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CONTENTS

ESP Across Cultures

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ESP Across Cultures is a double blind peer reviewed international journal that publishes theoretical, descriptive and applied studies on varieties of English pertaining to a wide range of specialized fields of knowledge, such as agriculture, art and humanities, commerce, economics, education and vocational training, environmental studies, finance, information technology, law, media studies, medicine, politics, religion, science, the social sciences, sports, technology and engineering, tourism, and transport. The journal addresses a readership composed of academics, professionals, and students interested in English for special purposes particularly from a cross-cultural perspective. The aim of the journal is to bring together scholars, practitioners, and young researchers working in different specialized language domains and in different disciplines with a view to developing an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach to the study of ESP.

ESP Across Cultures is indexed in Scopus and is covered in *Linguistics & Language Behaviour Abstracts*, *MLA International Bibliography*, *Translation Studies Abstracts* and *Bibliography of Translation Studies*.

Foreword

Welcome to volume 22 of *ESP Across Cultures*, the twelfth to be published in online format. There are four papers in this volume, all highlighting particular aspects of English for Specific Purposes from a cross-cultural perspective.

In the opening paper, Cecilia Boggio and Ilaria Parini examine a dataset of 118 headlines of articles from *The Economist* with reference to the Covid-19 outbreak and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, drawing on a study conducted by R.J. Alexander in 1986. The first aim of this investigation was to see whether the rhetorical strategies observed by Alexander were still to be found in contemporary headlines. Then, by means of a closed-ended questionnaire, 100 Italian undergraduate students specializing either in Economics or Business were asked to identify the rhetorical strategies used by *The Economist* in its headlines in order to assess the students' reading comprehension skills in English, particularly their ability to identify and understand what lies beyond the information given.

In her paper Chiara Cigliano explores the complex relationship that a group of 18 Italian MA students and PhD candidates have with the English language as it is used in academia, and the one they have with the nebulous figure of the English 'native speaker'. Semi-structured interviews were carried out in line with their traditional use in language attitudes research; they were subsequently analysed using the Grounded Theory Method. The results suggest that the native-nonnative binary is rooted in the respondents' minds, creating a situation in which nonnative speakers feel the need to abandon their accent so as not to be stigmatized as 'defective' native speakers, in a world where English native speakers always have "the upper hand".

Daniel Martín-González analyses the social media behaviours of 64 undergraduates in Spain specializing in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) who have chosen to use a private Facebook group as an alternative to the Moodle platform for engaging in online class tasks. This novel approach allows for greater freedom of expression as students tackle course assignments. The aim of this study is to identify how students interact with these tasks on the Facebook platform, exploring their tendencies to support or challenge their peers within the context of these simulations. The study also examines the linguistic resources used when offering support or expressing disagreement, and explains how students perceive their behaviours within this social media environment throughout the course.

In the final paper in this volume Antonio Pinna, David Brett and Barbara Loranc explore travel journalism using a corpus-driven approach. Their study focuses on a key aspect of formulaicity, collocate pairs and collocation, comparing and contrasting findings in travel journalism in three different languages, English, Italian and Polish by examining texts taken from online versions of *The Guardian*, *La Repubblica*, and *Gazeta*. The texts were annotated for part-of-speech and lemma. Collocate pairs were then extracted from the annotated data. The resulting collocate pairs were placed into thematic groups, the largest being LOGISTICS and CULTURE+HISTORY. The results show how the collocate pairs in the three languages point to differing constructions of destination images and tourism experiences in these cultures.

The last time we publicly thanked external referees was in issue 20 (2023). Since then, the following scholars have all reviewed paper for the journal:

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We hope you enjoy the current issue of this journal, and we would like to remind you that all the past issues are available online.

Christopher Williams
Denise Milizia

WHAT'S IN A HEADLINE? LEARNING AND TEACHING THE USE OF RHETORICAL STRATEGIES TO STUDENTS OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS THROUGH *THE ECONOMIST*

Cecilia Boggio and Ilaria Parini *
(University of Turin and University of Eastern Piedmont, Italy)

Abstract

Newspaper and magazine headlines have been the subject of abundant research over the years and, because of their peculiar characteristics, they can be considered as a genre. One of their main functions is to catch the attention of the reader and, to achieve this goal, headline writers make use of different rhetorical strategies. *The Economist* is a newspaper which is well-known for its witty headlines. Some of the strategies used to engage the reader in a "dialogic language game" (Bowker 2008: 167) are linguistic devices, such as puns, metaphors, and phonological schemes (i.e. alliteration, assonance and rhyme), whereas others are based on cognitive mechanisms, such as allusions to idioms, quotations, titles of novels, films, and songs. Drawing on a study conducted by R.J. Alexander in 1986, this article will first present the results of the analysis of a dataset of 118 headlines of articles published in *The Economist* dealing specifically with two of the major events that have recently hit the world, namely the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The goal of this investigation is to establish whether the rhetorical strategies observed over thirty-five years ago by Alexander are still found in contemporary headlines, especially in the case of such serious and sensitive global issues. Then, the article discusses the results of a closed-ended questionnaire on the rhetorical strategies used by *The Economist* in its headlines taken by a cohort of 100 EFL/ESP learners, Italian undergraduate students specializing either in Economics or Business. The goal of this analysis is to assess the above-mentioned students' reading comprehension skills in English and, more specifically, their ability to identify and understand what lies "beyond the information given" (Alexander 1986: 176).

1. Introduction

The objective of newspapers and magazines is to disseminate news about local, national, and/or international politics, business, sports, social issues, education, entertainment, etc. An essential role of news stories is played by their headlines which have the crucial function of grabbing the readers' attention, as well as summarizing the essential information contained in the article itself. Newspaper and magazine headlines

*Although this paper is the result of a joint effort, Ilaria Parini wrote sections 1and 2 (2.1, 2.2, 2.3) while Cecilia Boggio wrote sections 3.2, 3.3, and 4. Sections 3 and 3.1 were written jointly.

have been the subject of abundant research over the years, and they can be considered as a genre, as rightly pointed out by Isani (2011: 83-84). In fact, if we refer to the definition of genre provided by Swales (1990), it is possible to observe that headlines present all the features that the scholar identifies in this specific kind of discourse. According to Isani (2011: 83), "within the multifunctional and multiple umbrella genre that is generally referred to as headlines, there exist certain characteristics not common to all headlines but sufficiently recurrent in others to constitute a sub-genre which we propose to distinguish from the parent genre by the term *headlinese*", a term that had been previously coined by Mårdh (1980).

The Economist is a newspaper which is especially well-known for its witty headlines[1]. In particular, Alexander (1986) focused on the tendency of *The Economist* to engage in "wordplay of various forms in the headlines of its articles" (*ibid*.: 159) and, most importantly, he identified the many different rhetorical strategies used in its headlines to catch the attention of the reader. He concluded his study by claiming that, given the importance of *The Economist* – both as textual material for teaching and source material for essays and oral presentations — for students of English specializing in Economics and Business, if they "can be sensitized to some of the features employed, it is likely that their reading comprehension will be enhanced; they will, at least, have learned one necessary reading strategy, that of 'going beyond the information given'" (*ibid*.: 176).

Starting from these premises, the aim of this paper is twofold. First, it examines 118 headlines from articles published in the "Europe" section of *The Economist* dealing with two major events that have recently hit the world, namely the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukraine conflict. The goal of this investigation is to test the hypothesis that the rhetorical strategies observed over thirty-five years ago by Alexander are still employed in contemporary headlines, especially in the case of such serious and complex global issues. To the best of our knowledge, prior research on the key rhetorical strategies employed by the headlines of *The Economist* is limited to Alexander's 1986 study. Three works which are more recent - although they are still quite dated - touch upon this topic. The first one (Roberts 1998) focuses on the use of wordplay in the British press, the second one (Bowker 2008) on *The Economist*'s use of humour in its headlines, and, finally, White (2010) investigates the use of phonic resources, morpho-syntactic ambiguity and metaphors in newspaper and popular magazine headlines. All the remaining research devoted to the study of newspaper and magazine headlines has focused primarily on headlines as a genre. The second part of the article discusses the results of a closed-ended questionnaire on the rhetorical strategies used by *The Economist* in its headlines administered to a cohort of 100 EFL/ESP learners, second- and third-year Italian undergraduate students specializing in either Economics or Business at the School of Management and Economics of the University of Turin, Italy. The goal of this analysis was to assess the above-mentioned students' reading comprehension skills in English and, most importantly, their figurative competences, meaning their

[1] Although nowadays technically a magazine – printed in a magazine format, with a colour cover and colour on all inside pages and published weekly – *The Economist* still refers to itself as a "newspaper". This is so because from its launch on 2 September 1843 until the middle of the 20th century it was a black-and-white periodical devoted to the coverage of current affairs, features that made it more similar to a newspaper than a magazine. Despite the transformation from newspaper to magazine format, the habit of referring to itself as a "newspaper" remained (Standage 2013).

ability to identify and understand what lies, in Alexander's (1986: 176) words, "beyond the information given".

Considering the crucial role played by rhetorical strategies in the headlines of *The Economist*, if our hypothesis that the rhetorical strategies singled out by Alexander in 1986 are still employed in current headlines is confirmed, the findings of this study can help obtain a better understanding of what the students' main difficulties in comprehending them are, as well as the major sources of such difficulties. This can enhance the quality of EFL/ESP teaching and learning particularly in non-linguistic disciplines, such as Economics and Business, in which the prior knowledge of rhetorical devices of learners of English is mostly based on knowledge acquired in their (Italian) literature classes in high school.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. *Newspaper and magazine headlines as a genre*

Newspaper and magazine headlines have been the subject of abundant research over the years. Apart from Alexander (1986), other researchers (such as Bell 1991, Jucker 1992, Morley 1998, Dor 2003, Bucaria 2004, White *et al.* 2004, Brône and Feyaerts 2005, Herrera Soler and White 2010, Bowker 2008, Ifantidou 2009, White and Herrera 2009, Brône and Coulson 2010, Isani 2011, Amelia and Muth'im 2021, Borchmann 2023) have analysed the intriguing field of headlines, acknowledging their specific elements. As stated by Crystal (1987: 388), the headline is "one of the most distinctive features of a newspaper" and it is a form of discourse specific to the written press. Moreover, headlines are also the most widely read part of a newspaper, as they tend to be read five times more than the body copy (Isani 2011: 82).

Although they were first only concerned with literary genres, today genre studies are an interdisciplinary discipline which involves researchers in linguistic, rhetorical, social and even scientific disciplines. Researchers in ESP, such as Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), have considered the concept of genre as a social phenomenon, with the fundamental pedagogical motivation of using it as an analytical tool to apply the teaching of English to non-English-native speakers in academic and professional settings.

As is well known, Swales (1990) defines "genre" as a category of communicative events sharing common purposes recognized by experts within a discourse community. These purposes shape the genre's structure and influence content and style choices. Essentially, a genre is defined by its communicative purposes, which give it an internal structure formed by conventional rhetorical elements from the discourse community. Additionally, he notes that genres are stable and recognizable classes of communicative events, consisting of texts and their encoding/decoding procedures, influenced by text roles and environments. Acquiring genre skills, therefore, requires knowledge of the world, previous texts, and relevant tasks. Isani (2011) specifically draws on Swales's theories in her analysis of newspaper headlines as a genre, and of headlinese as a subgenre. Indeed, Isani (*ibid.*: 84), referring to Swales's definition of genre, maintains that:

- headlines and headlinese can be considered as a class of communicative act;
- journalists/texts/readers are involved in encoding and decoding procedures;
- the interpretation of the text can be seen as processing procedures;

- journalists and readers are the members that share a set of communicative purposes, as well as the expert members of the parent discourse community;

- the textual, linguistic and cultural parameters of headlinese can be said to shape the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains the choice of content and style.

As far as the functions of headlines are concerned, both Isani (*ibid*.: 84) and Kronrod and Engel (2001: 685-686) claim that the main functions are to *inform* and to *persuade*. These two functions are also highlighted by White (2010: 97), who claims that "the most outstanding characteristic [of headlines] is considered to be summarisation of content and that this has to be given with clarity. On the other hand, headlines should attract the reader to the news item and encourage him or her to read on". The same concept was already put forth by Bell (1991: 189), who singled out summarization and attracting the reader as the essential headline functions. Similarly, Dor (2003: 720), after stating that the umbrella function of headlines is to act as "negotiators between the stories and the reader", identifies three micro-functions of headlines, namely, to summarize, highlight and enable selection, and attract.

However, White (2010: 97) also points out that studies by Ifantidou (2009), White and Herrera (2009) and Brône and Coulson (2010) have demonstrated that "headlines dismally fail in summarisation". Conversely, the function of attracting the attention of the reader is achieved through the linguistic devices put into the crafting of headlines, which play a major role in bringing about such attraction. Among such devices, White (2010) identifies the use of phonic resources, morpho-syntactic ambiguity and metaphors and states that it is precisely the use of such devices that makes the understanding of headlines particularly challenging for non-native speakers of English.

2.2. *Newspaper and magazine headlines in the EFL/ESP class*

Newspaper and magazine headlines are undoubtedly material that poses various kinds of challenges to EFL/ESP students. Indeed, as White (2010: 96) claims, despite their goal to enhance communication, headlines often cause confusion as they are frequently characterized by phonic, syntactic and semantic unorthodoxy as opposed to conventional sentence structure, which constitutes a noticeable difficulty for the EFL/ESP learner. Although they may represent a challenge also for the native speaker, the decoding process involved is necessarily more pronounced for the non-native speaker and EFL/ESP learner.

As far as phonic resources are concerned, White (*ibid*.: 98) maintains that the tendency to exploit this device in headlines may turn out to be rather difficult for the EFL/ESP student, as the lure of alliteration or rhyme, which will be very clear to native speakers, making the headline attractive and eye-catching, may go unnoticed by EFL/ESP students. As regards morphosyntactic ambiguity, on the other hand, the difficulty for the EFL/ESP student mostly lies in the fact that the same words in English can belong to different word classes, which can contribute to perplexity in parsing. Finally, as White (*ibid*.) points out, a highly effective strategy that enhances the metaphorical range of headlines while also imparting a witty or humorous effect is known by various terms: interface (White *et al.* 2004; White and Herrera 2009), double-grounding (Brône and Feyaerts 2005; Brône and Coulson 2010), or topic-triggered metaphor (Koller 2004; Semino 2008). When this strategy is employed, lexical items from the semantic field of

the topic dealt with provide the linguistic metaphor for an expression. This means that a lexeme can be used in its literal meaning in the context provided, but at the same time it can also function figuratively. Among the various examples provided by White (2010: 104), the following two headlines taken from the aviation semantic field, where both a literal meaning of the lexemes and a figurative one are possible, help exemplify this strategy: "Alitalia *takes off* amid protests" and "Air alliance runs into *turbulence*". According to White (*ibid.*), the lack of source knowledge in cases like these may be another "stumbling block" for the EFL/ESP learner.

Besides ambiguity, a most important characteristic feature of headlines which may constitute yet another barrier for foreign learners of English is the use of wordplay (Roberts 1998: 115). This is because learners may not be culturally aware and informed of social, political or cultural events that took place, or are taking place, in a specific country or region of the world which the wordplay alludes to. The issue of wordplay will be analysed in more detail in the next section of the article, as it constitutes a most variegated and multifaceted element which deserves specific attention.

2.3. *Article headlines in* The Economist

The Economist focuses on current affairs, international business, economics, finance, politics, technology, and culture. According to Alexander (1986: 159), *The Economist* represents an extremely important resource for EFL/ESP students specializing in Economics and Business as it provides them with both textual material to practise and improve their English, and source material for oral presentations, final papers, and theses.

Bowker (2008: 171) claims that *The Economist* "can be considered semi-specialized if placed on a cline of economic and scientific technicality, with a very varied audience in terms of specialist knowledge, background and shared expertise". In her opinion, this is the reason why an extensive use of playful language is used in the magazine's headlines, as it seems that the special pragmatic effect of this seemingly frivolous language play is to create a stark contrast with the seriousness and often technical nature of the magazine's content (*ibid.*). In fact, "[t]he lightened mode of the headline preparatory to reading makes the more sober material which is to follow more palatable and has a softening, mitigating effect" (*ibid.*). Moreover, she argues (*ibid.*: 167) that *The Economist* headlines have much in common with the prefabricated joke, and take the form of a "dialogic language game". In other words, through its skillfully crafted headlines, *The Economist* seems to invite its readers to play "the game", and consequently it solidifies its shared readership identity, demonstrating that the reader is "an insider", that he/she is "part of the club" (*ibid.*: 171-172). This reinforces the idea of the readers as expert members of the community who share a similar set of communicative events, as previously seen in the definition of genre provided by Swales (1990: 58).

Alexander (1986) also highlights *The Economist*'s tendency to use various rhetorical strategies in its headlines to engage in a sort of a "game" with its readers, while observing that *The Economist* is not the only one to do this in the British media. This is also confirmed by Isani (2011), who carried out her research not only on the headlines of *The Economist*, but also of *The Guardian, The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph*, and whose results seem to support this claim. However, the case of the headlines of *The Economist* is particularly relevant for our purposes because, as Alexander (1986: 159) notes, "for students of economics the confrontation with puns and wordplay in the

context of serious economic journalism may clash with expectations". In his research, Alexander analysed the article headlines of four issues of *The Economist* published between December 1 and January 19 1985, highlighting the use of different rhetorical strategies employed "to catch the attention of the reader in a witty fashion or to provide a wordplay which ties in with the subject of the article" (*ibid.*: 159). For our research, we analysed a selection of headlines from *The Economist* following closely the system of categorization proposed by Alexander.

3. Methodology, data analysis and discussion

The data selected for this study are headlines from articles about the two major world events that occurred between 2020 and 2022 published in the "Europe" section of *The Economist*. More specifically, firstly we focused on articles relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, published in the period from February 2020 to February 2021, which corresponds to the first year of the pandemic. Secondly, we identified articles that dealt with the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, published from June 2021 to June 2022, which encompasses a period of a year spanning from the escalation of friction between the two countries to the first four months after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army. Altogether, we collected 118 articles: 62 articles relating to the Covid-19 pandemic and 56 articles relating to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Before moving on to the analysis of our dataset of headlines, it ought to be noted that headlines in newspapers and magazines are usually made up of different sections, also called "decks". As Mårdh (1980: 14) claims, "A headline is set in a size and style of type which is different from the running text. It consists of one or more decks, which also differ typographically from one another". More specifically, a deck entity is made up of a superheadline, the headline proper, and a subheadline. As Figure 1 shows, the superheadline appears above the headline proper, and it is printed in a smaller font size. Moreover, the name of the section of the newspaper, in this case "Europe", is written in red. The headline proper is written in a larger font size and in bold characters. Finally, the subheadline is written in a font size which is smaller than the headline but larger than the superheadline.

Figure 1. Structure of headlines in *The Economist*

Since our main purpose was to investigate not only *The Economist*'s tendency to engage in wordplay but also EFL/ESP undergraduate students' competences in recognizing the rhetorical strategies identified by Alexander, our study focused only on superheadlines, as this is the section where the use of such strategies was mostly found.

3.1. *Analysis of superheadlines*

According to Alexander (1986: 160), the foregrounding devices used in *The Economist* headlines tend to cluster around the following main areas:

- puns
- metaphors
- alliterative and assonance mechanisms
- further allusive techniques

The latter broad category may involve allusion to one or the other of the following:

- (well known) sayings
- idioms
- quotations – literary and other
- catchphrases, titles of books, films, etc.

Drawing on the taxonomy of rhetorical strategies that Alexander compiled almost thirty-five years ago, we performed a predominantly qualitative analysis which was carried out manually. The 118 superheadlines were first selected, then scrutinized, and finally classified. Table 1 summarizes the results of the analysis. The rhetorical strategies detected in the superheadlines were identified as either linguistic devices or allusive techniques. Linguistic devices include puns, metaphors, and phonological schemes (such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and mimicry), whereas allusive techniques include oblique references to idioms, sayings, quotations, films, books, songs and game

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN THE CORPUS	
Linguistic devices	**Allusive techniques**
pun homophony near homophony phonological similarity polysemy **metaphor** **phonological schemes** alliteration assonance rhyme mimicry	**allusion** idiom saying quotation film book song game

Table 1. Rhetorical strategies in our dataset of superheadlines from *The Economist* by type

names. Examples of the different types of linguistic devices and allusive techniques found in our dataset of superheadlines are given below.[2]

Linguistic devices

Alexander (1980: 6) delves deep into the predisposition for punning which the English language manifests. He first distinguishes between a "narrow" and a "broader" sense of the term "pun". In the narrow sense, by "pun" he means what is commonly defined as a "real pun" or a "genuine pun" (Alexander 1986: 163), where:

> [...] we find involved either the polysemy of a single word (i.e. one form with multiple meanings) or the use of homonyms or near homonyms (i.e. lexical items having identical or, less often, similar phonetic or graphetic form but different meanings).

In the broader sense, he uses the term "pun" to refer to playing on words in which strict homonymy is not necessary as "it is sufficient for a person to allude to a word or to distant formal similarities" (Alexander 1980: 6). In other words, within this broader sense of the term "pun" he includes any form of allusive technique involving some sort of oblique intertextual reference. In our study, we decided to reserve the term "pun" for the narrow sense only and consider allusive techniques as a separate category. Within the category "puns in the narrow sense", Alexander (1986: 164-165) distinguishes between different subcategories of puns based on their linguistic characteristics, namely puns originating in 1) homonymy, 2) near homophony, 3) phonological similarity, and 4) polysemy. In our corpus we found all four subcategories of puns. One example for each subcategory is given below.

> 1) **pun originating in homophony**: *Herd on the street* (16 May 2020), which plays on the homophony of the noun "herd" and the past participle verb form "heard".
> 2) **pun originating in near homophony**: *Germany's wurst jobs* (23 July 2020), which plays on the near homophony of the noun "wurst" ("sausage" in German) and the superlative adjective form "worst".
> 3) **pun originating in phonological similarity**: *Paris masked* (30 May 2020), which plays on the phonological similarity of the words "masked" and "match", and, at the same time, alludes to the French magazine *Paris Match*.
> 4) **pun originating in polysemy**: *Shots fired* (27 January 2021), which plays on the polysemy of the word "shot", which can refer both to "the action of firing a gun or another weapon" and to "an injection, or an amount of the drug or vaccine put into the body by a single injection"[3].

In his study, Alexander (1986: 172) also considers headlines which employ metaphors to hint at the topic dealt with in the article. In our dataset, we identified nine superheadlines which belong to this subcategory, such as the following two examples.

> 1) *After the honeymoon* (7 May 2022), where the term "honeymoon" is used in a metaphorical sense to refer to the relationship between Russia and Austria. In fact, whereas the

[2] The full dataset is available from the authors upon request.

[3] Retrieved April 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/shot

two countries used to be on notably friendly terms in recent decades, after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Austria immediately backed EU sanctions against Russia.
2) *Thinking about the endgame* (26 May 2022), where the term "endgame" – whose literal meaning refers to the last stage in a game of chess when only a few of the pieces are left on the board – is used in a metaphorical sense to refer to the potential tactics which ought to be used by the Western allies in order to end the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Moreover, also certain phonological features of language, such as alliteration, assonance and rhyme, which Alexander (*ibid*: 173) refers to as phonological schemes, tend to be employed with a certain frequency both in the headlines he investigated and in the superheadlines we scrutinized. Indeed, they seem to play a very important role in grabbing the reader's attention or, in Alexander's words, in engendering "catchiness" (*ibid*.: 162). Also of note is a further subcategory of phonological schemes that Alexander (*ibid*.: 175) included in his study, namely "mimicry and style imitation", which he defines as wordplays that seem to be "attempts to hint at or imitate either spoken language, accents or a particular register". The following are examples from our dataset for each subcategory of phonological schemes mentioned above.

1) **alliteration:** *A terrible toll on tourism* (11 April 2020)
2) **assonance:** *A euro row* (*The Economist*, 18 April 2020)
3) **rhyme:** *From battleground to playground* (9 April 2022)
4) **mimicry:** *Who's next?* (5 February 2022)

Allusive techniques

As previously mentioned, by allusive techniques Alexander (*ibid*.: 167) means strategies that involve "more or less oblique reference to other texts", where the term "text" includes idiomatic expressions, sayings, well-known quotations, film, book and song titles, and game names. In our dataset, as the examples below demonstrate, it is possible to observe superheadlines employing semantic allusions to all the "texts" mentioned by Alexander. In some cases, as example 5 shows, the same superheadline may embed more than one rhetorical strategy; in example 5, for instance, there are both an allusion and a pun.

1) **allusion to an idiom**: *No ports amid the storm* (14 May, 2022), an oblique reference to the idiomatic expression "any port in a storm" which is "used to say that in a difficult situation, people get help from wherever or whoever they can";[4]
2) **allusion to a saying**: *One man's terrorist* (16 January, 2021), a partial reference to the adage "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter", i.e. the definition of a terrorist depends entirely on the subjective outlook of the definer;
3) **allusion to a quotation**: *Free at last* (14 May, 2020), a direct reference to the conclusion of the famous "I have a dream" speech, delivered by Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963;
4) **allusion to a film**: *High noon in the High North* (9 June, 2022), an oblique reference to the film *High Noon* (1952) by Fred Zinnemann;

[4] Retrieved April 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/any-port-in-the-storm.

5) **allusion to a book**: *Crimea and punishment* (21 July, 2021), a reference to the novel *Crime and Punishment* (1866) by Fyodor Dostoevsky. In this superheadline it is also possible to note the presence of a pun originating in the phonological similarity of the words "Crimea" and "crime";
6) **allusion to a song**: *Waiting for the freeze* (30 November, 2021), an oblique reference to the song "Waiting for the sun" (1968) by the rock band The Doors;
7) **allusion to a game:** *Hide and seek* (5 June 2022), a direct reference to the popular children's game.

The quantitative results of the analysis of our dataset are significant. Table 2 summarizes them by showing the total number (%) of rhetorical strategies in the dataset divided by topic and type. The last row of the table shows the number of superheadlines which do not employ any rhetorical strategy for each topic.

NUMBER (%) OF RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN THE CORPUS			
Covid-19 pandemic (total number of superheadlines: 62)		**Russia-Ukraine conflict (total number of superheadlines: 56)**	
Rhetorical strategy		**Rhetorical strategy**	
pun	10 (16%)	pun	6 (11%)
metaphor	5 (8%)	metaphor	4 (7%)
alliteration/assonance	13 (21%)	alliteration/assonance	9 (16%)
rhyme	1 (2%)	rhyme	2 (3,5%)
mimicry	4 (6%)	mimicry	2 (3,5%)
allusion	16 (26%)	allusion	19 (34%)
No rhetorical device	13 (21%)	**No rhetorical device**	14 (25%)

Table 2. Number (%) of rhetorical strategies in our dataset of superheadlines from *The Economist* by topic and type

As far as the articles related to the Covid-19 pandemic are concerned, we identified the use of all the rhetorical strategies investigated by Alexander in his study. More specifically, out of a total of 62 articles, we detected 10 instances of punning devices, five instances of metaphor, 13 instances of alliteration/assonance, one instance of rhyme, four instances of mimicry and 16 instances of allusive techniques, whereas 13 superheadlines do not employ any rhetorical device. Also in the case of the articles related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict we identified the use of all the rhetorical strategies investigated by Alexander. More specifically, out of a total of 56 articles, we detected six instances of punning devices, four instances of metaphor, nine instances of alliteration/assonance, two instances of rhyme, two instances of mimicry and 19 instances of allusive techniques, whereas 14 superheadlines do not employ any rhetorical device.

Overall, the analysis clearly demonstrates a persistent use in *The Economist* not only of rhetorical strategies but also, and most importantly, of the same rhetorical

strategies over almost four decades (1986-2022). As discussed in Section 2.3, the newspaper's skillful use of puns, metaphors, phonological schemes and allusions manages to lighten the tone of serious content, creating the "mitigating effect" mentioned by Bowker (2008: 171) and/or to create an eye-catching effect that attracts the readers' attention (Alexander 1986: 162). Moreover, the recurrent employment of these rhetorical strategies, even in the context of global crises/serious topics, is an unquestionable sign of the newspaper's commitment to linguistic play as an integral part of its identity and reader engagement.

3.2. *Closed-ended questionnaire – data collection*

Starting from the aforedescribed analysis, we conducted a survey to determine EFL/ESP undergraduate students' level of understanding of the rhetorical strategies in the headlines of *The Economist*. The data were collected between November 2 and December 10, 2022, through an online closed-ended questionnaire in English, administered to 100 undergraduate students enrolled in the School of Management and Economics (SME) of the University of Turin and specializing in either Economics or Business. All 100 students are native speakers of Italian (Italian L1) and, thus, learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as well as learners of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), that is, English for Economics and Business, with an average level of English between B1 and B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Both the Economics students and the Business students must fulfil an English language requirement which, however, differs considerably between the two-degree programs. Undergraduate students in Economics are expected to attend a two-semester lecture course (96 hours, 12 credits) titled "Business English, Communication & Presentation Skills" in their second year and must pass a final examination (both written and oral) which is graded on a 30-point scale and is calculated into their cumulative GPAs. Since all third-year classes of this undergraduate degree program are taught in English, the above-mentioned course is in particular designed to improve the students' ESP proficiency, so that they can profitably take their third-year classes in English. On the other hand, undergraduate students in Business satisfy their English language requirement by taking a pass/no pass computer-based English language test (*LTEST*, 2013)[5]. A "pass" grade in this exam requires a level of performance at least equal to a B1.2 level of the CEFR (equivalent to an overall IELTS band score of 4.5) and earns 6 credits but is not calculated into their cumulative GPAs. To prepare for the computer-based test, they are advised to attend a one-semester English language course at pre-intermediate to intermediate levels, depending on their entry level.

We sent an invitation email via the students' course pages on the Moodle e-learning platform which asked them to kindly respond to an online questionnaire (found by clicking on the link attached to the email), specifying that the answers would be anonymous. The purpose of the questionnaire, created using Google Form (see Figure 2 for a sample question), was not explained to the respondents and there was no further contact with them. This was done to avoid any potential stress-related factor which might affect their performance, as the activity was not assessed in any way.

[5] *LTEST* [Computer software]. (2013). Roma, Italy: TeamTeaching.

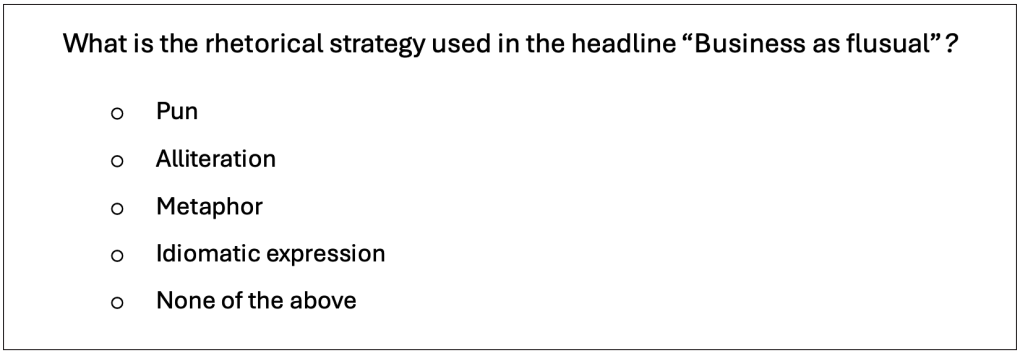

Figure 2. Closed-ended questionnaire – Google form sample question (1 of 12)

A total of 104 students submitted the questionnaire. However, the study sample we created, and which is analysed hereafter, is made up of 100 questionnaires as we agreed on discarding the four questionnaires which had been submitted without any answers. In the anonymous questionnaire the respondents were first asked to provide their gender, undergraduate degree program and year of enrolment (second or third year). More specifically, 49% of the respondents identified themselves as male, 47% of the respondents identified themselves as female and 4% of the respondents preferred not to specify their gender identity. At the same time, 62% of the respondents declared Economics as their field of specialization whereas 38% of them declared Business as their field of specialization. Finally, 53% of the respondents were second-year students and 47% of them were third-year students.

The participants in the questionnaire were then provided with 12 superheadlines selected from articles about the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict published in *The Economist* between February 2020 and July 2022, with no additional information as to the content of the articles they precede. For each superheadline, they were asked the question "What is the rhetorical strategy used in this magazine headline?". The 12 superheadlines were obtained as follows. From the grand dataset of 118 superheadlines, 16 superheadlines with a "language play" (Alexander 1986: 159) involving social, political or cultural references unfamiliar or foreign to the respondents were removed, to obtain a restricted dataset of 103[6]. Then, we drew 12 superheadlines from the restricted dataset. This draw was random except for the requirement that the sample of 12 be representative of the different rhetorical strategies identified in the first phase of our research (Section 3.1). No mention of the source of the superheadlines was ever made. For each superheadline, the respondents were given four

[6] For instance, two of the superheadlines we removed are *Raoultmania* (*The Economist*, 11 June 2020) and *The guns of January* (*The Economist*, 22 Jan 2022). The former is a blending of "Raoult" and "mania". Didier Raoult is a French microbiologist specialized in infectious diseases. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he was highly criticized for promoting hydroxychloroquine as a treatment for the disease. Because of the lack of evidence for its effectiveness, the World Health Organization (WHO) banned its use. The latter, instead, is an allusion to "The guns of August" by historian Barbara Tuchman published in 1962. The book is an account of the early stages of WWI and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for General non-fiction in 1963.

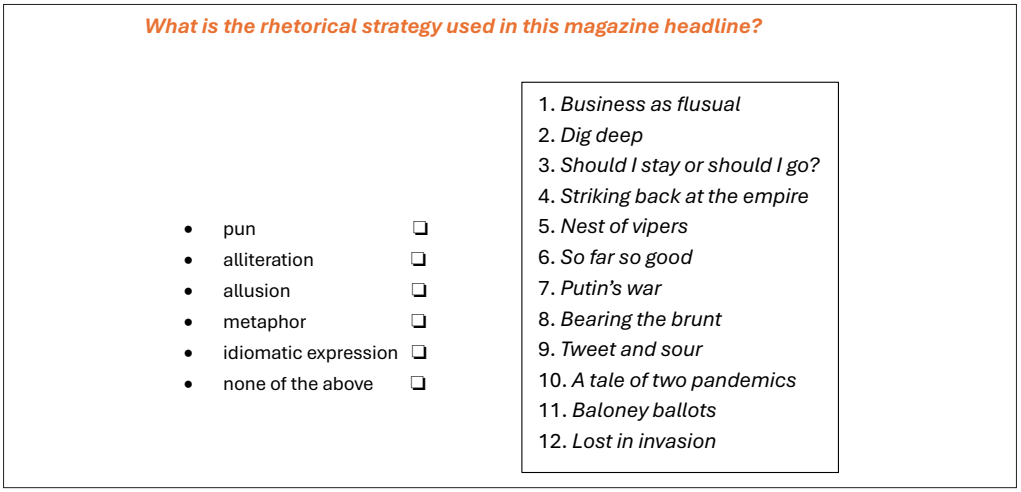

Figure 3. Closed-ended questionnaire – Identification of the rhetorical strategies

What is the rhetorical strategy used in this magazine headline?

Headline	Rhetorical strategy	Correct answers, in %
Business as flusual	pun	22%
Dig deep	alliteration	43%
Should I stay or should I go?	allusion to song	61%
Striking back at the empire	allusion to film	36%
Nest of vipers	metaphor	50%
So far so good	allusion to idiom	57%
Putin's war	none of the above	53%
Bearing the brunt	alliteration / allusion to idiom	22% / 30%
Tweet and sour	pun	22%
A tale of two pandemics	allusion to book	31%
Baloney ballots	alliteration	49%
Lost in invasion	allusion to film	51%

Figure 4. Closed-ended questionnaire – Results

different options of rhetorical strategies (plus a "none of the above" option) and asked to identify the strategy used in each of the 12 superheadlines (Figure 3, right side). The five strategies were selected out of the six possible answer options (Figure 3, left side). The order of the answer options for each question was randomized to avoid biases introduced by order and/or survey fatigue. During the survey, no explanation of the meaning of "rhetorical strategy" or any exemplification of the rhetorical strategies was given. However, unlike students specializing in Business, students specializing in Economics who had attended the course "Business English, Communication & Presentation Skills"

had been previously exposed to articles from *The Economist* as well as the rhetorical strategies in its headlines as part of their course material.

3.3. *Closed-ended questionnaire – data analysis and findings*

The analysis of the questionnaire results allows us to draw some interesting inferences. Figure 4 shows the question, which was asked 12 times, and a table with the 12 superheadlines in the questionnaire (column 1), the rhetorical strategy employed in each of them (column 2), and the percentage of respondents who correctly identified the superheadline's rhetorical strategy (column 3).

Looking at the percentages of correct answers in column 3, it is possible to notice that they are almost always below 50%. There are, however, three exceptions, the superheadlines *Should I stay, or should I go*? (3), *So far so good* (6) and "*Putin's war*" (7). *Should I stay or should I go?* (61% of correct answers) is an allusion to the song with the same title, released in 1982 by the English rock band The Clash. Most importantly, given the respondents' age group (20-22 years), however, this song is one of the iconic 1980s songs in the soundtrack of the popular Netflix's TV series "Stranger Things"[7]. It is likely that the respondents who answered this question correctly heard this song while watching the above-mentioned TV series. *So far so good* (57% of correct answers) is a fairly common idiomatic expression used in English when someone wants to state that an activity has gone well until now. Moreover, a song titled "So far so good" was released in 2006 by Canadian singer-songwriter Bryan Adams. However, this idiom could also be a "phraseological Anglicism" (Pulcini *et al.* 2012) heard by the respondents while watching or listening to the news in Italian[8]. This would explain why 57% of the respondents chose the correct answer, the second highest percentage of correct answers in the questionnaire. *Putin's war* is the only headline in the questionnaire which does not use any rhetorical device, thus, the correct answer to give was "none of the above". Slightly more than half of the respondents (53%, the third highest percentage of correct answers in the questionnaire) correctly noticed that there is no rhetorical strategy employed in this headline.

The lowest percentages of correct answers correspond to the two superheadlines that employ a pun; namely, *Business as flusual* (1) and *Tweet and sour* (9), both with 22% of correct answers. As explained in Section 3, they are both puns originating in near homophony. The pie chart in Figure 5 shows the distribution of answers for *Business as Flusual*. This pun blends the terms "flu" and "usual" and sounds almost the same as the phraseological unit "business as usual". The bar chart in Figure 5, instead, illustrates the demographics – gender, degree program and year of enrolment – of the respondents who chose "pun" as their answer. Worthy of notice is the much higher number of correct answers by students in Economics than by students in Business,

[7] *Stranger Things* is an American science fiction/horror drama television series created by the Duffer Brothers for Netflix and set in the 1980s. The first season was released on July 15, 2016 and the fifth and final season was released across November and December 2025.

[8] Furiassi (2017: 38) maintains that the Anglicization of Italian has become so pervasive that "units larger than words or compounds are borrowed from English alongside single lexical items, namely Anglicisms". Although Furiassi does not mention *So far so good* among the ones he takes into account, he also states that no phraseological Anglicism has yet been recorded in Italian monolingual dictionaries. Therefore, our claim is that *So far so good* may well be one.

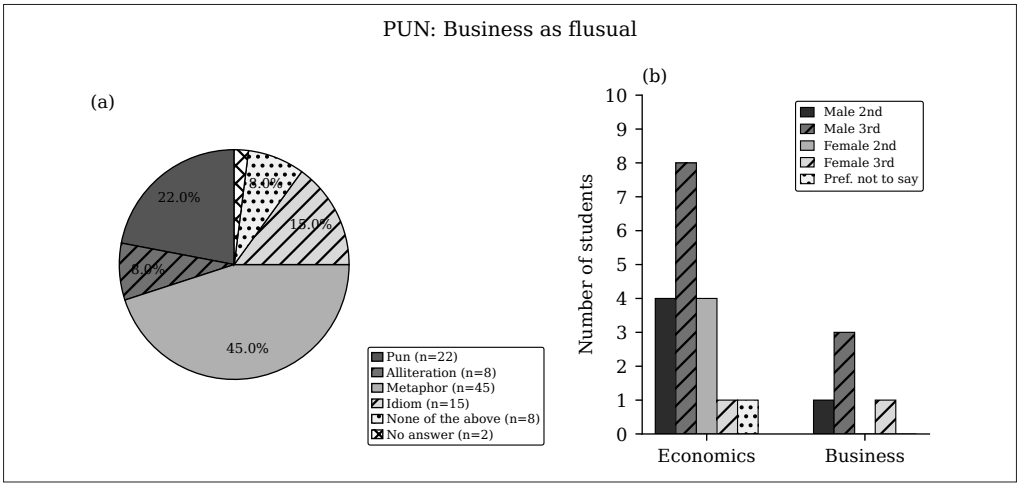

Figure 5. *Business as flusual* - Distribution of answers

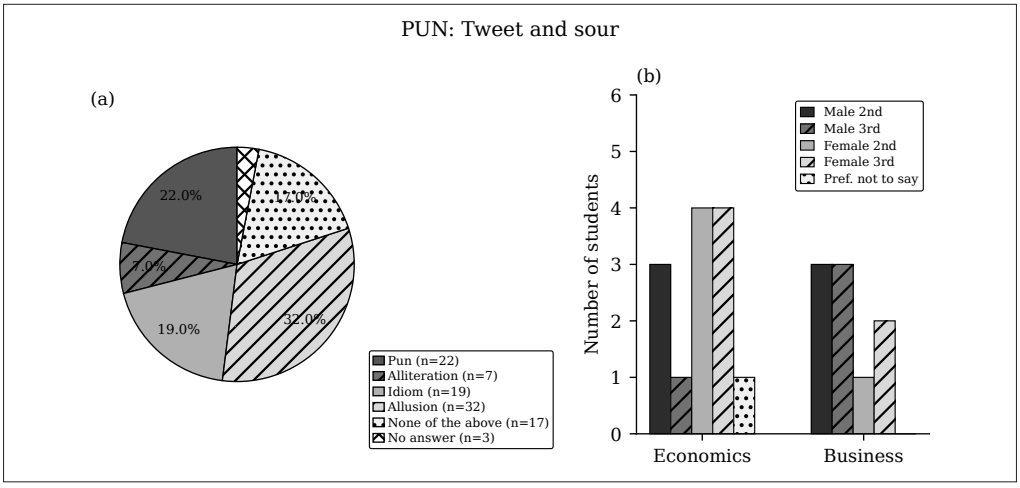

Figure 6. *Tweet and sour* – Distribution of answers

which can be explained by the fact that the former, as described in Section 3.2, are more exposed to English for Economics and Business English than the latter, and may thus be more familiar with "Business as usual" either as an idiomatic expression in English or a "phraseological Anglicism" in Italian (Furiassi 2017: 38), just like the idiom "So far so good" discussed in the previous paragraph.

Figure 6 reports analogous figures for the other superheadline employing a pun, *Tweet and sour*, which sounds almost the same as the adjective "sweet-and-sour" used to describe the taste of food cooked in a sauce containing sugar and either vinegar or lemon. By substituting "sweet" with "tweet", the superheadline becomes a telegraphic summary of the article it refers to which criticizes Elon Musk's use of the social media site Twitter to comment on the Russia-Ukraine war so as to sway his followers. Here, if

	Headline	Rhetorical strategy	Correct answers, in %
Linguistic devices	**Business as flusual**	**pun**	**22%**
	Tweet and sour	**pun**	**22%**
	Nest of vipers	**metaphor**	**50%**
	Dig deep	**alliteration**	**43%**
	Baloney ballots	**alliteration**	**49%**
	Bearing the brunt	**alliteration / allusion to idiom**	**22% / 30%**
Allusive mechanisms	*Should I stay or should I go?*	*allusion to song*	*61%*
	Lost in invasion	*allusion to film*	*51%*
	Tweet and sour	*allusion to film*	*36%*
	A tale of two pandemics	*allusion to book*	*31%*
	So far so good	*allusion to idiom*	*57%*
	Putin's war	none of the above	53%

Table 3. Closed-ended questionnaire – Superheadlines in our dataset according to the division proposed by Alexander

we look at the bar chart, we observe a less marked difference in the number of correct answers given by students in Economics than by students in Business. Moreover, if we look at the distribution of answers in the pie chart, we notice that although only 22% of the respondents identified *Tweet and Sour* as a pun, 19% of them identified it as an idiom and 32% of them as an allusion. Taken together, these results seem to suggest that many respondents recognized in this headline the adjective "sweet-and-sour", which is not specific to the language of Economics and Business and, nowadays, is often found in restaurant menus in Italy and around the world. It is thus a sort of global Anglicism used also by people who have a school-level knowledge of English.

As Table 3 shows, if we group the 12 superheadlines in the closed-ended questionnaire according to the division proposed by Alexander described in Section 3.1 (i.e. superheadlines using linguistic devices and superheadlines using allusive mechanisms), and we look at the percentages of correct answers, it is possible to deduce that the headlines using linguistic devices (in bold in the table) are in general less easily recognized by the respondents than allusive mechanisms (in italics in the table). Even the headline *Bearing the brunt*, which includes both the use of alliteration and of allusion to an idiom, confirms this deduction[9]. The respondents were given both options out of the five given and, among the respondents who chose one of these two options, 22% of them chose "alliteration" and 30% of them chose "allusion to idiom".

[9] *To bear the brunt* is an idiomatic expression which means "to endure the worst part or chief impact of something unpleasant". Retrieved February 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/brunt.

However, among the superheadlines using linguistic devices, instances of alliteration, i.e. *Dig deep* (43%) and *Baloney ballots* (49%), and the metaphor *Nest of vipers* (50%) were more easily recognized than puns. The reason may be that recognizing alliteration (and assonance) is an almost mechanical ability that the respondents may have acquired in high school, when studying Italian literature, and it is an ability that can be easily transferred across different languages. Similarly, 50% of the respondents were able to recognize *Nest of vipers* as a metaphor, a rhetorical device which draws a direct comparison between two distinct semantic domains. Besides the fact that also in this case the respondents' previously acquired literary knowledge in Italian may have come into play, it must be pointed out that the origin of the word "viper" (a small poisonous snake) in English is the Latin word "vipera", which is also the Italian word for "viper". Hence, the English "viper" and the Italian "vipera" are cognates as, at least in its written form, "viper" closely resembles its Italian equivalent and has an identical meaning. Most important of all, both languages share a non-literal use of the word "viper", i.e. a very unpleasant person whom you cannot trust[10], a metaphorical meaning that half of the respondents were able to identify in this superheadline. All of this is further proof of the fact that identifying punning headlines in English is a more challenging endeavour than recognizing other types of rhetorical devices as it requires, besides a high level of English language proficiency, a cultural background that needs to come into play before the processing of meaning construction.

The questionnaire also presented five allusions, namely one allusion to the title of a song (*Should I stay or should I go?*), two allusions to film titles (*Lost in invasion* and *Striking back at the empire*), one allusion to the title of a novel (*A tale of two pandemics*) and one allusion to an idiom (*So far so good*). Among these five allusions, for only two of them are the correct answers well above 50%, i.e., S*hould I stay, or should I go*?, a direct reference to the iconic 1980s song by The Clash, and *So far so good*, a direct reference to an idiom. Both these allusions have previously been discussed. The other three allusions, *Lost in invasion* (51% of correct answers), *Striking back at the empire* (36% of correct answers) and *A tale of two pandemics* (31% of correct answers), are only oblique references to film titles, "Lost in Translation" (released in 2003 and directed by Sofia Coppola) and "The Empire Strikes Back" (Episode V of the "Star Wars" saga, released in 1980 and directed by George Lucas), and to the title of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (1859) and, therefore, more difficult to unpack by our respondents.

A perusal of the results of the only headline in the questionnaire which does not employ any rhetorical device, i.e. *Putin's war* (correct answer "none of the above"), provides further insight into the challenges the respondents had to face while answering our questionnaire. Here, too, there is a slightly higher percentage of correct answers by Economics students than by Business students. The second most chosen answer option for this superheadline – and, as a matter of fact, for all the superheadlines when available – is "idiom". This answer option seems indeed to work as the salient answer option that the respondents choose when they do not really know what to answer. Also of note is that the third and fourth most chosen answer options are "pun" (14%) and "metaphor" (7%) respectively, which demonstrate that a significant number of the

[10] Retrieved February 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/viper.

respondents do not have the lexical sophistication in English to understand whether a headline employs a rhetorical device or not.

4. Conclusions: the importance of "going beyond the information given"

Since, to our knowledge, little research has been done on the figurative competence of EFL/ESP students, this study aims at being a contribution to a slowly growing body of research supporting the view that figurative language learning must be part and parcel of EFL/ESP learning and teaching. Considering the crucial role that rhetorical strategies still play in the headlines of *The Economist*, our findings suggest three important pedagogical implications that can help enhance the quality of EFL/ESP teaching and learning.

The first implication is that the respondents' proficiency in figurative language is positively correlated with their overall language proficiency. This is why, in general, students specializing in Economics, who are more exposed not only to the English language but also to the language of *The Economist* during their undergraduate studies, gave a higher number of correct answers in the questionnaire than Business students who, during their three years of undergraduate studies, are only required to take a B1.2 level pass/no pass English language exam. The second implication is that headlines in general, and headlines that employ rhetorical strategies in particular, such as the ones in *The Economist*, need to be taught as a genre. They are "a specific kind of linguistic phenomena" (Bucaria 2004: 280) and, as such, form a class of communicative acts with very specific features and functions. Hence, unless they are taught this way, we cannot expect our EFL/ESP students to be able to process and decode the meaning of lexical, syntactic, and phonological ambiguities in the headlines.

The third and final implication is that the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of headlines using rhetorical strategies are not only due to linguistic but also cultural gaps that must be filled before the processing of meaning construction even starts (Silaski and Durovic 2013). This means that the correct unpacking of headlines by non-native speakers of English requires the right cultural background as, when it is missing, headlines remain either incomprehensible or are erroneously interpreted. We must keep in mind that many Italian students specializing in both Economics and Business consider English as a vehicular language. They do know they will need a good working knowledge of English in their professional life, but they seem to be thinking of it as a mere technical tool, just like a programming language, rather than a full-fledged expression of a culture. Therefore, an explicit focus on headline patterns and rhetorical strategies in the classroom would help them not only to improve their ability to decode them but also to qualitatively advance in "idiomaticity skills" (White 2010: 114) and thus acquire a more exhaustive understanding of the English language and its cultural aspects which would give them a competitive advantage for the job market.

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE 'NATIVE SPEAKER MODEL' IN EAP: THE NATIVE-NONNATIVE DICHOTOMY IN ITALIAN ACADEMIA

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Abstract

Despite English being the global lingua franca, so-called native speakers (NS) of English are often accorded greater prestige compared to non-native speakers (NNS; Dragojevic *et al.* 2021). Nativeness is not an objective language level but a "socially constructed identity" (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy 2001: 100), and yet it is used as an ideal benchmark for language competence worldwide. This phenomenon has been observed in the academic sector and EAP (Mauranen *et al.* 2016): *native-speakerism* (Holliday 2006) affects teachers and seems to have been internalized by students as well. This creates an overlap between the concept of speaking 'good English' and the need to attain a 'native-like' proficiency level, which often includes the urgency to develop a 'native' accent (Jenkins 2009). The aim of this research was to explore the complex relationship that a group of 18 Italian MA students and PhD candidates have with the English language as it is used in academia, and the one they have with the nebulous figure of the English 'native speaker'. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, recorded and annotated in line with their traditional use in language attitudes research; they were later analysed using the Grounded Theory Method. Two main core categories are discussed here: one pertaining to the use of English for Academic Purposes encountered by the respondents, which included their experiences, level of satisfaction and field-related needs; one containing their perceptions of NS teachers of English, as well as their attitudes towards 'native' English accents and English spoken with an Italian accent. The results suggest that the native-nonnative binary is rooted in the respondents' minds, creating a situation in which NNS feel the need to abandon their accent in order not to be stigmatized as 'defective' NS (Cook 2002), in a world where English NS always have "the upper hand".

1. Introduction

Due to its diffusion as the global lingua franca and its ubiquity in fields such as economics, business and, perhaps most notably, academia and research, English has long stopped being 'singular': today, the concept of *World Englishes*, plural, is often used to underline a 'polycentric' vision of the language, and to emphasize how all varieties of English used across the globe are of the same value (see Hackert 2012). However, in actuality there continues to be a distinction between those who are *native speakers* of

English and those who are not – without ever clarifying in a comprehensive way what it means to be 'native'.

Usually, 'native' status is most often accorded to those who are born in the so-called *inner circle* countries: Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, since they represent "the traditional bases of English, dominated by the 'mother tongue' varieties of the language" (Kachru 1992: 3). This not only excludes those born in the 'outer circle', i.e. formerly colonized countries, but also fails to provide a clearer explanation of who a 'native' is: in her work, Hackert (2012) explores how the 'native speaker' corresponds mostly to an imaginary, idealized figure, who speaks the language 'perfectly', with the 'right' accent, and embodies the 'standard' language. This vision of the native speaker as a reference point is widely shared within society: the native-nonnative binary is used by linguists and laypeople alike as a way to categorize oneself and others, even if it exists in both L1 and L2 speakers' minds as a mostly unanalysed sociolinguistic concept. At this point, "nativeness constitutes a non-elective socially constructed identity rather than a linguistic category" (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy 2001: 100), which becomes problematic when 'natives' are set as a model not only for learners, but also for teachers and assessments (see Leung *et al.* 2016).

Since the beginning of the millennium, scholars have been studying the phenomenon of *native-speakerism*: the term, coined by Holliday (2006) in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), refers to the concept that those who are perceived as 'native speakers' (henceforth NS) of English are considered to be the 'ideal' teachers of the language, to the detriment of those perceived as 'non-native speakers' (NNS) – in academic environments as well.

Mauranen *et al.* (2016: 45) highlight how even in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), "native speakers have been set up as the gold standard against which non-English authors' texts have been measured". Moreover, native speakerism is also actualized when 'mother-tongue' teachers are recruited to teach NNS, ultimately insisting on a "monolingual use of English as a (neutral) lingua franca" (Hyland and Shaw 2016: 7).

Recent research suggests that the phenomenon of native speakerism seems to have been internalized by students: multiple studies of the language attitudes held by NNS concerning English spoken with their own L1 accent revealed a preference towards native English accents accorded on the basis of prestige and social acceptability (Dragojevic *et al.* 2021), and also a general confusion between correct pronunciation (on a phonological level) and native-like accent as a requirement for speaking 'good' English (Jenkins 2009). 'Becoming' native, or as close to a NS as possible, is thus taken as the highest level of language proficiency, which students must strive to reach.

However, since it is impossible to impartially and objectively 'quantify' and measure nativeness as a synonym of linguistic competence, being native or non-native becomes an insurmountable dichotomy which ultimately always sees learners as "defective native speaker[s]" (Cook 2002: 20). Additionally, becoming 'near-native' – if that is even attainable – would involve radically changing the way they speak: non-nativeness is most often revealed to others through the oral use of language, and especially through accent (Hackert 2012). It is virtually impossible not to have any accent, either in one's own L1 or especially when learning an L2; nevertheless, developing a 'native-like' accent is too often seen as a sign of ultimate linguistic success (Piller 2002).

2. Research questions

It can be objected that not all learners of EAP might be necessarily interested in 'becoming' near-native, or feel the immediate pressure to do so. The aim of this research study is to investigate the value that Italian students and PhD candidates attribute to 'native' or 'native-like' speech in English, how much they strive to reach a 'native-like' accent or competence, and what their needs are in learning English in their respective academic fields. The research questions could be schematized as follows:

RQ1: How rooted in learners is the tendency to use the NS as a model or reference point for 'correct' English?

RQ2: Is it possible that learners with different goals and needs might choose different models, with different characteristics?

RQ3: What elements, if not nativeness, could represent a new model for learners?

3. Methodology

3.1. *Participants*

The participants in this study were 11 MA students and 7 PhD candidates who have Italian as their L1 and have experience in using English in academic contexts. There were no instructions that excluded BA students, but none volunteered to participate; a possible explanation is discussed in section 4.2 below.

Snowball sampling was used to identify potential candidates. Inclusion criteria were: age comprised between 18 and 35 years; being a student (at any higher education level) or PhD candidate; having at least a B1 level of English competence on the CEFR scale. The latter was implemented in order to ensure that no participants were complete beginners in the study of the language. Participants were not asked to provide a certification for their proficiency level, although many had it; a self-evaluation was deemed sufficient for the scope of this study.

An active effort was made to ensure as much diversity as possible among participants (gender, age, proficiency level) and an even distribution across different fields of study and universities, in order to record experiences that were as varied as possible. The participants belong to 12 different subject areas, which were grouped as follows: four respondents in the Humanities area, three in the Linguistics area, six in the Socio-economics area, and five in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) area. Participants' data can be observed in more detail in Table 1 below.

The participants come from nine universities in six different Italian cities. Since many of them did not consent to share the name of their institution with others, due to the often personal nature of their interviews, this information is not included in the present article.

Participant	Level	Area	Subject	Age	Proficiency level	Gender
P1	PhD candidate	Socio-economics	Cultural heritage management	31	C1	F
P2	MA student	Socio-economics	Business communication	22	B2	F

→

P3	PhD candidate	Humanities	English literature	30	Bilingual	F
P4	PhD candidate	STEM	Engineering	27	C1	F
P5	MA student	STEM	Engineering	24	B2	M
P6	PhD candidate	Linguistics	English linguistics	31	C2	F
P7	MA student	Socio-economics	Finance	22	C2	M
P8	MA student	Humanities	Psychology	23	B1	M
P9	PhD candidate	Linguistics	Italian philology and linguistics	30	B2	F
P10	MA student	STEM	Physics	27	C1	M
P11	MA student	Humanities	Psychology	23	B2	F
P12	PhD candidate	Humanities	Psychology	31	B1	F
P13	MA student	Socio-economics	Political sciences	22	C1	F
P14	MA student	STEM	Physics	28	B1	M
P15	MA student	Socio-economics	Law/international relations	20	C1	F
P16	MA student	Linguistics	Languages for communication	27	C2	F
P17	PhD candidate	STEM	Engineering	32	B2	M
P18	MA student	Socio-economics	Cultural heritage management	28	B2	F

Table 1. Participants' characteristics

3.2. *Research design*

The method of data elicitation chosen for the present research is that of the semi-structured interview. An interview guide was developed which included a list of 15 open-ended questions selected to investigate the research questions defined above. For example, students were asked to recount their stories of use of English at university, their thoughts on 'mother-tongue' teachers, and what it means to them to 'talk proper'. This format was chosen due to its well-established use in language attitudes research "to elicit information in a direct way about what people believe, think, and feel about language – and why" (Karatsareas 2022: 99), and because it gave the chance to the participants to recount all experiences of their use of EAP they deemed to be important, without being constrained by a rigid structure.

18 interviews were conducted in January 2024 with the informed consent of the participants. They were in Italian, a choice dictated by the focus on the content of the interview rather than the desire to 'assess' the participants' language proficiency, and by the aim to create a natural, relaxed environment (many participants later stated they were 'anxious' the interview would be in English). All excerpts from the interviews cited here were translated by the author.

The interviews were performed either in person or online, and lasted for an average of 45 minutes, with the shortest being 28 minutes and the longest 1 hour and 8 minutes; the audio was recorded and then transcribed verbatim by hand. The transcriptions were then analysed using the Grounded Theory Method (GTM; Glaser and Strauss 1999). This tool encourages the exploration of topics starting from first-hand evidence rather than verifying pre-existing findings, which made it suitable for the current research. For an account of GTM use in applied linguistics research see Hadley (2022).

The transcriptions were read multiple times, and salient themes were initially annotated using *open coding*; when a pattern emerged across these codes in different interviews, they were grouped together using new labels (*focused codes*). Overarching themes were recognized, and focused codes were gathered under *conceptual categories*. Finally, several *core categories* tying together conceptual ones were identified. The present study will explore the content of two of these core categories: one pertaining to the use of English for Academic Purposes encountered by the respondents, which included their experiences, level of satisfaction and field-related needs; one containing their perceptions of NS teachers of English, as well as their attitudes towards 'native' English accents and English spoken with an Italian accent.

4. Findings and discussion

All MA students and PhD candidates attributed high importance to the English language, to the point that it is defined as "*a pre-requisite*" (P10) or "*indispensable*" (P13) for their studies; this includes those whose fields are highly dependent on the national language (e.g. psychology, law). Many highlighted how after a certain level of specialization, all available, up-to-date material is in English – mostly STEM area respondents (four out of five), but also some in the socio-economics area. The most frequent activities performed during the week are mostly research-related: 14 out of 18 respondents identified reading articles in English as the most frequent one, with virtually no difference between MA students and PhD candidates. However, only the latter frequently partake in activities such as writing articles, presenting at conferences, attending seminars.

Below are more in-depth descriptions of the respondents' experiences of English at university.

4.1. *ELT*

This section takes the label of 'ELT' because it gathers the interviewees' stories on English as a subject matter in itself at university. Their experiences were coded separating whether they occurred during their BA, MA or PhD courses. PhD candidates often reflected on their past experiences in higher education, and in this case were also included in the 'student' category due to their valuable insight. The respondents' experiences seem to follow a fairly common pattern.

During the BA courses, the focus was on language level testing; only two interviewees (P6 and P16, who both studied English language and linguistics) were offered English classes each year, which lasted either one or two semesters. The others were asked to sit a language exam which was in most cases (10 out of 11) a pass-fail exam with no grade; two of them could avoid sitting the exam because they already held an

English language certificate. In some cases, the level testing occurred before they began attending university: it was a requirement to enrol in the BA courses.

P17 laments how he was discouraged from studying for the exam: *"[it was] only worth three credits, so it wasn't even an exam that important… it was pass-fail, so you can't even aim to get top marks instead of the bare minimum, and we didn't get any specific instructions"*.

The only consistent teaching offer was represented by the classes held outside of individual university courses at the University's Language Centre, which are available to all students upon request. However, due to the high demand and low number of teachers the classes are often filled up in only a few minutes after the start of online registrations. Only one interviewee could benefit from that service, and described it as "*winning a lottery*" (P4).

During the MA courses, language lessons are almost entirely absent except for five interviewees: the two English linguistics students; P15, whose Master course in International Relations offers lessons to satisfy the requirement to graduate with a C2 level; P10, who studies physics and took an elective class on the language of science popularization; and P18, who had a pass-fail exam – this time with lessons that focused not only on grammar but also on specialized vocabulary pertaining to her field, Cultural Heritage Management. Many interviewees were only asked to prove their competence before enrolling at the university, and they could avoid doing so if they had passed the test during the BA.

In PhD courses, the only language classes offered pertain to 'academic English' workshops, which mostly focus on developing academic writing skills; four of the seven PhD candidates were offered these classes. P12 comments: "*the interesting thing about that class was that the teachers spoke English, so you had a fixed appointment every week where you could go and speak English for three hours. This was – apart from contents, which were a bit foreign to me, a bit trivial… I wasn't exactly impressed*".

4.2. *English as a Medium of Instruction – EMI*

This section contains experiences of respondents' interactions with English as a Medium of Instruction, i.e. when English is the language in which the course is taught.

During the BA, this experience was almost non-existent, except for P7, whose course was entirely taught in English, and for the English linguistics students, whose classes on both literature and linguistics were in English.

During the MA, more opportunities presented themselves: students were given the possibility to attend elective seminars or classes in English, and materials in English were frequently employed during ordinary lessons in Italian, especially in the STEM area where highly specialized textbooks are only available in English. Four respondents reported that their regular courses were unexpectedly taught in English when foreign exchange students happened to attend the lectures. Other times, it was professors deciding they should turn in an assignment (e.g. a report) in English, because "*they expect us to be understandable to everyone, so in English, in case we have to publish or present in front of an international audience*" (P10). However, no instructions are provided concerning academic writing or specialized language. Similarly, they are often asked to write their final dissertation in English as either a requirement or a "*whim*" of their advisors (P4) without any mention of the specificity of EAP or their field: "[professors]

don't help at all, it's all up to your own skills, so if you want to do the thesis in English, then you're on your own" (P5).

During the PhD, exposure to English becomes more frequent: "*unfortunately, or fortunately, in my field everything's in English, so anything I wanted to do was in English. Seminars and summer, winter schools in Italian were rare*" (P1). Most interactions with English occur outside the university, either at conferences or communicating with foreign colleagues. Among the respondents of this study, PhD candidates were also more likely to have spent some time studying abroad (five out of seven, compared to four out of 11 MA students), which is partly due to the fact that it is mandatory in many PhD courses.

The data suggests a separation of scope between the BA, more strictly focused on grammar and general language use, and the MA, where use of EMI actually takes place. This could perhaps explain why no BA students volunteered for the interviews: their lack of experience immediately disqualified them, so a process of self-selection might have occurred.

There also seems to be a stark divide between those who began their academic career with a higher language competence, who saw being 'forced' to use English as an opportunity to improve, and those who struggled with the language. For example, P4 enrolled in the classes provided at her university's language centre at the end of her MA, and progressed quickly from B1 level to C1 by the end of her PhD. During the interview she described how her peers who had not benefitted from those classes did not find the PhD activities in English as useful as she did: "*I realise from my colleagues' comments that you need to be dynamic and want to… improve yourself, otherwise you'll find yourself having to do it by force, because the work's all in English*". Others lament that the pressure to improve language competence is entirely placed upon the learners, with little to no support from the university: P14 goes as far as to say that "*the university gave me no means, it only asked me to prove my competence*", which is in line with general observations in the EAP field (see Airey 2016).

Individual initiative becomes even more vital to students when considering that most EMI activities in their academic career are described as 'sporadic' or 'fortuitous', e.g. classes only having to be held in English for exchange students. Moreover, students are often given the chance to avoid using English completely. P8 describes how "*when professors gave us material in English […] it was often only a suggestion… there was no mandatory preparation, not even to discuss it in an exam… it became up to the individual if they wanted to use it or not*". P13, who studies political sciences and foreign languages, was surprised to see her peers refuse to take exams in English, since it was not mandatory. P1, who during her PhD has come into contact with BA Cultural Heritage students, observed that they would never attend elective lectures provided in English; P8, who found himself in similar situations, recounted how he and his peers often did not have the resources to understand a lecture on complex topics without preparation.

This sentiment seems to be more frequent in MA students, but it is also true that the most satisfied PhD candidates are those who have a higher level of competence (C1, C2 and a bilingual speaker) compared to those who felt more uncertain (B1, B2) and described feelings of anxiety when having to work in English, especially at the thought of having to present their work in that language. P9 describes how "*the importance of*

the language, to me, was kind of a random impact, because I went abroad, otherwise… until the second year I was almost running from the duty to speak English".

Moreover, the lack of time to dedicate to the study of English was often described as an issue: since it is not part of the curriculum, some decided to focus on regular exams and then, eventually, 'catch up' with individual courses. However, general language courses can rarely give them the specificity that EAP requires, and as P12 underlines, it becomes even more difficult to find the time for an extended language course during a PhD, or while working.

4.3. *English language needs*

Students and PhD candidates were asked to describe what English skills could be most valuable in their field of study. Since this research is qualitative in nature, the data does not allow for statistical comparison of their needs in absolute terms; for example, some respondents stated that 'everything' is useful, or described what they found lacking in their own experience. However, the frequency with which some skills are mentioned still seems to be telling, especially when the needs of MA students are compared with those of the PhD candidates. Table 2 compares the percentage responses of the two student groups in relation to the various skills areas.

Language skills	**Total**	**%**	**PhD**	%	**Students**	%
Total	18		7		11	
Writing	11	61%	5	71%	6	55%
Oral communication	9	50%	2	29%	7	64%
Vocabulary	9	50%	4	57%	5	45%
Reading	7	39%	3	43%	4	36%
Listening/understanding others	7	39%	3	43%	4	36%
Pronunciation	1	6%	1	14%	0	0%
Accent	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Grammar	2	11%	1	14%	1	9%
'Everything'	4	22%	1	14%	3	27%
Diaphasic competence	3	17%	1	14%	2	18%
Understandability	5	28%	2	29%	3	27%
Fluency/ease	1	6%	1	14%	0	0%

Table 2. Skills needed

Great importance appears to be given in general to writing skills, described as valuable by 11 participants. However, it seems to be comparatively more important for PhD candidates, which could be explained by their need to disseminate and publish their research. This is not to say that writing skills are less relevant to MA students; however,

as mentioned in section 4.2, little to no formal instruction is given to them regarding academic writing. This could be a reflection of the smaller role that writing plays in Italian higher education compared with oral exams, both in English and Italian. During his interview, P14 hypothesizes that writing an academic article "*is something you learn later, I think, when you do a PhD, and the professor explains it to you*", thus somewhat separated from the 'regular' academic experience.

Oral communication skills are deemed important by half of the participants, most of whom are MA students. Again, this does not necessarily mean that PhD candidates assign no value to speaking English, but it could be inferred that it is taken for granted at their level of language use. Moreover, it should be noted that while many stressed the importance of speaking 'good' English, there seems to be some confusion over what it actually means to do so, for both MA students and PhD candidates. The interviews revealed that using the correct grammar and being generically 'fluent' often overlapped in the respondents' definition of 'being good at' English. Most notably, many could not draw a clear distinction between 'accent' and 'pronunciation' when asked, which could be due to the frequent lack of formal pronunciation instruction within the classroom (see Derwing and Munro 2005). It could be inferred that the haziness in defining what 'good spoken English' is might hinder the learning process, as it might push the view that a learner needs to master 'everything', including native-like speech, creating unnecessary frustration (*ibid.*).

The same kind of confusion seems to apply to vocabulary, the next most important skill according to the respondents. For the interviewees, 'vocabulary' comprises both technical terminology pertaining to specific fields, and a general mastery of the language that allows them to discuss more complex concepts. Some were more precise and added specific features valuable for their field, such as building a clear structure in an essay: P14 underlined the use of linking words in scientific articles, which he noticed while doing research. Moreover, he reflected on the need for a rich vocabulary by saying that "*science must be simple because it must be unambiguous, […] you must be able to avoid roundabout expressions, and this shouldn't be taken for granted – when I'm struggling I use them to express the idea even though I don't have those terms, but a person with good competence can say things at the right time without creating misunderstandings*".

The need to build a diverse vocabulary to communicate in all situations appears clear to a minority of participants (three), who spontaneously addressed the need for diaphasic competence. However, there seems to be a slight confusion in what type of vocabulary exactly is needed to be 'competent': respondents who described struggling with English often used their lack of basic vocabulary as an example: in describing her 'weaknesses', P12 mentioned "*lacking adequate lexical richness*" and added "*really, if I go to the supermarket, I don't even know the names of vegetables […] it makes me uncomfortable*". Later on, P12 added that she struggles to express complex concepts related to her field of study in English. She laments that it is expected of her to be able to "*transfer*" the knowledge she developed over thirty years in Italian "*horizontally*" to the other language. To her, "*that's the problem. It's not like I can start from 'My name is…', I have to discuss highly specialised concepts from the get-go*". Of course, lack of fluency can be an obstacle in expressing elaborate thoughts; however, Coxhead (2016) notes, academics actually need a limited range of vocabulary for their activities, while

colloquial or everyday terms (such as vegetables, for a psychologist like P12) are not necessary. Moreover, Hyland (2016: 19) underlines that "there is no need" to ignore specific vocabulary or discourse features at any stage, and that "students do not necessarily learn best by studying general features before more specialized ones". Yet, the approach observed in Italian universities of delaying EMI until after a certain language level has been reached (or at least assessed) could foster this perception that general language fluency is a prerequisite for EAP.

The concepts of fluency and 'ease' emerged spontaneously and repeatedly in the interviews. They were mostly associated with NS, who are characterized by a sense of ease and spontaneity in the use of English which is demonstrated by "*thinking*" and "*dreaming*" (P11) in that language. For the respondents, this factor seems to have the same weight as biographical data (e.g. being born in a certain country) in defining a person as 'native'. Notably, some saw this sense of 'ease' as something unattainable for a learner, while others took it as the sign that a NNS had finally become 'native'. P5, for example, talks about his aunt who works as an interpreter: "…she speaks such a perfect French that everyone tells her she's a mother-tongue, sometimes she finds herself dreaming in French, swearing in French…".

However, when asked to describe the features that define a 'talented' NNS, being understandable was often deemed more important than being perfectly fluent – something that was underlined both within the academic environment and in general. P9 recounts how "*something I understood* [while studying abroad] *is that the important thing is to try and be understandable, to let go. Then maybe you make mistakes, it's fine.*". Similarly, some participants advocated for a reduced focus on grammar and rigid evaluations, which in their opinion can ultimately create negative feelings in learners and hinder communication.

In order to better observe and record the respondents' references to these attributes in the interviews, the number of their occurrences was noted and divided according to whether they were associated with the respondents' professional or academic needs, with talented learners of English, or with NS. Table 3 below reveals the stark distinction in their use: 'fluency' mostly describes and even defines NS, while it is rarely employed in association with NNS, and barely recognized as a need; while 'understandability' is not only needed but a sign of skill – notably, never associated with NS.

	Students' needs	**'Talented' NNS**	**NS**
Fluency or 'ease' related to…	1	4	10
Understandability related to…	5	10	0

Table 3. Fluency

Despite the importance attributed to understandability as a defining factor of talented NNS, participants continue to attribute a higher level of prestige to NS, and to desire to have them as teachers, even when they have trouble in understanding them – as will be illustrated below.

4.4. *Native Speaker English teachers*

This section refers to the experience of the respondents of interacting with NS of English in general and in their role as language teachers. Specific hours of study taught by a 'mother-tongue' teacher are common in Italy in both high school and higher education. Interviewees were asked to recount their experience with NS teachers (at any level of instruction), focusing on whether they found it valuable and why. The vast majority of the respondents had had such experience, mostly with teachers coming from the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Table 4 below summarizes the main viewpoints expressed. Whenever specific reasons were given, they were annotated in the second column with the number of those interviewees who expressed them in brackets.

Attitudes towards NS teachers	**#**	**Reasons**	**Caveats**
Valuable because of real-life language use/ being 'forced'	11	Getting accustomed to listening to native speech/'real' English and slang (3); immersive environment, being 'forced to understand' (2); cultural background (1)	Not inherent to NS (2)
Valuable because of nativeness	10	Specifically because of accent and pronunciation (8); implicit value as NS (2)	Only useful as long as they are understandable, or real language is used (2)
No difference	7	Lessons 'too crowded', it becomes passive listening (1); positive experiences with Italian teachers (3); NS perform the same activities as 'regular' Italian teachers (2); 'not necessary': Italian teachers can do the same (5)	-
Valuable in comparison with their Italian teachers	6	Capability of correcting mistakes 'better' than their Italian teachers' (1); better pronunciation than their Italian teachers (3); nativeness ensures competence (1); 'negative experience' with their Italian teachers (1)	-
Valuable because of teaching skills	2	-	More important than being a NS

Table 4. Attitudes towards NS teachers

Three main reasons were given for preferring NS teachers: they were valuable due to their use of the 'real' language; they were valuable *because* of their nativeness, especially when it comes to their accent and pronunciation; they were valuable because they were specifically preferred with respect to Italian teachers. The importance of the use of 'real-life' English by NS has been highlighted by 11 participants, both in terms of

specialised applications and everyday language use, such as slang. Many appreciated having the opportunity to practise English in an immersive environment, where having to communicate with a monolingual NS 'forced' them to use the language more. However, in most cases NS would only handle ELT, while EMI was conducted by Italian professors within the curriculum. Many respondents expressed the desire to 'merge' these two approaches, suggesting for example workshops and discussion circles where one could practise oral communication and apply specific vocabulary and knowledge (P8, P15). In most cases, Italian professors using EMI were described as 'focusing on content' and 'being understandable'; to some, this was a positive factor (cf. 'understandability' in section 4.3). However, P7 (who attended a BA course in finance entirely taught in English) was clearly annoyed that 'conveying the message' was often to the detriment of the correct use of language, which was not taken into consideration in the assessment of students. He is the most vocal in underlining how 'conveying the right message' in his field is highly dependent not only on 'being understandable', but having a specialized skillset: "*if I work as a consultant, I have to use a language that allows me to be effective, sure, straightforward, but at the same time […] I need to be respectful of the role of the person I'm advising, and respect the canons of current corporate language*". These things are often not taught explicitly: professors and experts may believe certain discourse conventions to be 'self-evident,' and thus that simply recommending readings or assigning reports is enough for students to 'acquire' those skills (Hyland 2016).

Ten participants declared a preference for NS teachers. In some cases this was because they recognized a sort of intrinsic value in *being* native, but mostly due to the NS's accent and pronunciation: they are believed to better represent how English 'should be' spoken compared to non-native teachers. P16 reflects that "*it could be more useful*" or easier, she adds later, "*to learn the standard*", i.e. the language as it is spoken by a NS. Still, some recognized that a NS teacher is only useful insofar as they are understandable or have suitable teaching skills.

4.5. *Comparing NS and NNS teachers*

The preference accorded to NS teachers could be partially explained as a result of a direct comparison between them and NNS teachers. Six participants recognized that they held a higher opinion of NS teachers because their regular Italian teachers were often found to be somewhat lacking due either to their marked Italian accent, to their English level being perceived as insufficient, or to poor teaching skills. In particular, some respondents praised the NS's ability to correct their mistakes more accurately, and appreciated their 'better' pronunciation.

NS teachers are not always preferred: seven respondents found no difference between them and NNS teachers. Sometimes it was due to organizational issues (e.g. the NS classes being too crowded), but more often it was due to the satisfaction with their Italian teachers. Yet, the language used in the interviews shows how even those who reportedly believe that NNS can be optimal teachers still attribute an implicit (or sometimes explicit) position of prestige to NS. Native English is recognized as a reference point even while it is questioned: for example, while P10 insists on the importance of understandability over nativeness, he uses the "*Oxford accent*" as an example of the standard to which learners can decide not to adhere. During the interviews, it became apparent that specific language was being repeatedly used by the respondents

to characterize native and non-native speech: often unwittingly, they separated 'beautiful', 'clean' and 'normal' native English from the 'dirty', 'ugly' non-native varieties. Table 5 provides some example sentences and data on the frequency of the adjectives used.

Comments category	**# of occurrences**	**# of respondents**	**Examples**
"Clean language"	6	5	"if I found myself working in an environment where everyone speaks English, and even if they're not English they have a clean accent, I'd be more careful [about his own]" (P5); "I don't think I'll ever get [NS status], I mean, I try to speak as clean as possible…" (P15); [in reference to NS teachers] "it could be easier to learn language starting from a quote unquote cleaner language" (P16); "[in private school] I was exposed to American English in particular, today [year abroad in a non-anglophone country] the English I'm exposed to is way dirtier" (P7).
Right accent	4	3	"before [studying English in private school], the pronunciation I was exposed to [American] was necessarily the right one, and I had to absorb it" (P7); "the professors and researchers I've met tend to not care about having a beautiful, correct British accent but to be understandable" (P10); "being a NS is knowing the grammar, having a vast vocabulary and having the right accent" (P1).
Real language	7	5	"I have a strong southern Italian accent, because I never developed a real one, because I never speak it" (P10); [about her speaking English without a clearly recognisable Italian accent] "since I love languages I always try to relate to the original language" (P18); "[the advantage of having a native speaker] was becoming accustomed to hearing the real language, which I would have heard in England" (P16).
Standard accent	4	4	"[when people immediately notice she is Italian from her accent] I think 'gosh it's so evident, that means I can't speak… normal, the way they do" (P9); "I'd like not to have peaks of *Italianness*, so to say, because… I think workplaces should remain relatively neutral" ("It'd be useful to learn a standard accent and then maybe develop your own" (P16).
Beautiful accent	3	2	"British English is recognised around the world as the 'wow', beautiful accent" (P10); [in saying not everyone needs to have a NS accent] "it's not like we all need to have a perfect accent" (P15).

Table 5. Views on NS English

The use of this type of language in defining NS and NNS speech is not surprising: it is in line with Mugglestone's (2003: 51) observations that extralinguistic images of 'elegance', 'decorum' and 'correctness', as well as the opposite, can be associated to specific accents, to the point of making them "a reflection of the speaker's presupposed inner qualities". Interviewee P14 states openly that "*I 'have' the stereotype that English people have a good sense of humour, are determined, polite, elegant… if I hear a marked English accent […] I'll be well-disposed towards them – maybe they're a terrible person, but until I get to know them, I'll be well-disposed*". Most respondents displayed a positive attitude towards native-accented English in general, although some had a clear preference for the variety (and accent) their past teachers had used, or the one they had more experience with. On the other hand, as will be discussed in more detail in section 4.6, they seemed to have a much more troubled relationship with NNS English, even – or especially – when it is spoken in their own native accent.

It should be noted that past experience was not the only factor making native varieties 'pleasant'. For example, P4 recalls: "*I didn't like the American accent at the beginning […] I like the British accent, but not because I had studied it, because it seemed much more formal, much cleaner, much more elegant. The American accent just sounded boorish to me*" – once again, attributing extralinguistic qualities to an accent. However, she later adds, "*I also started to appreciate the American accent by being there*". Indeed, the few negative comments about 'native' accents had two main causes: either not being accustomed to certain varieties of English, as in P4's case above; or not understanding a certain speaker (e.g. British, even though it was the accent most often defined as 'pleasing' to the ear, then Australian, Scottish, Texan, Nigerian). This is in line with the findings by Dragojevic and Giles (2016) that negative attitudes can be influenced by difficulty in understanding the input language, and not only by the stereotypes associated to it.

Understandability emerged again as a leading concern for interviewees when they were asked whether they wish to change their native Italian accent, or to adopt a 'native-like' one. Most of them (13 out of 18) declared to like or 'accept' their Italian accent, either because they associate it with their identity (7) or because of the 'effort' it would take to change it (4), however, seven participants affirmed they would consider changing the way they speak if it interfered with being understood by others. As described in section 4.3, respondents often did not think there was a difference between having a correct pronunciation on a phonological level and having a (foreign) accent, which blurs the line between needing to have a 'native-like' accent and 'talking properly' even further.

Eight participants expressed the desire to change their accent – not necessarily to 'sound more native', which was only mentioned by three people (P6, P13 and P16; the latter actually stated that she has 'grown to like' her Italian accent and does not seek to change it anymore). The biggest push towards changing their accent seems to be either fear of being judged or discriminated, or internalized dislike of the Italian accent.

4.6. *Attitudes to NNS English*

As was mentioned above, some interviewees described a general sense of anxiety when having to speak English. This feeling was heightened when they were in direct comparison with – or judged by – NS. P18, for example, described incidents in which

NS repeatedly pretended not to understand her as she was working abroad; P2 and P8 report being "*glared at*" or being treated "*coldly*" by NS. P6 and P13 shared their impression of being taken "*more seriously*" when they displayed a 'native-like' accent, and many feel an added pressure when they need to talk in front of NS, such as P17, who was nervous about having to speak at a conference and only relaxed when he noticed "*there weren't many English people*" there.

One interesting case is represented by P3: the Italian-born PhD candidate has Nigerian roots and grew up speaking both Italian and the English-based Nigerian Pidgin (for an overview of the differences between Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin, see Agbo and Plag 2020) at home. She describes her experience as a bilingual speaker of a variety of English not fully recognized as 'native' as strongly dependent on her interlocutor: "*it's interesting, because when I talk to Nigerians they tell me 'you don't sound like one of us, your pronunciation is different', but when I talk to an Anglophone person they say 'you have an Italian accent', so depending on who I have in front of me my accent never seems right*". She goes on to emphasize how correctness is a matter of perception, not only concerning accent but also the differences in syntax across World Englishes: "*an English person would say 'we're not talking proper here'* [about the Nigerian Pidgin], *but to Nigerians that way is correct… it is normalised for them, there are millions of people who use it that way, and it is right to them, so 'talking proper' is relative*".

On the other hand, P6 was also criticized for not having the right accent – only in her case it was an Italian speaker mocking her for her British accent, which she developed due to taking English lessons since childhood. To the other Italian speaker, it was offensive that she would try to conceal her identity as a native Italian – a sentiment that has been echoed by another participant, who equated changing one's own accent to being 'inauthentic'.

The bond between language and identity is undoubtedly strong and hard to extricate. The matter is further complicated when people begin to show negative attitudes towards their own language variety or accent, which can occur when they become aware of its lower level of prestige compared to a 'standard' variety – in this case, 'native' English (see Dragojevic *et al.* 2021). One third of respondents displayed an internalized belief that Italians mostly speak 'bad English', or "*macaronic*" English, as it is often called. This attitude revealed itself through comments such as 'being surprised' that an Italian could display a high level of proficiency, describing the 'classic' Italian accent in English as 'terrible', or openly mocking Italians who speak English with an accent. For example, P7 described his high school teachers' perceived lack of skills as them being "*Italian-Italian*".

Vincze and MacIntyre (2017) found evidence that accent stigmatization increases anxiety about speaking in a foreign language. This can increase a learner's inhibitions, thus hindering both progress and communication – arguably, the main reason for learning a foreign language. Their findings become all the more interesting in situations such as the one exposed in these interviews, which show that accent stigmatization does not come necessarily from interactions with native speakers, but also from those with non-native speakers who have internalized native-speakerism.

5. Conclusion

The work presented here aimed to explore the complex relationship that a group of Italian MA students and PhD candidates have with the English language as it is used in academia, and the one they have with the nebulous figure of the English 'native speaker'. To this goal, three research questions were developed. RQ2 (Is it possible that learners with different goals and needs might choose different models, with different characteristics?) was addressed in the first part (and especially in the 'Needs' section, 4.3), which suggested that PhD candidates and MA students have different needs pertaining to their role within the university (focus on research vs. on completing their education), and that they seem to be aware of what skills might be required in their respective fields. However, the small number of interviewees and the qualitative nature of the research meant that it was not possible to make inferences about the specific needs respondents may have pertaining to their fields of study. Further research might expand on the elements of interest that arose from this inquiry with a greater focus on quantitative data.

RQ1 (How rooted is in learners the tendency to use the NS as a model or reference point for 'correct' English?) and RQ3 (What elements, if not *nativeness*, could represent a new model for learners?) were explored in the second part, i.e. in sections 4.4 and 4.5, in which participants discussed the figure of the 'mother-tongue' speaker. The results suggest that the native-nonnative relationship is even more layered than expected, since many interviewees stated that NS teachers could be replaced by competent NNS while nevertheless reinforcing their role as a reference point at the very same time.

Perhaps the most interesting results are those that are not directly connected to the research questions – which attests to the usefulness of the Grounded Theory Method in ongoing research. Firstly, the picture interviewees painted of the use of English in academia raises the issue that EAP does not seem to have a definite place in their experiences. Although in PhD courses it is sometimes offered in the form of academic writing courses, at BA and MA level it is too often replaced by EMI or ELT. As a result, understanding the intricacies of field-specific language and discourses is left to the learners' own initiative. It also appears that there might be an interest on the part of MA and PhD students in receiving more formal instruction in EAP.

Secondly, the interviews revealed that participants not only have a complex relationship with the concept of 'natives' – but, perhaps consequently, with their own language and accent as well. While they underline the importance of being understandable to others, they attribute greater prestige to NS and criticize – sometimes harshly – those who have an accent that is 'too Italian'. This suggests that the native-nonnative binary might have developed in a sort of hierarchy, in which NNS will always be 'faulty natives' unless they renounce the markers of their national identity. This goes against the goal of EAP, which is to develop "disciplinary biliteracy [and] mastery of the disciplinary discourses *in both languages*" (Hyland and Shaw 2016: 7, emphasis added).

Since English acquired its role as the global lingua franca, "native-speaker ownership is impossible by definition: if the language is to be truly international, it can no longer be the possession of a particular (national) speech community but belongs to everyone who uses it" (Hackert 2012: 23). However, in the words of one interviewee, native speakers still have "*the upper hand*" (P9).

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THUMBS UP OR THUMBS DOWN? NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA DYNAMICS IN AN ESP COMMERCE COURSE ON FACEBOOK

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Abstract

This study explores the social media behaviours of 64 undergraduates specializing in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). These students have chosen to use a private Facebook group as an alternative to the Moodle platform for engaging in online class tasks. This novel approach facilitates the fusion of diverse class sections within a relaxed and informal digital space, allowing for greater freedom of expression as they tackle course assignments.

These learners are enrolled in three separate sections of a second-year English for Commerce Purposes program (BA in Commerce) at a Spanish public university. They convene in person twice a week, dedicating two hours to each session. Over the course of the term, students are tasked with participating in different discussion forums, which take place either on the Facebook group or the Moodle platform. These forums serve as a means to practise writing skills and review course materials covered in class. Each online task is designed to be completed within a 15-minute time frame, and students are regularly prompted to engage with their peers by responding to various simulated scenarios (e.g. endorsing or disapproving email requests, accepting or rejecting apologies, etc.). When responding to their classmates, learners can provide support or take a more critical stance.

Hence, my study aims to dissect how students interact with these tasks on the Facebook platform, exploring their tendencies to support or challenge their peers within the context of these simulations. Furthermore, I will scrutinize the linguistic resources employed when offering support or expressing disagreement. Finally, I will explain how students perceive their behaviours within this social media environment throughout the course.

1. Introduction

Social networks have changed our manner of connecting with our relatives and friends, allowing us to get to know what people are doing, and breaking down distance barriers.. For education purposes, they have been introduced inside and outside classrooms, mainly to motivate students and adapt to their current lifestyles. However, many teachers are reluctant to use them in class, associating social networks with less professional ways of communicating with people. This caused some scholars to disregard social networks altogether, resulting in few studies being undertaken to analyse

the role of platforms like Facebook in enhancing English as a Foreign Language teaching. Now, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid and online education have become paradigmatic, and social networks are seen as innovative and necessary ways of communicating with students.

The present study analyses the use of Facebook in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course taught at a public university in Spain. Three different groups of students studying the same subject, namely, Business English for Commerce students, were invited to join a Facebook closed group to do written activities that would boost class engagement and interactions among peers of different sections. This idea would allow students to talk to classmates from other groups, or even peers in the same class whom they would not normally talk to because their course section has numerous students. Additionally, since the COVID-19 pandemic was still taking place at the time of the experiment, some students were required to attend classes online while others had to attend classes face-to-face. Therefore, creating a Facebook closed group could guarantee students' interaction with one another, regardless of their group.

L2 sociopragmatic competence is key in ESP courses which anticipate using the foreign language in prospective professional contexts. From this perspective, it is interesting to see how students interact with one another, whether they align and support each other when being asked to take fictitious roles (e.g. adopting the role of the boss of their classmates, or simply a friend, or hiring staff at a given company). Therefore, several questions arise when carrying out this experiment:

RQ1: Would students prefer using the institutional online platform or the Facebook closed group created ad hoc for the course?

RQ2: How will students react to their peers' responses to activities on the Facebook wall? Will they support them or go against them? Which linguistic strategies will they use to respond to their classmates' texts?

RQ3: In a more general sense, can Facebook become a feasible didactic tool for an ESP course?

The study is structured in the following manner. After the introduction, a brief literature review of the use of Facebook in EFL contexts will be presented, both in English for General and Specific Purposes settings. Later, a description of the methodology (participants, class activities, and procedures) will follow. Then, the data analysis and discussion of results are presented. Finally, some concluding remarks and a list of references are provided.

2. Facebook as an English workbook

Integrating social networks into English language learning, particularly through platforms like Facebook, offers new possibilities for fostering engagement, community, and authentic language use. Social media tools are becoming increasingly relevant in language learning due to their accessibility, interactivity, and alignment with modern students' digital literacy skills. Unlike traditional learning platforms like Moodle, so-

cial networks offer an informal space where students can participate more freely, enhancing their motivation and providing additional peer support beyond the classroom.

2.1. Community building and peer support

A common theme across several studies is the ability of social networks to create learning communities where students feel more comfortable expressing themselves and supporting each other. Facebook, in particular, encourages peer interaction in ways that traditional platforms may not fully facilitate. The sense of belonging in a social network space, which students may already associate with personal and social relationships, extends to their academic work, allowing them to collaborate and learn from each other. This fosters social learning that traditional platforms might struggle to replicate.

For instance, Saylag (2013) and Peeters and Fourie (2016) emphasize how Facebook encourages self-disclosure and helps students adapt to new academic cultures by promoting peer communication and sharing personal experiences. Similarly, Rodliyah (2016) found that Facebook's dialogue journaling feature helps students develop their writing skills by sharing and learning from others' linguistic contributions.

2.2. Motivation and engagement

Another recurring theme is the ability of social networks to enhance students' motivation and engagement. Unlike traditional platforms, social networks allow for more immediate interaction and real-time feedback, which can make the learning process feel more dynamic and enjoyable. The informal nature of social networks can also reduce the pressure that comes with formal academic platforms, encouraging students to take more risks with language. This is particularly relevant in language learning, where learners may hesitate to participate in more rigid environments like Moodle.

Shih (2013) and Saienko *et al.* (2020) highlight that using Facebook in ESP contexts boosts motivation and interest in the course material. Similarly, Salazar Chica *et al.* (2021) demonstrate how Facebook groups foster active participation and help students improve their vocabulary in a less constrained environment, further validating the idea that informality can promote creativity and exploration in language learning.

2.3. Authenticity of communication

Social networks are celebrated for providing students with opportunities to engage in authentic communicative practices. These platforms mimic real-world interactions more closely than traditional platforms, allowing students to practise the language in context through informal exchanges, such as commenting, sharing, and reacting to posts. In contrast, Moodle and other learning management systems may provide structured activities but often lack this level of spontaneity.

Several studies, such as Nikbaht and Boshrabadi (2015), have noted that using social networking sites positively influences vocabulary retention because students are exposed to words in a more interactive environment, leading to deeper lexical processing. Additionally, Lantz-Andersson (2018) emphasizes how social networks support pragmatic and sociolinguistic development by exposing students to hybrid language practices (e.g. emoticons, memes) that reflect real-life communication.

2.4. Challenges of mixing personal and academic spaces

While social networks offer numerous advantages, they also come with challenges, particularly in how they blend students' personal and academic lives. Some students may find it difficult to shift from using Facebook for social purposes to using it for university activities. This overlap can create issues of privacy and professionalism, with some students feeling uncomfortable engaging with academic content in a space they typically associate with personal communication.

Rodliyah (2016) highlights this tension, noting that while students appreciate the flexibility and accessibility of Facebook for language learning, they also express concerns about the blurred boundaries between personal and academic spaces. In comparison, platforms like Moodle provide a more formal and controlled environment, which may feel more appropriate for scholarly work, especially in professional settings like ESP courses.

2.5. Blended learning and flexibility

Several studies also advocate a blended learning approach, where social networks complement traditional learning platforms rather than replace them. This integration allows educators to take advantage of the unique strengths of each tool. Shih (2013) suggests that combining Facebook with more formal learning management systems can maximize student engagement and provide diverse ways to support learners. Similarly, Peeters and Fourie (2016) argue that Facebook can be used as a supplementary tool to help students overcome challenges in academic acculturation while ensuring that formal academic needs are met through traditional platforms. This blended approach addresses concerns about privacy and professionalism by giving students the flexibility to choose the platform that best fits their learning style and the nature of the task.

In conclusion, using social networks like Facebook in EFL and ESP contexts introduces new ways to engage students, foster a community spirit, and support authentic language practice. However, these platforms also bring challenges related to privacy, professionalism, and the blending of personal and academic spaces. By exploring these themes across various studies, it becomes clear that social networks, when used strategically and in conjunction with traditional platforms, can greatly enhance the language learning experience, particularly in fostering motivation, peer support, and real-world communicative competence.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This study's sample consists of 64 second-year students (ages 19-21) who are enrolled in the same English for Commerce Purposes course at a public university in Madrid (Spain). However, they are divided into three different sections. Group 1 and Group 2 (21 and 24 students, respectively) go to class at the same time in the morning but are taught by two different professors, and Group 3 (19 students) attends classes in the afternoon. However, they all take two-hour classes twice a week for 15 weeks. The total number of students enrolled across all sections is 160 for all the groups combined. They follow a blended learning approach, meaning that only one-third of the students enrolled in each group attend classes every week while the remaining students fol-

low the class through a Google Meet session. Lastly, students are mostly intermediate learners (B1 CEFR), but there are some A2 students as well.

3.2. Class activities

Since all 64 students are covering the same content and doing the same activities, students are offered to join a Facebook group to interact with each other when doing certain written activities in each class. However, all students are also allowed to do those activities in their official Moodle course from the Virtual Campus.

Students have done a total of 20 activities throughout the course, which are mostly linked to the course topics, which, in turn, follow the logical structure of a job application process (writing a CV, writing emails, interviewing for a job, and delivering a pitch). From this perspective, regarding the description of previous experiences, students have to explain their fictitious past job experience (Act 1) and apologize for past wrong behaviour (Act 2). To improve their CVs, students approach action verbs by imagining they become CEOs of a company (Act 3).

For interview practices, students attempt to convince someone to go for an interview (Act 8). They have to describe the flaws of a previous manager in a fictitious job (Act 14). Learners also deal with methods such as RESA (Relevant, Experiences, Skills, Achievements and Awards), DLCT (Did, Learned, Contributed, Transformed), or STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Results) to inform and persuade the interviewer (Activity 15). Also, students practise pitch scripting and delivery in Activities 18 and 19.

Additionally, also related to business management and dynamics, students have to choose an approach to business (Act 4), make their own approach to Sustainable Development Goals (Act 17), see how to address superiors or inferiors at a company (Act 16), and they have to show resilience by adapting to changes in the office (Act 10). They also have to give advice (Act 7), make both informal and formal proposals (Activities 5 and 6, respectively), make a formal request via email (Act 12) or present plans for a Halloween office party (Act 13).

Learners are also required to show their creative and leadership skills by canvassing for a project (Act 9), creating a startup (Act 11), and individually convincing their professor why they are the student of the month (Act 20).

3.3. Procedures

All 20 activities aim at practising different linguistic functions in a 15-minute writing activity done in most of the classes. Now, only 64 students have decided to participate in the closed Facebook group, while the rest have preferred to work on the Moodle platform. In fact, for each activity, we have a different Facebook participation rate, depending on whether students have come to class or not. While the participation rate among students who stay on Moodle is around 66%, only half of the class who join the Facebook closed group have come to class and do the activities.

The reason why many students still prefer using Moodle over Facebook can be due to their familiarity with the platform, as it is used in all the other university courses they have been taking in the last year. None of the students publicly raised any concern about Facebook, but the lack of anonymity could be a worry for some of them. Finally, some students might resist the change because they prefer more traditional learning methods.

Now, the main difference between the two systems is that learners who have opted out of joining the Facebook community can see and interact with students from other groups rather than just their own and can make anonymous comments, since students are not required to join the group with their real names, thus leading to more opportunities to develop or pretend to be a new persona. Students are thus prompted to engage with their peers by responding to various simulated scenarios (e.g. endorsing or disapproving email requests, accepting or rejecting apologies, etc.). When responding to their classmates, learners can provide support or take a more critical stance.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Results

Students were asked to react to their peers' activities written down on the wall of a Facebook closed group created *ad hoc* for the course. The first activity was explicitly used as an introduction and did not require students to comment on their classmates' activities, and we all voted aloud the best profile for a given job offer. Since then, students have reacted differently towards their classmates. Out of 19 activities done on the wall of the closed Facebook group, 499 answers were generated by students (an average of 26 per activity), who also provided 378 comments (an average of 19 comments per activity) to the different answers throughout the course. This means that not all students who wrote an answer to each activity then commented on another classmate's work. The main reason behind this difference may be due to students not attending class synchronously: they might have just done the first activity in most cases but avoided doing the second half.

Moreover, this difference can be explained by the students' English proficiency disparities. Most ESP courses taught in Spanish universities have students with different levels of English, from A2 to C1 (CEFR). Therefore, not even intermediate and advanced students can deliver similar results in the same 15-minute frame given to do the activity. Then, depending on whether this online writing task was the last activity in the class or not, those students with lower levels would try to complete the second half of the activity or not. 78% of the students who did the first activity also did the second one, which seems to highlight these competence disparities or the number of times this writing task was followed by a different activity so that lower-level students could try to finish commenting on their classmates' answers.

As we mentioned, 378 comments were generated by students replying to other students' answers. Now, students mainly chose to respond positively (n=289, 77%) to their classmates by means of supporting them or agreeing with them in their original answers to the class activity, as opposed to students who preferred to defy, oppose, criticize, or go against their classmates' first answers (n=89, 23%).

4.2. Students' reactions to their peers on social media

Students mostly responded positively when answering their classmates' first answers to the activities. However, in two out of 19 situations, they decided to go against their peers. The first case deals with an activity in which students are to practise action verbs in future verb tenses (simple, progressive, perfect simple, or *be going to*) where they imagine becoming CEO of a company. Then, learners are asked to "Choose

somebody's predictions and support them or question them. Come up with a story of your own and explain why that prediction/plan will or won't be happening. Remember this is a fictitious world that we use for English practice". In this activity, 90% of the answers criticize their peers. Students employ different techniques, mockery being one of the most common strategies to reply to other learners:

- Simply disagreeing

(1) Student 1' answer: "If I am CEO at HUAWEI, I will negotiate marketing strategy with department managers".

Student 2' comment: "You should negotiate marketing with [the] marketing department, instead of negotiating it with all department managers".

- Against socialism

(2) Student 1' answer: "When I'm CEO at Zara, I will reduce the [working] hours of the employees".

Student 2' comment: "Don't implement socialism political measures, it doesn't work".

- Mockery

(3) Student 1' answer: "When I was* the CEO of Apple, I will set up a new policy to encourage employees to innovate".

Student 2' comment: "I don´t think you will be the CEO of Apple. Because you have never tried to innovate. How are you going to encourage your employees while you haven´t done it well? 🤣".

(4) Student 1' answer: "When I'm CEO in Carolina Herrera, I will motivate my employees and give them sales and presents".

Student 2' comment: "I don't think you will give your employees a present because you didn't even give me anything for my birthday".

(5) Student 1' answer: "When I'm CEO at TOEI ANIMATION I will be advising the animators so that they make the best animations on the world".

Student 2' comment: "u wont be CEO at TOEI ANIMATION first of all because* I will be CEO at MAPPA and I'm going to buy TOEI ANIMATION, if u want to u would be second in comand*. In adition*, u wont be skilled enough to take the position".

These examples show which strategies students used to oppose each other. We do not witness any sort of constructive criticism, but students want to be funny to avoid losing face in front of the other classmates who might be reading these responses. Personal attacks are not rare, especially when it comes to workers' rights, which students tend to associate with socialist policies.

In the last activity of the course, students are asked to sell themselves to win the award of the best student of the course. Then, they must reply to their classmates' messages as if they were the English teacher and explain to their classmates if they think those reasons are good enough to be the best student or not. In this case, humour is only used once, when one student comments on his answer:

(6) Student 1' answer: "Good morning, as you know, one reason is thtat* always I go early to the class and I pay attention at all times to the explanation of the teacher, others resons* are that if one student ask me for help, never I say no and I do it the best that I could and I have the best note* in the class".

Student 1' comment: "Hi. It is true that you always come so early and ever pay attention to the class, also your classmates say to me that you help with everything and also it is true you have the best note* in the class. For all reasons, I think that you deserve this award".

Most typical replies simply consider that the reasons given to win the awards are not enough:

(7) Student 1' answer: "Hi everyone. I think I am the best student in the "English for Business Management I" course because I come to class on time every day and I listen carefully every time. I actively participate in the group discussion activities assigned and I have done well in every assignment".

Student 2' comment: "As your teacher I have the responsibility* to choose who will win this award. I think that arriving to class at time every day doesn´t give you the award, but I know that your interaction at class is always good. So you could be probably one of the best students in class".

However, due to the importance of becoming the best student of the course (this award gives students an extra grade), not all students go against each other, and some (probably because they are not simply classmates but also friends at this point of the course) try collaborating by replying to one another supporting their candidacies.

(8) Student 1' answer: "Sorry I don* feel that I was the best student at the class, but if for a one* moment I would think about this, I would say that I have been at the* every classes and I have participate* in every activities* with all my fort*. I have working* with few resources learned before and I have got make* every homework's successfully.

I have got growing* my level of vocal expression, I have been a creative student and I have try* growing the level of the different ways lo* learn English. I have the intention of follow* learning after".

Student 2' comment: "Hello, I might* you are best student. because the* faithful is the most important thing. So already I know you got good attitude for learning English*. In conclusion*, I think you are the best student".

(9) Student 1' answer: "Good afternoon. I think I am the one of the best student in this class. Because I attented* the whole* of class. Also, I got good score in my assignment. Therefore, I am looking forward to take* a time with you, and I'm prepared to communicate with you".

Student 2' comment: "are you* really a perfect candidate to win this award. I have seen that you are a* active student, an* student that know* about the vocal techniques and expressions and I have so much* ideas help* you to be the winner. We are going to talk so soon".

Now, as we mentioned before, students preferred to respond positively to their peers. For instance, when students are asked to apologize for previous behaviour, and then accept or reject the apology (which is a good opportunity to show off wittiness and mockery), only three comments do not offer hope and forgiveness. Even in some activities designed to lead to mockery (i.e. when students are asked to accept or reject a date), the majority of answers simply accept the romantic date (57% vs. 43%), or just an invitation for a fun plan (84% vs. 16%), although mockery appears often in both activities (example 10 and 11, respectively).

(10) Student 1' answer: "Hi there gorgeous, I was thinking about getting a drink after class, wanna go to Starbucks and get to know each other?".

Student 2' comment: "Are u dumb? Have u seen it face, u really think u could handle me? It may happen in ur dreams so can u disappear pls?".

(11) Student 1' answer: "For my Halloween* holiday I am going to a big party at trinidad*, Madrid. I have paid 40$* for the party, but includes free alcohol, custom party and shots gun* to get drank. My idea is to forget everything about university and just enjoy because the night is young".

Student 2' comment: "Hello, I have no plans that day, but 40 euros is crazy!!! I'd rather stay home with my four cats and watch a good scary movie before I go to that drunken party. But thank you very much for your invitation. I will make you a summary of the movie on Monday. A greeting".

Positive comments respond to the social nature of Facebook which, in the context of an English course, creates a peer-supportive dynamic fostered by a culture of "likes". Social network rules dictate students' lifestyles nowadays, which somehow leads them to desire social approval and to avoid social friction.

Students are also offered opportunities to be mean to their inferiors in a company, but even in these cases almost 70% of the learners were nice and offered some days off when requested by their employees. It is noticeable that several students use mental health excuses to obtain the permission:

(12) Student 1' answer: "Dear boss, I feel very tired recently, and my mental state is not very good. I hope to apply for a three-day vacation to adjust my state so that I can work better. Thank you for your approval".

Student 2' comment: "I understand you believe me. Sometimes we need a little break to calm down and keep working so yes, you should try to rest these days and when you are back you should also try to work in a different way so that you dont* get so tired".

Nevertheless, we also saw an attempt at mockery:

(13) Student 1' answer: "Hi boss, I was wondering if u could give me some free days as I have to rest after all the hard work u may know I have done".

Student 2' comment: "Sorry but you may not take vacation, I was thinking that you can do something else, you must arrive soon[er]".

Mockery is sometimes quite acerbic, leading to the use of swearwords to pretend to be funny (example 14) or simple accusations as in example 15 regarding the choice of the most important Sustainable Development Goal.

(14) Student 1' answer: "There are some positive reasons to be a self-employed, I think that *is a lot of people in Spain *very creative and with good ideas, so they create amazing business, you will be your own boss that the best reason to be and* self-employed. If you do good and your business like*, you will be rich in a few years. You can invest with your best friends, and I think that you learn a lot when you became* your own boss".

Student 2' comment: "Hi, I don't know what's wrong with that fucking head of shit that you have. I think you should take a walk-in fucking reality and stop being silly. Watch the news more and please be more realistic".

(15) Student 1' answer: "The most important one it´s* the quality* of the education, because if we improve the education of our children, the future of the country it´s* goint* to be better guaranteed, and also we can be one of the potential* countries in the world".

Student 2' comment: "You are the perfect example of why education is important and how bad it is because only such an incompetent person would say that education comes first when we are running out of planet* to live on".

Similarly, one student uses irony to mock another peer when learners were required to apply for a position as Amazon's new CEO:

(16) Student 1' answer: "Dear Mr Bezzos, I have heard your need of a new CEO for your company and I would be the best candidate possible for that job. I can manage companies nearly as good as you do, that is why I was the CEO of Walmart for 25 years and made the sales increase in more than 260%. I would be a great learner if you allow me to observe your work for a few days and I will treat the company as if it was mine. I am capable of making the companys sales continue growing as if your were still there. If I catched your attention, please call to my tlf and will meet to have an interview. Best regards".

Student 2' comment: "I dont* know who u are and I dont* really care, u just disrespected myself so dont* even think of it, best whises whith* ur "incredible" company".

We have witnessed mockery every now and then. Yet, it seems that students did not reply to those remarks afterwards. The only case that shows an answer to a previous humorous reply is seen when students were asked to provide advice to the CEO of their fictitious company on buying TikTok. Student 1 finds it hilarious that Student 2 blatantly just answers "No" to the advice.

(17) Student 1' answer: "I think you might buy Tiktok, because it has already reached 1 billion active global users. And the number must keep growing during the Covid-19 pandemic. If you want to further our company, you must take actions as soon as possible".

Student 2' comment: "No".
Student 1's reply to Student 2: "XD".

In summary, we have seen a strong tendency to avoid confrontation or harsh criticism, resorting to humorous responses when producing a negative answer. This face-saving behaviour is ingrained in students' social network culture, which is transferred to the context of the class. A hate attitude is thus avoided, as students cannot hide behind a mask or name in order to criticize others (as people tend to do in social networks). When students do provide criticism, they often employ indirect strategies or hedge their language to soften the blow, using strategies such as humour.

Another social behaviour shown by students is that they tend to copy grammatical structures used by other students, even if they are wrong ("I'm agree", because of the influence of Spanish *Yo estoy de acuerdo*, appears in many responses) or they are not canonical ("I'm in the side of Adi" is used numerous times in activity 4). In a peer-learning environment like the Facebook wall used for the course, when a student sees a classmate using a grammatical structure, s/he may repeat it, and that iteration may lead more students to think that such a construction is well-formed or is acceptable. In this sense, students might not question the use of structures that they frequently see because they trust the majority usage, assuming it aligns with standard English. The lack of immediate correction in a peer-driven, informal platform like Facebook can reinforce this behaviour. The instructor read some of these comments aloud at the end of the activity, raising awareness of students' mistakes. However, students were not asked to correct these wrong linguistic uses and they were expected to pay attention to the teacher's explanations and apply them to future activities.

Moreover, students sometimes rely on cognitive shortcuts to complete tasks efficiently, that is, they might copy phrases from peers to participate in class activities without having to devote much time to constructing sentences from scratch. Moreover, not all students have the same linguistic proficiency, and some attempt to copy their peers' structures because they do not have the same level of English and prefer to produce content at the expense of their grammatical processing. This could be the case of those who repeat the structure "I'm agree", which they do not consider incorrect because they have read in their peers' answers and because it sounds like the Spanish linguistic counterpart.

Students do pay attention to all comments, and they normally have time to reply to just one comment, and depending on their mastery of English those comments are either longer or shorter. Students do not always side or do not side at all with their classmates, but they vary their answers depending on the topic, as it is true that they do not always use the same strategies to reply. Learners do not decide who to reply to depending on the original message length (although there is a tendency to avoid the longest reply to the original activity). We also see certain students prefer to try to reply to the same classmates because they are sitting together and can later comment orally on their answers, which is also good because it helps them practise not just written but oral skills in class (although some of the post-activity comments would be done in Spanish, even more when they are cases of mockery).

5. Concluding remarks and future lines of research

This study has analysed the use of a Facebook closed group created *ad hoc* for an English for Specific Purposes course at a public university. 64 students have joined the group to do 20 activities, 19 of which led to written interaction among participants. In all cases, learners were always given two choices: supporting their peers or going against their applications, requests, apologies, etc. Students produced a total of 499 answers throughout the course, an average of 26 per activity (as opposed to 64 students who had joined the Facebook group). They only commented 378 times on their classmates' original answers (an average of 19 per activity). 77% of those comments were positive, meaning that students preferred supporting their peers rather than opposing them. However, regarding negative comments, it was interesting to see that many students resorted to humorous responses, mainly using mockery (accusations and irony among other techniques).

The first research question (*RQ1: Would students prefer using the institutional online platform or the Facebook closed group created ad hoc for the course?*) has been answered considering the large number of students who preferred using the institutional Moodle platform found in Virtual Campus. This result was unexpected since Facebook was understood as being more genuinely aligned with students' preferences and lifestyles. Nevertheless, learners were registered in Moodle by default, and many students did not use Facebook at the beginning of the course, as they now use Instagram and TikTok. Future research should try to use these social networks instead, which could boost student participation.

The second research question (*RQ2: How will students react to their peers' responses to activities on the Facebook wall? Will they support them or go against them? Which linguistic strategies will they use to respond to their classmates' texts?*) shows that students preferred to be faithful to their peers and respond positively to their classmates. Learners were adequately formal or informal depending on the context of the activity, but they were always polite when replying positively. They showed concern for their peers and their mental health and were always interested in helping in any way possible. Now, when students wanted to oppose their peers, comments ranged from neutral answers in which they simply and objectively stated their point of view to clear examples of mockery. Some of these cases included direct accusations against their classmates because of their behaviour in class, (more rarely) insults, or even the use of irony. The number of linguistic mistakes (considering their level of English was A2 or B1, CEFR) shows that students used the foreign language naturally, without artificial intelligence. Future studies could try to analyzs how students can use tools like ChatGPT to correct their mistakes before submitting their answers and comments.

Finally, answering our last question (*RQ3: In a more general sense, can Facebook become a feasible didactic tool for an ESP course?*), this study has proved that Facebook can be a motivating tool. During the 15 minutes students devoted to these writing activities, learners were fully engaged with them, just reading their peers' texts to choose who to respond to. These activities led to more reading comprehension practices, which can be a sort of intensive reading opportunity for students who do not tend to read texts in English. Future studies could combine intensive reading of more text genres other than students' short texts and writing practices to make learners' written practise

more exhaustively. In this respect, some of the activities could be combined with other modes of communication, such as listening activities that introduce the activity *per se*. In conclusion, using social networks in class has proved to be quite useful for reading and writing practice and leading to class engagement. Future lines of research could also focus on using these sites outside the classroom, to assist learners in their daily study and perhaps thus substituting their use of social networks for leisure purposes.

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THE LANGUAGE OF TRAVEL JOURNALISM IN DIFFERENT CULTURES: A STUDY OF COLLOCATE PAIRS IN ENGLISH, ITALIAN AND POLISH

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Abstract

Travel journalism has hitherto received scarce attention on the part of academics in general and linguists in particular. Using a corpus-driven approach, this paper will focus on a key aspect of formulaicity, collocate pairs and collocation, comparing and contrasting findings in travel journalism in three different languages, English, Italian and Polish. In order to compile three comparable corpora, one for each language, articles were downloaded from the online versions of *The Guardian*, *La Repubblica*, and *Gazeta*. The texts were annotated for part-of-speech and lemma using TreeTagger. Collocate pairs were then extracted from the annotated data using tailor-made Perl scripts. Subsequently a dispersion filter of presence in at least 10 different texts was applied. The resulting collocate pairs were placed into thematic groups, the largest of which were LOGISTICS and CULTURE+HISTORY. These categories were subjected to further analysis, and it emerged that there were notable differences in their relative proportions between the three sets of data. The results show how the collocate pairs in the three languages point to differing constructions of destination images and tourism experiences in these cultures, a finding relevant both to trainee travel journalists in the three languages, as well as those translating into or from one of the three languages.

1. Introduction

The significant expansion of the tourism industry in recent decades has been heavily influenced by the emphasis placed on leisure travel in affluent societies. This surge has led to an increased production of travel-related publications to cater to the growing global audience's interest in travel activities and experiences. According to Pirolli (2019: 3), prospective travellers now heavily depend on these media outlets for information and advice when making decisions about their leisure trips. Travel journalism plays a crucial role in connecting the tourism industry's services with an enthusiastic global audience, shaping destination images, and inspiring potential tourists. As a form of lifestyle journalism, travel articles possess a distinct commercial and service-oriented nature (Hanusch and Fürsich 2014: 10-11; Pirolli 2019: 36; Cocking 2020: 13). Their primary objective is to provide practical and useful information about travel destinations and services. Pirolli (2019: 34-38) emphasizes the importance of contextualizing

first-hand travel accounts to generate expectations among potential tourists. In this sense, an author's representation of the destination contributes to both eliciting the readers' desire to experience the narrated experiences and potentially framing their interpretation of future holidays. Information, persuasion, and guidance are intertwined in travel journalism output, making it an intriguing subject for contemporary market-oriented communication research.

The language of tourism promotion, a domain that is adjacent to that of travel journalism, can offer a linguistic and socio-cultural perspective of a particular culture (Katan 2014). Since perceptions of reality and attractiveness may vary from one culture to another, these differences can be observed not only in the words used but also in cultural orientations. Therefore, to successfully translate meaning into the target language, it is not enough to identify translation equivalents at the linguistic level; it is crucial to consider cultural orientations as well. For instance, Manca (2004) analysed the distinctions between British and Italian cultures in the promotion of holiday offers at farmhouses, hotels, and campsites. She showed that while the Italian descriptions used abstract nouns and metaphorical language to appeal to customers' five senses, the English descriptions relied on factual and concrete details. She concluded that a literal translation would be inadequate, failing to consider the target-culture stylistic conventions and aesthetic traditions.

Despite gaining recent academic interest in media and journalism studies (e.g. Hanusch and Fürsich 2014; Pirolli 2019; Cocking 2020), the genre of travel reportage remains under-researched from a linguistic perspective. However, recent exploration of this type of discourse using corpus-assisted techniques has been carried out by the authors of the present study with a focus on phraseological aspects, either dealing with collocation (e.g. Brett 2018; Brett *et al.* 2021; Brett *et al.* 2023) or multi-word expressions (Brett and Pinna 2015; Brett and Pinna 2020; Pinna 2020; Pinna and Brett 2022). A recent study attempts to determine whether the language of travel journalism is more similar to mainstream newspaper language or to that of tourism promotion, concluding that, while travel journalism does display some common traits with tourism, it is nevertheless distinct in terms of other features (Brett 2023).

While various semiotic techniques contribute to the effectiveness of leisure travel publications from a communicative standpoint, analysing their written content and form helps us understand essential linguistic strategies commonly employed to portray leisure travel destinations. These strategies aim to capture readers' attention, generate interest, and ultimately convert them into consumers of specific tourist services. In an effort to fill this research gap and simultaneously expand the investigation of travel journalism output to different socio-cultural contexts of production and consumption, our focus is on collocate pairs and collocations in travel reports in three European languages: English, Italian, and Polish.

Studying collocations is a valuable approach to uncovering recurrent semantic associations within a specific socio-cultural context, whether it be a community of practice restricted to the journalistic profession or larger social groups based on shared interests, language, and/or culture. In this paper, our goal is to identify and describe collocate pairs in the three languages that may contribute to recognizing common discursive practices within this profession in the West. Simultaneously, we aim to highlight

variations in accordance with assumed differences in sensitivity and taste among the target audiences.

2. Collocate pairs and collocations

The first attested use of the term *collocation* with a sense similar to that currently used in linguistics dates to Palmer's celebrated *Second Interim Report on English Collocations* in 1933 (Barnbrook *et al.* 2013). However, still today within the field the term does not have a clear unanimously agreed-upon meaning. On the contrary, as Gries (2013: 138) states, "the notion of 'collocation' is probably best characterised as a radial category whose different senses are related to each other and grouped around one or more somewhat central senses, but whose senses can also be related to each other only rather indirectly". In a similar fashion, McEnery and Hardie (2011: 123) observe that there is "a great multitude of different definitions" for the term. Evert (2009: 1214), when discussing the meaning of collocation, distinguishes between empirical and theoretical concepts. The empirical sense regards quantifiable co-occurrences of lexical items in natural language. The theoretical concept concerns "idiosyncratic multiword expressions, defined by linguistic tests and speaker intuitions''. There is a great deal of interest and discussion at present concerning the capabilities and affordances of Artificial Intelligence. While AI may someday assist in highlighting and extracting pairs of co-occurring terms that display such idiosyncratic patterning, as yet they cannot be elicited by automatic processes.

In this paper we will use the following terminology: co-occurrences that are identified on a merely quantitative basis, by means of association measures, will be referred to as *collocate pairs*. The term *collocation* will only be solely employed when one or both of the words is "lexically determined and has a modified or bleached meaning" (Evert 2009: 1214). Therefore, we underline that the lemma pairs resulting from the automatic procedure described in Section 3 should not be called collocations, but rather potential collocations, and whether or not they are indeed so can only be ascertained via subsequent analysis. The results and discussion of the present study will therefore focus on these potential collocations, i.e. collocate pairs, and their semantic groupings in the specialized language of travel journalism in English, Italian and Polish. Course materials dedicated to Language(s) for Specific Purposes (LSP) have been criticized for not including enough resources on collocations (Granger and Bestgen 2014). Various authors emphasize the importance of using corpora for teaching collocations as a way to address challenges of the LSP classroom, for example, to assist students in recognizing the semantic prosody of the target word and provide opportunities to identify information on how collocations can adjoin negative or positive sentiment (Nelson 2006). Furthermore, it has been observed that a general academic collocation list is not enough to support students in the LSP course, therefore, discipline-specific corpus-derived resources, enriched with collocational information need to be developed (Durrant 2009; Jablonkai 2020; Rovelli 2022).

Hence, the research questions of this study are the following:

1. What are the most widely dispersed statistically significant collocate pairs in travel journalism in English, Italian and Polish?

2. Can such collocate pairs be attributed to semantic groupings? And if so, are there differences among the groups in the three languages?

3. Methodology

To address the research questions posited above, use was made of three comparable corpora of travel journalism in the three languages discussed: English, Italian and Polish, that were compiled for a previous study by the same authors (Brett *et al.* 2021). For English, articles published over a period of seven years were taken from the 'Travel' section of *The Guardian* (http://theguardian.com). The Italian section was composed of texts from the 'Viaggi' section of *La Repubblica* (https://www.repubblica.it/) and the Polish section was composed of articles from the 'Podróże' section of *Gazeta* (https://www.gazeta.pl/). The three newspapers are of a similar standing in each culture, as they are all held to be quality publications, and address a middle-class readership, with medium-high education. The articles were downloaded and processed using a semi-automatic procedure described in detail in Brett *et al.* (2021). The resulting corpus consisted of three 1M-word sections. However, some variability was noted in the composition of these subsections: the English, Italian and Polish sections were composed of 1204, 725, and 1084 articles, respectively. Therefore, the Italian section contained articles that were on average longer (1,379 tokens) than those of the English (830 tokens) and Polish articles (922 tokens).

The subcorpora were then annotated for part-of-speech and lemma with the TreeTagger tool (https://www.cis.uni-muenchen.de/~schmid/tools/TreeTagger/). Collocate pairs (4L, 4R) featuring lexical lemmas (adjectives, common nouns and lexical verbs)[1] were then extracted from the three corpora by way of a tailor-made Perl script. The procedure used to test for statistical significance of co-occurrence was the mutual information (MI) test. Only the collocate pairs that scored three or more on the MI test underwent further analysis. The procedure adopted is comparable to that of the Concgram program (Greaves 2009), i.e. the collocate pairs are extracted in a "grammatically blind" manner (Ferraresi *et al.* 2010: 338), rather than there being a search based on certain syntactic patterns. Given that dispersion is a stronger and more unique predictor of word naming and lexical choice than token frequency (Gries 2021), the results were then subjected to a dispersion filter (occurrence in at least 10 texts) to identify and discard collocate pairs present in high concentrations in only a small number of texts. The necessity for this filter can be illustrated with an example from the data: in the Italian subcorpus there are 41 instances of the statistically significant collocate pair AVERE DIRITTO [HAVE+RIGHT]. Other pairs with the same frequency are LIVELLO MARE, CULTURA CAPITALE, PISTA SCI [SEA LEVEL, CULTURE CAPITAL, SKI SLOPE]. However, the former is present only in seven texts, and furthermore 34 of its 41 instances are all from a single text presenting the constitution of the Republic of Užupis in Vilnius. The other collocate pairs cited instead appear in a number of texts ranging from 28 to 33. Therefore, adopting a dispersion filter avoids giving

[1] Each unit tested for co-occurrence was composed of a lemma followed by underscore+PoS tag (e.g. town_NN). Note that only the first two letters of each tag were used, hence all nouns were normalized into singulars, and all adjectives and verbs into base forms.

disproportionate coverage to pairs that are certainly frequent, but only in very limited sections of the corpus.

In a pilot study conducted by the authors on the same corpus (Brett *et al.* 2023), a dispersion filter of presence in at least 20 texts was set, which resulted in 251, 318, and 309 collocate pairs in English, Italian and Polish, respectively. In the current study, lowering the filter to presence in at least 10 texts results in an approximately four-fold increase in the number of collocate pairs to be discussed, thereby providing a far more detailed view into collocate pairs in travel journalism in the three languages.

The results were subsequently analysed and classified by semantic field. The lists of collocate pairs for each language were initially categorized individually. The lists of categories were then compared, and a single set of categories was agreed on for the three languages.

4. Results and discussion

The description and analysis of the results will start with the presentation of some quantitative data, subsequently the results will be analysed qualitatively. As indicated above, a dispersion filter of presence in at least 10 different texts was applied. This resulted in there being 984, 1180 and 1080 collocate pairs for the English, Italian and Polish sections, respectively. However, a point must be made in relation to the differences in composition of the sections of the corpus. Since the number of texts in the English section is considerably higher (1204) than in the Italian section (725), one would assume that a higher number of English collocate pairs would meet the criterion of presence in at least 10 texts. Contrary to expectations, there are 187 (19%) more collocate pairs in the Italian section, suggesting that it is somewhat more formulaic.

The categories identified in the data were the following: ACTIVITY, CULTURE+HISTORY, EVALUATION, FOOD, LOGISTICS, NATURE, PEOPLE, PLACE, SPORT, and TIME. A substantial number of collocations could not be placed into any particular category and hence they were added to an OTHER category. Table 1 shows the number and percentage of types for each category in each of the three languages.

	English		Italian		Polish	
Category	Types	%types	Types	%types	Types	%types
ACTIVITY	39	3.96	23	1.95	65	6
CULTURE+HISTORY	37	3.76	198	16.78	76	7
EVALUATION	26	2.64	35	2.97	94	9
FOOD	75	7.62	53	4.49	34	3
LOGISTICS	243	24.70	181	15.38	196	19
NATURE	65	6.61	117	9.92	133	12
OTHER	268	27.24	374	31.69	269	25
PEOPLE	81	8.23	22	1.86	37	3
PLACE	55	5.59	91	7.71	155	14

→

SPORT	31	3.15	18	1.53	29	3
TIME	64	6.50	68	5.76	57	5
	984	100.00	1180	100.00	1080	100

Table 1. Number and percentage of types in each category in the English, Italian, and Polish sections of the corpus

In our analysis we decided to discard the OTHER category because of the high degree of heterogeneity of the collocate pairs it contains. We then opted to focus on the category containing the largest number of collocate pairs in each language. Since LOGISTICS is the largest in both English and Polish, and CULTURE+HISTORY is the largest in Italian, the following analysis will concentrate on just these two categories.

It is important to highlight that the following discussion focuses on collocate pairs composed of lemmas, not on word forms, so adjectives are presented in their base (i.e. masculine) form in Italian and Polish, irrespective of the gender of the noun constituting the other component of the pair. Following the conventions of linguistics, lemmas are written in capital letters. The order in which the collocate lemma pairs are reported in the results does not necessarily indicate the most frequent word forms in the corpus.

4.1. *LOGISTICS*

Apart from OTHER, the LOGISTICS category comprises the largest number of collocate pairs in the English and Polish sections of the corpus and is one of the largest in the Italian section. This is a complex category that includes various thematic areas connected to the practical aspects of the holidays being discussed, from transport to and from the destination to accommodation, from travel and admission costs to trip details. We will analyse each language in our corpus in alphabetical order.

4.1.1. *LOGISTICS in English*

In the English section of the corpus, this category is composed of 243 types (24.7% of all types), which amount to a sum of 5,711 tokens (24.67% of all the collocate pair tokens). Within this category, we have identified the following thematic areas: type of transport (69 collocate pairs), travel details (50), accommodation (47), price (39), and services (25).

In the thematic area of transport, we can distinguish hyponymic and co-hyponymic relationships between collocate pairs. All types of transport mentioned (e.g. AIR TRAVEL, TRAVEL RAIL, BUS SERVICE, and TRAIN SERVICE) are a form of transport (FORM TRANSPORT), mostly offering a public service (PUBLIC TRANSPORT) through various means (e.g. AIRPORT FLIGHT, STEAM TRAIN, BUS TRAIN, FERRY CAR, TAXI RIDE, CABLE CAR, CANAL BOAT, CRUISE LINER, and CARGO SHIP). The most frequent lemma is FLIGHT, which is found in 20 collocate pairs; for example, it is associated with nouns (e.g. CODE, RETURN, ACCOMMODATION, and INSURANCE), verbs (e.g. EXCLUDE, INCLUDE, BOOK, and BOARD), and adjectives (e.g. INTERNATIONAL, CHEAP, DOMESTIC, and DIRECT) to provide specific information regarding this type of transport.

An adjacent thematic area is that concerning travel details, which can be subdivided further into three subgroups providing information about duration, distance, and

route. Duration specifies the length of travel along the time variable (e.g. COUPLE DAY, HALF HOUR, JOURNEY HOUR, LONG HAUL, SHORT TRIP, LONG JOURNEY, SHORT FLIGHT, and DRIVE HOUR), while distance is concerned with the space variable (e.g. SHORT RIDE, LONG DISTANCE, ROAD MILE, ROUTE MILE, FEW MILE, LONG WALK, LONG WAY, and ROUND CORNER); finally, route provides details regarding the itinerary (e.g. START POINT, ROUND TRIP, BEATEN TRACK, FIRST STOP, ROAD TRIP, CROSS COUNTRY, and INLAND WATERWAY).

Accommodation includes information on the price (e.g. WEEK ACCOMMODATION, NIGHT PERSON, STAY NIGHT, and ACCOMMODATION PRICE), the services included (e.g. ACCOMMODATION INCLUDE, ACCOMMODATION BOARD, ACCOMMODATION TRANSFER, and BED BREAKFAST), the type of accommodation (e.g. CABIN LOG, HOUSE COUNTRY, HOTEL STAR, and HOSTEL YOUTH) or a more detailed description of the accommodation (e.g. SELF CATERING, ROOM DINING, ROOM HOTEL, and ROOM DOUBLE).

A related thematic area is that of price, which regards information on the cost of the various aspects of a holiday (e.g. COST TICKET, COST TRIP, FLIGHT PRICE, INCLUDE PRICE, START PRICE, FARE RETURN, FEE ENTRANCE, FREE ADMISSION, and TAX INCLUDE).

The last thematic area conveys information about the services provided by a tour operator (e.g. AVAILABLE PACKAGE, HOLIDAY PACKAGE, COMPANY OFFER, INVOLVE HOLIDAY, TRIP OFFER, PACKAGE OFFER, INCLUDE PACKAGE, and INCLUDE ATTRACTION). The lemma INCLUDE is one of the most frequent members of collocate pairs (26 in total) and is commonly used to introduce the services offered by a certain company, as shown by Examples 1-2:

1. Prices from £2,300 for a two-week trip and £5,850 for 11 weeks, **including flights**, accommodation, most meals and professional coaching

2. The two-day trip **costs** £130 **including** packed lunch, bunkhouse accommodation and cream tea. The company can arrange accommodation in local B&Bs for an extra charge.

4.1.2. *LOGISTICS in Italian*

In the Italian section of the corpus, the LOGISTICS category includes 181 types (15.38% of all collocate pair types), which amount to a total of 4,319 tokens (16.87% of all collocate pair tokens). The thematic areas that have been identified concern: type of transport (20), travel details (106), accommodation (17), price (12), and services (7).

Type of transport (e.g. LINEA FERROVIARIO [railway line], NAVE CROCIERA [cruise ship], VOLO DIRETTO [direct flight]) is attested by means of a handful of collocate pairs, including the superordinate MEZZO TRASPORTO [means transport], and its direct hyponym MEZZO PUBBLICO [means public].

Travel details may also be subdivided into the subgroups of duration (e.g. BREVE TEMPO [brief time], MEZZA ORA [half hour], ORA AUTO [hour car], PAIO ORA [couple hour], and POCO MINUTO [few minute]), and distance (e.g. MANCIATA CHILOMETRO [few kilometre], POCO DISTANZA [little distance], POCO PASSO [few step], and RAGGIUNGIBILE PIEDE [reachable foot]). An interesting aspect about the subsets concerning distance and duration is that most of the collocate pairs emphasize proximity: movement between two points is limited in time or space, as shown by Examples 3-4:

3. Non scordiamoci che la posizione del borgo è strategica, trovandosi a **pochi minuti** da tutto. [Do not forget that the location of the village is strategic, being just minutes away from everything]

4. Senza allontanarsi troppo, in una **manciata** di **chilometri**, ecco il borgo di Campochiaro [Without going too far, just a few kilometres away, you will find the village of Campochiaro].

The subset describing itineraries is particularly rich in details with reference to stages (e.g. PUNTO PARTENZA [starting point], INIZIARE VIAGGIO [start trip], PORTA INGRESSO [gateway], PUNTO INCONTRO [meeting point], SECONDO TAPPA [second stop], ULTIMA TAPPA [last stop], FARE SOSTA [make stop], and META TURISTICO [tourist destination]), and routes, the latter denoted by the following lemmas:

- ITINERARIO [itinerary], associated with PERCORRERE [take], SCOPERTA [discovery] and SEGUIRE [follow];
- STRADA [road], associated with COSTEGGIARE [drive along], PERCORRERE, PORTARE [take], and SEGUIRE;
- PERCORSO [path], associated with SEGUIRE, and SNODARE [wind];
- SENTIERO [trail], associated with ATTRAVERSARE [cross], PERCORRERE, and PORTARE;
- VIA [street/route], associated with PERCORRERE, and PROSEGUIRE [continue].

The collocate pair STRUTTURA RICETTIVO [accommodation facility] is a superordinate concept subsuming various types of accommodation, such as STRUTTURA ALBERGHIERO [hotel facility], CASA VACANZA [holiday house], RESIDENCE HOTEL, and BED BREAKFAST. Additional subgroups describe in detail the accommodation (e.g. CAMERA LETTO [bed room], CAMERA DOPPIO [double room], and SUITE CAMERA [suite room]) or provide information about the quality of its services (e.g. STELLA HOTEL [star hotel], and ALBERGO STELLA [star hotel]).

The thematic area of price is attested by some collocate pairs such as PARTIRE EURO [start euro], PREZZO EURO [price euro], PREZZO PARTIRE [start price], NOTTE EURO [euro night], and COSTARE EURO [cost euro]. Finally, services offered by the tour operator are denoted by CIRCUITO TURISTICO [tourist circuit], GUIDARE VISITA [guide visit], GUIDARE TOUR [guide tour], GUIDARE ESCURSIONE [guide excursion], and ORGANIZZARE VISITA [organize visit].

4.1.3. *LOGISTICS in Polish*

In the LOGISTICS category, the Polish section of the corpus comprises 196 types (19% of all collocate pair types) for a total of 5,997 tokens (22% of all collocate pair tokens). Various thematic areas concerning subcategories such as duration (57), transport (45), route (39), price (31), services (30), distance (26), accommodation (25), and practical travel details (17) have been identified.

In the thematic area of duration, there are collocate pairs related to the time units needed to complete an activity (e.g. DZIEŃ CIĄG [day course], GODZINA TRWAĆ [hour last], CZAS KRÓTKI [time short], and GODZINA ZAJĄĆ [hour take]), as well as those indicating a particular timing for the trip to take place (e.g. SEZON SZCZYT [season peak], WEEKEND DŁUGI [weekend long], and FERIE ZIMOWY [winter holidays]).

The subcategory of transport comprises collocate pairs related to the types of transport, such as LOTNICZY LINIA [air line], and AUTOBUS POCIĄG [bus train] and,

similarly to Italian, includes the superordinates ŚRODEK TRANSPORT [means transport], and PUBLICZNY TRANSPORT [public transport]. This subcategory also includes a number of collocate pairs referring to communication hubs, such as LOTNICZY PORT [air port], KOLEJOWY DWORZEC [railway station], and PKS DWORZEC [bus station].

Furthermore, collocate pairs related to the route subcategory (e.g. PROSTY LINIA [straight line], ULICZKA LABIRYNT [alley labyrinth], and ŁATWA TRASA [easy way]) describe a degree of difficulty that taking a particular route poses to the visitors, or indicate directions (e.g. BIEC SZLAK [run route], ŚCIEŻKA PROWADZIĆ [path lead], and WIEŚĆ TRASA [lead way]).

The thematic area of services is attested by some collocate pairs related to practical travel details, such as BAGAŻ PODRĘCZNY [hand luggage], JAZDA ROZKŁAD [timetable], and PODRÓŻ CEL [travel destination], or activities undertaken while organizing a trip, such as POŁĄCZENIE MIEĆ [connection have], WYJAZD ZAPLANOWAĆ [trip plan], and PODRÓŻ TRWAĆ [journey last].

The subcategory of price comprises collocate pairs indicating the cost of the service EURO KOSZTOWAĆ [euro cost], EURO ZAPŁACIĆ [euro pay], and BILET CENA [ticket price], but more interestingly there are quite a few collocate pairs describing the price of the service as low and affordable to everybody, with the synecdochical expression KIESZEŃ KAŻDY [pocket everybody], inexpensive WYCIECZKA TANI [trip inexpensive] or even free of charge: WSTĘP WOLNY [entrance free], as illustrated by Examples 5-6:

5. Ceny **na każdą kieszeń** i wyrozumiała obsługa , która wyjaśni gościom wszystkie skomplikowane nazwy posiłków [Prices for every budget and an understanding service which will explain all the complicated names of meals to guests]

6. Znajdą się propozycje **na każdą kieszeń** oraz ciekawe oferty dla większych grup. [There will be proposals for every budget and interesting offers for larger groups].

The subcategory of accommodation includes a collocate pair expressing its superordinate concept NOCLEGOWY MIEJSCE [accommodation place], along with examples of various types of accommodation, such as: PENSJONAT HOTEL [guesthouse hotel], AGROTURYSTYCZNE GOSPODARSTWO [holiday farm], PRYWATNY KWATERA [private room], and WYPOCZYNKOWY OŚRODEK [holiday resort]. Again, some collocate pairs referring to the perceived cost of the accommodation, for example, TANI HOTEL [inexpensive hotel], and LUKSUSOWY HOTEL [luxury hotel] are found.

In conclusion, insofar as data from this corpus may be considered to yield useful information about the communicative contexts and, in more general terms, the cultures in which the articles are produced and read, LOGISTICS plays a key role for the authors and readers of the English, Italian and Polish articles. The English data highlight a specific interest in practical details concerning what is included in a given package tour and hotel stay, the cost of travel and services, and types of transport involved. This seems to confirm Manca's (2008: 382) conclusion that British tourism texts are characterized by a notable degree of detail and explicitness about what is on offer, though her analysis is limited to a collection of texts promoting farmhouse holidays. The Polish data show a similar preoccupation with practical details, especially with reference to the duration of a holiday activity, means of transport, degree of difficulty of an itinerary, and cost of service. The Italian section, on the other hand, is particularly concerned with the description of routes, although this is often combined with a romantic,

lyrical attitude meant to stimulate the imagination of the readers so as to make them fantasize about the trip, as shown by Examples 7-8:

7. Lungo il percorso odori e profumi riempiono l'aria umida, mentre rumori di animali lontani e vicini rompono il silenzio. Un sentiero tortuoso conduce attraverso questo mondo esotico fino ad un villaggio di capanne di fango. Un altro **percorso** si **snoda** accanto ad un fiume dove si possono osservare da un ponte sospeso veri pesci esotici. [Along the way smells and scents fill the humid air, while noises of distant and nearby animals break the silence. A winding path leads through this exotic world to a village of mud huts. Another path winds along a river where you can observe from a suspension bridge real exotic fish]

8. Tra il blu intenso del Mar Morto, a sinistra, e le ultime balze del deserto della Giudea a destra, procediamo lungo la **strada** che **porta** all´oasi di Ein Gedi dove, secondo la tradizione ebraica, si rifugiò re Davide per sfuggire a Saul, e poco dopo arriviamo a Masada, la fortezza di Erode il Grande inerpicata in cima al "sentiero del serpente" [Between the deep blue of the Dead Sea, on the left, and the last ridges of the Judean desert on the right, we proceed along the road that leads to the oasis of Ein Gedi where, according to Jewish tradition, King David took refuge to escape Saul, and shortly after we arrive at Masada, the fortress of Herod the Great perched on the very top of the 'snake trail'].

4.2. *CULTURE + HISTORY*

This semantic category includes the largest number of collocate pairs in the Italian section of the corpus. It is also relevant in the Polish section while less so in the English one. In our first classification of the semantic groups, CULTURE and HISTORY were separate categories. However, on carefully reading the concordance lines of the various collocate pairs, we noticed the consistent overlapping of the two and therefore opted for merging them into one.

4.2.1. *CULTURE+HISTORY in English*

In this category the English section of the corpus yielded 37 collocate pair types (3.76% of all types) which amount to a sum of 634 tokens (2.83% of all collocate pair tokens). In very general terms, this category denotes a historical event or identifies a cultural attraction. Collocate pairs denoting historical events, such as WORLD WAR, SECOND WAR, SECOND WORLD, FIRST WAR, and CIVIL WAR, the first four of which are evidently part of the nominal compounds *First World War* and *Second World War*, serve the purpose of contextualizing the destination by providing background historical information, as illustrated by Examples 9-10:

9. They were invented by the Italian army during the **First World War**

10. The caves were used as an air raid shelter in the **second world war**.

Collocate pairs identifying attractions, collectively referred to by the collocate pair WORLD HERITAGE found in the nominal compound *UNESCO world heritage site*, may be subdivided into four main groups: those designating architectural landmarks (OLD BUILDING, OLD HOUSE, MANOR HOUSE, and STATELY HOME), exhibitions (ART GALLERY), events (MUSIC FESTIVAL, LIVE MUSIC, BIG FESTIVAL, and SUMMER FESTIVAL), and arts and crafts (ART CRAFT, and LOCAL CULTURE). It is worth noticing that the subset denoting events has the largest number of collocate pairs in this category, with the lemmas FESTIVAL and MUSIC contributing to various

collocate pairs; apart from the collocations mentioned above, the former is also found together with ANNUAL, FOOD, TICKET, HOLD, and SITE, while the latter is also found together with FOLK, DANCE, PLAY, and ART.

4.2.2. *CULTURE+HISTORY in Italian*

In the Italian section of the corpus, the CULTURE+HISTORY category contains the largest number of collocate pair types, i.e. 198 (16.78% of all types), which amounts to a total of 4,155 tokens (17.28% of all tokens). These can be grouped into three broad thematic areas, that is, identifying an attraction, defining its age, or evaluating it.

The first thematic area, i.e. identification of an attraction, is the largest with 155 collocate pairs that form networks of hyponymic and meronymic relationships. For example, most of the attractions are part of heritage, a notion that is referred to by the lemma PATRIMONIO, which is a member of various collocate pairs in association with UMANITA' [humankind], MONDIALE [world], ARTISTICO [artistic], CULTURALE [cultural], STORICO [historical], DICHIARARE [declare], LISTA [list], and PARTE [part]. Some of these are included in the nominal compound *Patrimonio Mondiale dell'Umanità*, sometimes shortened as *Patrimonio dell'Umanità* or *Patrimonio Mondiale*, which designates the subset of heritage monuments comprised in the list of World Heritage Sites elaborated by UNESCO. Other collocate pairs are also associated with this nominal compound, as shown by Examples 11-12:

11. conserva la bellezza del suo centro **dichiarato Patrimonio** dell'Umanità [preserves the beauty of its city centre declared a World Heritage site]

12. per la sua bellezza, è entrato a far **parte** del **Patrimonio** dell'Unesco [for its beauty it has become part of the UNESCO World Heritage].

In general, most attractions belong to one of three subsets: architectural landmarks, exhibitions, and events, which are collectively designated by the superordinate collocate pair BENE CULTURALE [cultural asset]. Architectural landmarks almost exclusively denote civil or religious historical buildings (e.g. PALAZZO RINASCIMENTALE [building Renaissance], CASTELLO MEDIEVALE [mediaeval castle], RESIDENZA ANTICO [mansion old], GOTICO CHIESA [Gothic church], SANTA BASILICA [holy basilica], SANTA CATTEDRALE [holy cathedral], and TEMPIO DEDICARE [temple dedicate]). In this subset, PALAZZO and CHIESA (also found together in the pair CHIESA PALAZZO) are the two lemmas that participate in the largest number of collocate pairs. Apart from the instances mentioned above, PALAZZO is also found associated with COMUNALE [municipal], BAROCCO [Baroque], REALE [royal], NOBILIARE [aristocratic], and IMPERIALE [imperial], while CHIESA is associated with SANTA [saint], ROMANICO [Romanesque], BAROCCO, MEDIEVALE [mediaeval], and PARROCCHIALE [parish]. Only three collocate pairs denote parts of these architectural landmarks, i.e. BAROCCO FACCIATA [Baroque facade], CHIESA CAMPANILE [church bell-tower], and TORRE CAMPANARIO [bell tower]. Stylistic features of the monuments are conveyed by STILE [style] in association with such lemmas as ROMANICO, GOTICO, RINASCIMENTALE, BAROCCO, and LIBERTY; alternatively, the collocate pair ESEMPIO ARCHITETTURA [example architecture] may be employed, also in combination with the pair ARCHITETTURA MODERNO [modern architecture]), as shown by Examples 13-14:

13. uno dei massimi **esempi** di **architettura** moderna [one of the best examples of modern architecture]

14. un ottimo **esempio** dell´**architettura** industriale [an excellent example of industrial architecture].

The second subset, collectively designated by the superordinate pair ESPOSITIVO SPAZIO [exhibition area], identifies various types of exhibitions areas (e.g. CIVICO MUSEO [town museum], ARTE GALLERIA [art gallery], NATALE CASA [birthplace], ARCHEOLOGICO PARCO [archaeology park], ARCHEOLOGICO SITO [archaeology site], ARTE MOSTRA [art exhibition], and ARTE COLLEZIONE [art collection]). In this subset, MOSTRA, COLLEZIONE and MUSEO are frequently found in association with various other lemmas, although the latter is the most frequent, being a member of 18 collocate pairs. This lemma is typically associated with an adjective (e.g. ARCHEOLOGICO [archeological], NAZIONALE [national], and DIOCESANO [diocesan]) to specify the type of museum being referred to or a verb (e.g. DEDICARE [dedicate], OSPITARE [house], and RACCOGLIERE [collect]) introducing the most relevant themes or objects in an exhibition, as shown by Examples 15-16:

15. un insolito **museo dedicato** al lavoro del salumiere [an unusual museum dedicated to the work of the cured meat producer]

16. l'interessante **Museo** della Valle, che **raccoglie** reperti etnografici ed archeologici [the interesting Museo della Valle, which displays a collection of ethnographic and archeological finds].

Other collocate pairs highlight specific artefacts of interest that are exhibited (e.g. OPERA ARTE [art work], CAPOLAVORO ARTE [art masterpiece], OPERA CONTEMPORANEO [contemporary work], REPERTO ARCHEOLOGICO [archeological find], and STATUA BRONZO [bronze statue]) or specify the author of a work of art (e.g. OPERA ARTISTA [artist work], OPERA MAESTRO [master work], and REALIZZARE ARTISTA [make artist]).

The third subset identifies various types of cultural events (e.g. RIEVOCAZIONE STORICO [historical reenactment], FESTIVAL INTERNAZIONALE [international festival], EVENTO MOSTRA [event exhibition], CONCERTO SPETTACOLO [concert show], SPETTACOLO TEATRALE [theatre show], and MUSICA VIVO [live music]). These are collectively designated by the superordinate pair EVENTO CULTURALE [cultural event] which is referred to by other collocate pairs (e.g. PROGRAMMA EVENTO [event programme], CALENDARIO EVENTO [event calendar]). A fourth subgroup includes collocate pairs denoting traditional arts and crafts (e.g. ARTISTICO ARTIGIANATO [artistic craft], ARTIGIANATO LOCALE [local craft], TRADIZIONE LOCALE [local tradition], and ANTICO MESTIERE [old trade]).

Twenty collocate pairs introduce historical information about dates (e.g. RISALIRE SECOLO [date back century], FONDARE SECOLO [found century], FINE SECOLO [end century]) or signal the era to which a certain attraction dates back (e.g. EPOCA ROMANA [Roman epoch], ANTICO ORIGINE [ancient origin], EPOCA MEDIEVALE [mediaeval epoch], GUERRA MONDIALE [world war], SECONDA GUERRA [second war], and ANNO SESSANTA [year sixty).

Finally, 29 collocate pairs provide positive assessment of a destination or attraction. This is often done in a straightforward manner (e.g. MUSEO INTERESSANTE [interesting museum], BELLA MOSTRA [beautiful exhibition], RICCO EVENTO [rich event], and VALORE STORICO [historic value]). Positive evaluation may also be found in the linguistic context of the collocate pairs that variously combine the nominal

lemmas ARTE, STORIA, and CULTURA or the adjectival lemmas ARTISTICO, CULTURALE, and STORICO, as shown by Examples 17-18.

17. un mix affascinante di **arte**, **storia** e gastronomia [a fascinating mix of art, history and gastronomy]

18. un territorio ricco di eccellenze **artistiche**, **culturali** e gastronomiche [an area rich in artistic, cultural and gastronomic excellence].

Positive evaluation may also be conveyed by strongly advising a visit to a specific museum (e.g. VISITA MUSEO [museum visit], and VISITARE MUSEO [visit museum]), as shown by Examples 19-22.

19. Altro luogo da **visitare** è il **Museo** delle Belle Arti [Another place to visit is the Museum of Fine Arts]

20. va **visitato** il **museo** Unterlinden di grande interesse artistico [visit the Unterlinden museum of great artistic interest]

21. Infine è d'obbligo la **visita** al **Museo** Olimpico [Finally, a visit to the Olympic Museum is a must]

22. non può mancare una **visita** al **museo** della tortura [a visit to the museum of torture can't be missed].

4.2.3. *CULTURE+HISTORY in Polish*

In the CULTURE+HISTORY category, the Polish section of the corpus yielded 76 collocate pair types (7% of all types) which amount to a sum of 728 tokens (7.8% of all collocate pair tokens). This section encompasses a number of specific subcategories identified on the basis of their main topic, that is, history, culture, religion, and architecture.

In the subcategory of history, the Polish section of the corpus yielded 39 collocate pairs. They can be classified further in terms of themes related to historical events (e.g. ŚWIATOWY WOJNA [world war]) or specific periods in the past, such as RZYMSKI CZAS [Roman time], OKRES MIĘDZYWOJENNY [interwar period], and WOJNA CZAS [war time]. Another group of collocate pairs in this subcategory is related to human settlements from the past, such as STOLICA DAWNY [old capital] and STAROŻYTNY MIASTO [ancient city], or architectural landmarks from the past with the superordinate BUDOWLA ZABYTKOWY [building historic] encompassing several examples of old urban architecture, such as MUR ŚREDNIOWIECZNY [wall mediaeval], or PAŁAC KRÓLEWSKI [palace royal], MOST STARY [old bridge], ULICZKA STARY [alley old], and DZIELNICA STARA [district old], as shown in Examples 23-24:

23. Wąskimi uliczkami, mijając **zabytkowe budowle**, sklepy i knajpki, docieramy do placu Narodni Trg [Narrow streets, passing the historic buildings, shops and pubs, we reach Narodni Trg square]

24. Przekraczam **stary**, kamienny **most** nad wpadającą do zatoki Moray Firth rzeką Beauly [I cross an old stone bridge over the Beauly River that flows into Moray Firth]

The second subcategory is related to sacral architecture, encompassing the buildings with the superordinate KOŚCIÓŁ KATEDRA [church cathedral], and specifying various styles of the religious edifices, such as KOŚCIÓŁ DREWNIANY [wooden church] and KOŚCIÓŁ GOTYCKI [church gothic], their status (e.g. KOŚCIÓŁ PARAFIALNY [parochial church]) or component elements (e.g. OŁTARZ GŁÓWNY [altar main], ŚWIĄTYNIA WNĘTRZE [sanctuary interior], and KOŚCIÓŁ WIEŻA [church tower]), as illustrated in Examples 25-26:

25. **Wnętrze świątyni** urzeka swym ogromem i przepychem [The interior of the sanctuary captivates with its vastness and splendor]

26. We wnętrzu znajduje się renesansowy **ołtarz główny**, cenne figury świętych , interesujące ołtarze boczne [Inside there is a Renaissance main altar, valuable figures of saints, and interesting side altars]

The subcategory of culture consists of collocate pairs denoting events, such as FESTIWAL MIĘDZYNARODOWY [international festival], and KONCERT ODBYWAĆ [concert occur], exhibitions areas, such as NARODOWY MUZEUM [national museum], SZTUKA GALERIA [art gallery], and ARCHEOLOGICZNY MUZEUM [archaeological museum], as well as artistic creations, such as ARCHITEKT DZIEŁO [architect work], MISTRZ DZIEŁO [master artwork] ŚCIENNY MALOWIDŁO [wall painting], and SZTUKA ZBIÓR [art collection].

Finally, there are quite a few collocate pairs related to positive assessment of an attraction, highlighting its importance, i.e. ZABYTEK WAŻNY [monument important] ZABYTEK CENNY [monument valuable], and PUNKT OBOWIĄZKOWY [item mandatory], visual attractiveness, i.e. WIDOK PIĘKNY [view beautiful], and DECH ZAPIERAĆ [breath take], being rich in history (e.g. HISTORIA BOGATY [history rich]), or underlying emotional engagement with the place and its personal significance to the visitor: MARZENIE MIASTO [dream city], SERCE ZOSTAWIĆ [heart leave], RAJ PRAWDZIWY [paradise real] KULTOWY MIEJSCE [cult place], and CEL WYMARZONY [destination dreamt]. Some relevant examples (27-30) are given below:

27. Właśnie z tamtego okresu zachowało się tu wiele **cennych zabytków**, które mimo wojny i pożarów przetrwały [Many valuable monuments have been preserved here from that period and survived despite the war and fires]

28. Z minaretów **zapiera dech** widok handlowego centrum stolicy [The minarets offer a breathtaking view of the commercial centre of the capital]

29. Ostatnio zaprezentowaliśmy **bogatą historię** tego miasta, ciekawe zabytki i ważną dla Siemiatycz postać [Recently, we presented the rich history of this city, interesting monuments and a figure important to Siemiatycze]

30. siedziałem i grałem. I tam **zostało moje serce**. Niezapomniany dzień w podróży. [I was sitting and playing. And that's where I left my heart. An unforgettable day on the road]

In conclusion, in the English section of the corpus CULTURE + HISTORY collocations are not present in large numbers and those that have been identified portray a view of culture as a social form of entertainment, as there are numerous collocations connected with music, food and art and craft festivals. On the other hand, CULTURE + HISTORY is given pride of place in the Italian section and a substantial role in the Polish one by means of a considerable focus on attractions connected to high culture and the past. This is embodied by the Italian collocate pair RICCO STORIA, which is realized by the adjective phrase RICCO *di storia*, the 31 instances of which provide a general description and, most of all, a broad positive assessment of a certain destination. This is a metaphorical expression of the HERITAGE IS WEALTH conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The metaphor is particularly interesting in that it construes the past as capital of which the visitors can avail themselves and therefore are invited to take part in the rewards of this type of cultural wealth, as shown in Examples 31-32:

31. La Valle d'Aosta è una terra **ricca** di **storia** e di luoghi da scoprire. Se non avete ancora avuto il piacere di visitarla, lasciatevi affascinare dalla maestosità e dalla bellezza dei suoi numerosi castelli. [Valle d'Aosta is a land rich in history and places to discover. If you have not yet had the pleasure of visiting it, let yourself be fascinated by the majesty and beauty of its many castles]

32. Tra borghi **ricchi** di fascino e **storia**, il visitatore si trova immediatamente immerso nei profumi, nei colori […] [Among villages rich in charm and history, the visitor is immediately immersed in the scents, colours [...]

In a similar vein, the Polish corpus yielded a number of collocate pairs related to presenting and emphasizing history, such as HISTORIA BOGATY [history rich], HISTORIA CIEKAWY [history interesting], HISTORIA OPOWIADAĆ [history tell], and SIĘGAĆ HISTORIA [history go back] which demonstrate a special interest in attractions connected to high culture and the past. Examples 33-35 illustrate this tendency:

33. Gruzja to nie tylko **bogata historia**, zabytki, uroda krajobrazu. [Georgia is not only rich in history, monuments and beautiful landscapes]

34. tutejsze płyty nagrobne świadczą o **bogatej historii** regionu [local gravestones confirm the rich history of the region]

35. **Ciekawa** jest **historia** klasztoru , założonego w V wieku n.e. na miejscu starożytnej świątyni [The history of the monastery is interesting, founded in the 5th century AD, on the site of an ancient temple]

The importance of heritage in the Italian and Polish sections might be related to the specific cultural and communicative contexts in which the respective media outlets operate, e.g. the type of relationship between these media and their target audiences. Both *La Repubblica* and *Gazeta* appear to give a special place to an interpretation of leisure travel in which the role of heritage tourism is critical in the acquisition and consolidation of cultural capital. Furthermore, the cultivation of high culture competencies may play a key role in one's identification as a member of an educated elite (e.g. Franklin 2003: 205-209). There remains the question of why the presence of CULTURE+HISTORY is relatively modest in *The Guardian*, a quandary for which there are no easy answers. While it may be true that the readerships of the Italian and Polish newspapers are perceived to be more interested in cultural and historical matters than their English-speaking counterparts, it is also the case that they are likely to be more homogeneous from a linguistic and cultural point of view. This would allow the travel journalist to evaluate more accurately whether a certain feature or activity would be of interest to them or not. On the contrary, the readers of *The Guardian* are far more heterogeneous when it comes to their cultural background, as the newspaper is written in what is today the global lingua franca, therefore its audience is potentially the whole world. Since the journalists writing for *The Guardian* have a far less distinct idea of what kind of person the intended reader is, they may shy away from overly detailed descriptions of monuments and historical events and deem it safer to deal with more universal themes, such as FOOD, SPORT and ACTIVITIES.

5. Final remarks

Some tentative conclusions may be drawn from this study of collocate pairs in travel journalism in English, Italian and Polish.

First of all, the analysis has shown sufficient diversity among the thematic categories in the three languages to suggest that there could be considerable differences at the cultural level and/or with regards to the specific contexts of production and consumption of such media output. With respect to the thematic areas that have been analysed, LOGISTICS emerges as pivotal across the English, Italian, and Polish articles. However, whilst English and Polish prioritize a transactional type of interaction where the practical, down-to-earth, business-like aspects of organizing a trip are foregrounded, Italian seems to prefer a persuasive style that is more involved in sparking the readers' imagination. A second critical difference has been identified in dealing with the theme of cultural heritage. The place of honour given to CULTURE + HISTORY among all the categories in the Italian section of the corpus and its notable position in the Polish section confirm the remarkable level of prestige and reverence attributed to the traditional totems of high culture, especially when the artefacts of past epochs and civilizations acquire an almost sacred aura by being exhibited in museums and galleries.

Secondly, some methodological considerations regarding the usefulness of this approach are in order. Over 3,300 collocate pair types (over 70,000 tokens) have been retrieved and (all caveats considered) some points can be made:

- The study of this conspicuous number of collocate pairs seems to provide a reliable picture of the general thematic tendencies and stylistic preferences at work in travel journalism discourse in the three languages.

- This large, dispersed number of collocate pairs points to a propensity of travel articles towards formulaicity: some languages may be more prone to it than others, especially when dealing with certain topics. For example, the English and Polish sections are particularly formulaic in describing the logistical details of holiday trips, whilst Italian is mostly so when illustrating cultural attractions.

- Collocate pairs and collocations pose varying degrees of difficulty for the translator. While there are cases where the correspondence between the languages is straightforward, more often than not the search for the right equivalent is problematic and requires a thorough investigation of the linguistic and cultural contexts of the source and the target texts. Our lists of collocate pairs indicate areas of potential overlap in form and function in the three languages and provide the basis for the development of a trilingual dataset of correspondences.

However, some caveats must be taken into account. First of all, the corpora representing the three languages are composed entirely of texts from only one newspaper per language. This may suggest that the results cannot be generalized so as to describe all travel journalism in each language. On the other hand, while future research will certainly involve expanding the corpora to include texts from other sources, it is to be borne in mind that the articles in the current corpora are penned by a large number of authors. For example, 225 journalists contributed to the sample in the Italian section. In the Polish section, this number rose to 494. While editorial guidelines and house style may bear some influence on the final appearance of the articles, it could be argued that such large numbers of authors would tend to assuage reservations about the representativeness of the corpora.

Another point that must be borne in mind is that caution must be exercised when interpreting the presence of collocate pairs concerning a particular topic as indicative of greater treatment of that theme in a particular language. There may be collocation

gaps, in which a two- or three-word collocation in one language is expressed with a single term in another, e.g. *vested interest* (English) > *interesse* (Italian) (Taylor 1998: 55); *avvenuta ricezione* (Italian) > *receipt* (English). Furthermore, English has a tendency to make great use of compounds, and this complicates matters somewhat, as the vagaries in their orthographic realization (space, hyphen, no space) means that what is considered to be a "token" in corpus linguistics is indeed a thorny issue. For example, the Italian *impianto di risalita* and the Polish *wyciąg narciarski*, which are composed of two lexical words that collocate, translate into English as *skilift*, which has two clearly identifiable lexical elements, but which standard corpus linguistics procedures will count nevertheless as a single token.

Finally, some considerations concern the impact this methodological approach can have for students and practitioners in areas such as translation, travel journalism, and tourism. Students of translation, would-be travel journalists, and PR copywriters operating in a multilingual business environment would benefit from an in-depth study of the collocational behaviour of keywords and functional equivalence of collocate pairs in the various languages, so as to improve their ability to target diverse linguistic audiences. Furthermore, a practical application of this approach could result in the production of useful resource material for LSP practitioners to practise a variety of multilingual collocations in selected semantic categories and improve lexical accuracy in the target language(s) among students of tourism. By mastering multilingual collocations, students and practitioners alike can tailor their language use to demonstrate greater cultural sensitivity and awareness and consequently more effectively navigate linguistic and cultural barriers in their profession.

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