" in the verbiage given the active voice and the use of parataxis, the image is represented in a long shot. This seems to be a paradox, but it can be ascribed to the fact that the person depicted is a teacher. Children do not have

to identify with her. Teachers' role in bullying dynamics is that of a helper children can rely on and trust. Moreover, the main text and the text in the speech bubble emphasize a "small social distance", inviting children to feel at ease with adult figures.

As to *involvement*, again, there is a relationship of *convergence* as both modes display a "strong involvement": the second-person pronoun throughout the verbal text and the frontal angle to portray the participant are employed. Therefore, in general, the webpage does not simply present knowledge; bullying is explained by relying on concrete situations children are familiar with. In addition, it cohesively involves the reader using the verbal and the visual modes, thereby establishing a close interpersonal relationship with the web-user.

The webpage on bullying on *Kids Health Hub* (KHH) is designed for middle-school students. The verbal content is more extensive, and the images differ from those on the previous website. The webpage is segmented into horizontally colored frames, each corresponding to a different paragraph of the verbal text. The first one still has a question as a title: *What is bullying?*. The answer is an *intensional definition* of the *genus and difference* type. First, it is said that *Bullying is mean and hurtful behaviour*, and its distinguishing properties are emphasized by separating them in a list and by the italics to make teenagers better understand what bullying is:

(9)   What is bullying?
       Bullying is mean and hurtful behavior.
       Bullying is:
       Intentional – the person is mean and hurtful on purpose. If they do not mean to
       do it, it is an accident.
       Repeated – the person is mean more than once. If they are hurtful one time,
       that is them being rude or inconsiderate.
       Power Imbalance – the person is using their power negatively. Their power
       could come from: being older, being bigger/stronger, having more friends,
       knowing more, having more confidence, or having more things. If there is no
       power imbalance, it is a conflict. (KHH)

Its necessary characteristics are associated with their respective *reformulations* so that users will not confuse bullying with other types of behavior, such as an accident or a simpler conflict. The image associated with this paragraph is of a stylized boy gazing at the verbal text with a puzzled facial expression and three question marks above his head. The verbal-visual relationship in terms of *address* is one of *convergence*: verbally, address is "low" because of the use of declaratives and of the third person; visually, it is "low" as the participant is not looking at the viewer. When examining *social distance*, again, *convergence* prevails. Social distance is verbally and visually "moderate" because of the neutral voice of the verbs employed and the use of

Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites

125

parataxis and hypotaxis, as well as the fact that the boy is represented in medium shot. Modes are *convergent* also in the dimension of *involvement*: the third person with no possessive pronouns and the oblique angle indicate a "weak" involvement in the text.

The second paragraph, *Who does bullying involve?*, has another *wh*-question as a title, and its answer is a visually separated list of the people involved in bullying:

(10) Who does bullying involve?
      The person who is targeted by the bullying behaviour.
      The person who is bullying.
      The person who witnesses the bullying.
      These roles can shift, and people can be more than one of these roles in different areas of their life. (KHH)

No *denominations* are given. It is specified that these are not fixed roles. This is somehow mirrored in the accompanying image. It is a photograph of a girl watching her mobile phone in a school corridor, with a blurry group of three female students talking in the background. The girl seems to be isolated. Yet, it is difficult to understand whether the girl in the foreground is a victim and the other girls are bullies, or vice versa (Figure 2). From the point of view of the image-text interplay, the relationship is that of *convergence* for all the three dimensions of the interpersonal meanings: *address* is verbally "low" since the text is made of third-person declaratives, and it is also visually "low" because all the participants are not gazing at the viewer; *social distance* is "moderate" both in relation to the written text and to the picture given the neutral voice of the verbs together with the use of parataxis and hypotaxis, and the medium shot; *involvement* is visually and verbally "weak" because of the oblique angle of the girl and the third person of the body of the text.
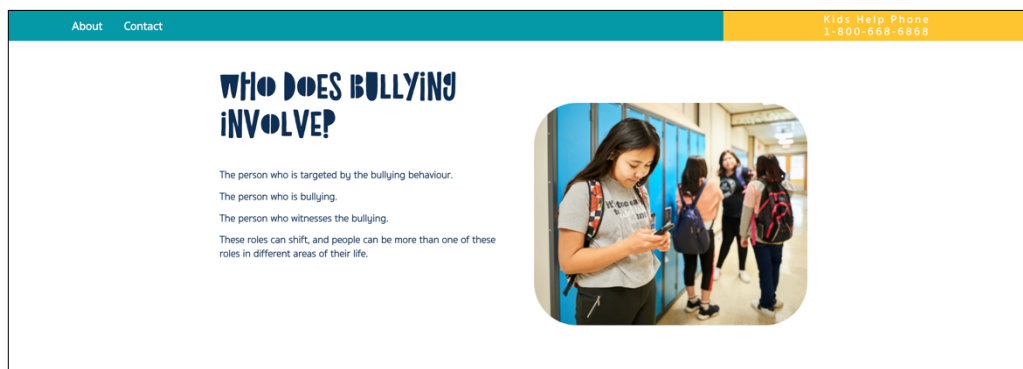

Figure 2
Bullying section from KHH.

The third paragraph, *What are the types of bullying?*, provides teenagers with the *denominations* and the *operational definitions* of the different types of bullying (11):

(11) What are the types of bullying?
       Verbal – using words to be mean and hurtful.
       For example, teasing, insults, threatening, making jokes, humiliating someone, racist/sexist/homophobic comments, or sexualized language
       Physical – harming someone's body or their things.
       For example, hitting, slapping, punching, pushing, choking, hazing, spitting, stealing/wrecking someone's property, grabbing, or choking.
       Social – harming someone socially, like ignoring someone, telling secrets, ruining friendships, or inviting someone to do something and not showing up.
       For example, spreading rumours, telling secrets, ganging up on someone, ignoring someone, keeping someone away from their friends, or making plans with someone and not showing up to be mean.
       Cyberbullying – using technology to be hurtful, like texting mean things or posting things on social media.
       For example, sending hurtful or mean messages via text, email, social media, or phone call, sharing an embarrassing picture of someone without permission, pretending to be someone else online, or creating pages or polls to rate people in a hurtful way. (KHH)

These definitions are completed by *exemplifications* incapsulated in the text introduced by "like" or separated from it and introduced by "for example". They provide users with concrete examples of bullying actions such as spreading rumors or spitting.

       The protagonist of the connected photograph is still a girl watching her phone, probably sitting at a desk with a sad and/or serious expression. For all three dimensions of interpersonal meanings, the relationship between the image and text is one of *convergence*, as in the previous paragraphs: *address* is "low" both verbally and visually because the text is written in the third person and because the girl's gaze is directed to her mobile. *Social distance* can be categorized as visually and verbally "moderate", given the neutral voice of the verbs and the fact that only the girl's face and part of her chest can be seen. *Involvement* is "weak" in the two modes because the girl's body is turned right (oblique angle) and the sentences are in the third-person.

       Coherently, the next paragraph entitled *Who does bullying hurt?* is composed of short third-person declarative sentences answering this question, as in examples (12):

(12) When someone is bullied, it can be really hurtful and have many negative outcomes. (KHH)

Then, there are three bullet lists of the emotions the victim of the bullying, the bully, and the witness can feel (*The person being bullied might feel or*

Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites

127

experience; *The person who witnesses bullying might feel or experience*; *The person who is bullying another might feel or experience*). Three out of the four roles involved in bullying are considered.

The picture portrays a girl like in the other pictures analyzed. She wears a ballerina dress, sadly bended towards the floor, her eyes closed, thus exemplifying the feelings felt by the target of the bullying behavior.

The relationship between the verbal and visual elements might be classified as one of *convergence* in terms of *address* and *involvement*, with both being "weak": the viewer is not gazed at by the girl who is represented in an oblique angle, and all the sentences are characterized by the third-person pronoun. The image-text relationship is instead of *complementarity* in terms of *social distance*: verbally, it is "moderate", yet it is visually "large" because the girl's entire body is depicted. This distance from the viewer may be due to the fact that these feelings are tried to be presented as objectively as possible, as the verbal text attempts to do.

Particularly, the neutral/third person is abandoned in the last sentence of the paragraph for an inclusive "we" (Vladimirou 2007), comprising the writer and the reader: *This is why we need to get help*. The distance created by the picture is therefore shortened by including the reader in the age range of the users.

This sentence links this paragraph to the last paragraph of the webpage *How to deal with bullying?*. In this one, the reader is directly addressed with the second pronoun "you" and with a series of imperatives offering him/her advice on how to stop bullying such as *save the messages for proof*. These suggestions are presented in bullet lists according to the types of bullying (*Cyberbullying*, *Other types of bullying*, etc.). A *scenario* is then embedded in an *exemplification* when it is said to exploit humor. Without a further explanation, the use of humor as a weapon against bullying may be difficult to understand so an imaginary situation is described:

(13) Using humour is taking what they say and "owning" it in a humorous way. For example, if they say, "You're so ugly," you could respond with "I know, right?? It's actually amazing how ugly I am." Remember, this is not you validating what they say! It is just showing them their words don't have power. (KHH)

The corresponding photograph features a girl again (!) speaking to an adult in the background, probably her father since the setting appears to be a living room. The image-text relationship is still that of *divergence* as regards *address*: verbally, it is "high" because of the second person pronoun and the use of the imperatives, and visually, it is "low" since the two participants in the picture do not look at the viewer but the father stares at the daughter and the girl gazes downwards. Image-text relationship in the dimension of

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involvement can also be classified as *divergence* with the visual and the verbal positioned at the two opposites: the picture implies "low involvement" whereas the text a "high involvement". In terms of *social distance*, it exhibits *complementarity*: visually, social distance is "moderate" because the user can see the girl's face and part of the chest (but only her father's face, who is anyhow blurred) but is "small" from a verbal point of view because no passive voice is used, and parataxis dominates. Therefore, the picture maintains the style of the other photographs.

Generally, bullying seems to be presented as objectively as possible, without focusing on the users' engagement. Information is more detailed and precise as it can be evinced from the use of *denominations*. This objectiveness characterizes the pictures on the webpage too. However, it is worth noting that the choice to convey information through lists can serve both as a form of scaffolding or of a scientific approach and as a means to connect with users.

It can also be seen as a form of "teenspeak", a "language which imitates the jargon of teenagers and which tries to convey a conversation-like quality as in advice from peers" (Gotti 2014, p. 25). As a matter of fact, "teenspeak" has been detected in health discourse on risks in teen magazines (McKay 2006, pp. 316-317). This seems somehow corroborated by the inclusive "we" found in the third paragraph.

5. Concluding remarks

The study's findings reveal that differences between HK' and KHH's webpages on bullying predominate over similarities, given the different age-groups they address. From a linguistic perspective, one notable feature is the use of the second-person pronoun on HK's webpage, which is distinctive of health materials designed for children. As Breeze (2015, p. 16) suggests, "the level of familiarity associated with the second person serves to involve the reader in the story"; thus, its goal is to create a rhetorical effect of closeness, emphasizing the highly interactive nature of children's websites. (See also Diani 2019.)

The second-person pronoun is also found in the definitions given on the webpage. It is combined with the types categorized as *operational*; these are the ones typically used in psychology to make abstract concepts like anger more comprehensible.

The emphasis on child engagement is coherently observed in image-text relationships. In terms of *interpersonal meaning*, with regard to *address* and *involvement*, the combination of the verbal text and the image helps build a relationship with the child users so that they can cope with bullying and trust the advice offered. Notably, the role of adults as dependable helpers for

Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning
and participants' roles on educational websites

129

children is visually emphasized through the dimension of *social distance*: these adults are not figures who children need to identify with, but rather they appear as welcoming and supporting caregivers.

On the other hand, KHH, being addressed to an older audience, focuses on precise and objective *definitions* using a neutral third person, accompanied by *denominations*, for the different types of bullying. This tendency is mirrored in the associated photographs. From the point of view of *interpersonal meaning*, the image-text relationship does not appear to favor users' direct engagement but a distanced and detached approach. This may also be due to the fact that the visual is composed of photographs of specific hurtful situations that exemplify the victim's and/or the bully's role: sometimes the user cannot distinguish whether the depicted girl is a victim or a bully, perhaps underlining the same feeling of fear and distress characterizing both figures.

However, the webpage changes at the end when coming to the set of guidelines to prevent and stop bullying violence; in this case, second-person pronouns and imperatives are used in contrast with the related picture of the paragraph. The reason lies in the fact that the user's direct engagement is, in this case, more than necessary for the actions they should implement.

In fact, teenagers' involvement appears to be incentivized throughout the text via systematic recourse to lists. These can be interpreted as a feature of the so-called "teenspeak", which has been identified in other kinds of health materials for teenagers. Therefore, the webpage seems to create a balance between accurate and impersonal knowledge dissemination and users' involvement.

Similarities between HK and KHH are few but extremely important. First, questions are used as titles in order to simulate an interaction between experts and non-experts, and a familiar classroom situation. Secondly, both webpages use *concretization* strategies, that is, *exemplification* and *scenario*. These can help children and teenagers relate bullying behavior to their own experiences, and connect what is said on the webpages to their own experiences, so as to ultimately understand the characteristics of bullying and learn to deal with it.

In conclusion, the study's results demonstrate how the HK and KHH educational webpages are conceived as means through which bullying can be recognized and fought, by exploiting the visual and verbal modes, and tailoring them to the different age-groups they target. Specifically, they disseminate knowledge and involve users by adopting strategies that suit their different ages (Bianchi *et al.* 2022).

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Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites

131

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Bullying explained to children and teenagers. Knowledge dissemination, interpersonal meaning and participants' roles on educational websites

133

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