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Linguistic Insights

Studies in Language and Communication

Daniela Cesiri (ed.)

# Adapting Food-Related Communication to Children

Interdisciplinary  
and Multicultural Insights

Peter Lang

This collection of essays examines the multifaceted nature of food-related communication for children, an area that has become increasingly significant within the digital age. Beyond its nutritional value, food has always served as a powerful social and cultural connector, with traditions and rituals transmitted across generations. In addition, the contemporary media landscape, characterized by the excessive visibility of both children and food on social media, has given rise to the concept of the 'consumer-child'. This has led to concerns about the negative health impacts of marketing that often promotes unhealthy dietary options.

While other fields, such as marketing, media studies, and literary and cultural studies, have explored the symbolic and socio-political dimensions of food representation for children, the volume identifies a significant gap in linguistics and communication studies. To address this gap, the chapters included in the volume aim to shed light on how food is represented, narrated, promoted, and translated for younger audiences across various genres, including corporate communication, digital media, and translation. Finally, the volume also presents the results of the two-year SPIN2023 research project funded by "Ca' Foscari" University of Venice.

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# Linguistic Insights

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# **Adapting Food-Related Communication to Children**

Interdisciplinary and Multicultural Insights



**PETER LANG**

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# Introduction

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## 1. Food-Related Communication to/for Children

Human societies, in any moment of their history and in any known civilization, have always considered food an essential constituent element not only for its nutritional value as a source of sustenance but also as a powerful social connector. Beyond meeting dietary needs, in fact, food has always played a crucial role in establishing, favouring, fostering and/or reinforcing social bonds within communities and in establishing emotional bonds among family members and between individuals that share traditions, memories and rituals linked to the collective preparation, consumption and sharing that lie behind a certain dish or food (Marshall 2005).

These traditions and rituals are transmitted from one generation to the next one by means of several genres that usually vary from oral narrations to cookbooks, to diaries, and today by means of social media accounts and shared pictures between family members. What these exchanges have in common, however, is that food is only a means through which people express their own respective identity, culture and social links. Moreover, these common, shared experiences that revolve around food, its preparation and consumption help to preserve community bonds as well as to reinforce social systems, in turn reinforcing the role of food as an even more essential element in human social life throughout all cultures and historical eras (Montanari 2006).

This is all the more important today, in a period in which communication happens mostly via social media and one’s social status is determined by the amount of “life” ones shares via their social media accounts, the mushrooming of media dedicated to food (e.g. food blogs, TV shows and whole channels, social media accounts and dedicated posts by celebrities and non-celebrities) testifies the role of food as a status symbol rather than a symbol of social bonding or means of sustenance (Cesiri 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021).

From the moment a child is born into a community, food plays a crucial role, not only in supporting their healthy growth but also in helping to integrate them into the social fabric through shared food-related customs and rituals. In this way, the connection between people and food begins early and continues to shape social interactions throughout life. This becomes especially relevant in today’s

context when both children and food receive excessive media visibility by adults, who constantly publish on social media photos of their children (Kumar 2020) as frequently as they publish the food they eat with their meals (Jorge et al. 2022).

As will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 4, research on how food has been represented and narrated to children, and the latter's role in food-related communication, can be found in several areas such as marketing, media studies and sociology: what findings from these studies have in common is that, since the emergence of a distinct category of specialized food for infants and children in the nineteenth century (Castilho & Barros Filho 2010), the promotion of food products has placed the child at the centre of its narratives, therefore creating the figure and concept of the "consumer-child" (Shepherd & Shepherd 2014; Moshenska 2019). In this context, children are considered autonomous consumers with the power to influence the food-consumption practices of their families (James et al. 2009). This new view has created a considerable impact on the promotional practices of advertising campaigns with the negative side effect that most of the advertisements promote unhealthy dietary options, such as fast food, sugary drinks, candy and unhealthy snacks (Wilks 2009); therefore, food marketing negatively impacts children's (and their families') diets and health, increasing calorie consumption, preferences for unhealthy product categories and perceptions of product healthfulness.

Other areas of research, such as literary and cultural studies, have also extensively examined the representation of food to and for children. This interdisciplinary field highlights the symbolic significance of food in children's culture (Montanari 2006). In this disciplinary context, food is a symbolic representation used to foster social integration and reflect societal norms (Keeling & Pollard 2020). Moreover, studies in this field (e.g. Gasperini et al. 2024) also indicate that food in children's literature can symbolize kinship, desire, danger or death. Other studies also consider the socio-political implications of policies affecting eating conditions and the differences in eating habits between children and adults, as well as those determined by social class. For example, Gilbert (2014) argues that food in literary works symbolizes life itself and the socio-political composition of the represented national culture. This is particularly true in children's literature, where food reflects on children's conditions across time and cultures (Daniel 2006; Cedro & Piatti-Farnell 2021).

As far as research conducted in linguistics and communication studies is concerned, more details will be given in Chapter 4 of the present volume. Indeed, the present volume brings together contributions from leading scholars in the respective areas of research that aim to shed light on how food is represented,



narrated, promoted and translated to and for children. By employing diverse research backgrounds, as well as interdisciplinary and cross-linguistic lenses, the chapters included in this edited collection examine how food and nutrition targeting children are conveyed across genres. More specifically, the analysis of these communicative strategies allows the volume to highlight the role of culinary and nutritional values in transmitting cultural heritage and sustaining food traditions for younger audiences.

To date, no comprehensive work (except for Cesiri 2025) has systematically addressed the complex methods through which food-related knowledge is shared with children. Bridging this gap, the book assembles globally recognized experts from complementary disciplines, fostering a multifaceted exploration of the topic through varied yet synergistic methodologies.

## 2. Contents of the Volume

The contributions included in this volume focus in particular on three aspects of food-related communication addressing children, that is, corporate communication with a specific focus on advertising, communication via digital and social media and translation. For instance, EMILIA DI MARTINO's "Constructing Class Identity: How American, British and Italian Food Brands Shape Childhood Through Advertising" examines how food brands use language and cultural cues to construct class-based social identities in advertising aimed at children. Building on indexicality theory (Silverstein 1976), the chapter explores how words and images in food ads convey social status, lifestyle and values. The study also draws on enregisterment (Agha 2007) to analyze how brands develop distinctive linguistic and visual styles that signal class distinctions. Additionally, it uses multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2020) to investigate how language, visuals and branding elements work together to create cohesive class identities. Through case studies of American, British and Italian advertisements, the chapter illustrates how food products are strategically framed for specific audiences, reflecting and reinforcing class hierarchies. It also examines the role of TikTok and YouTube influencers in maintaining food-based class markers, revealing how digital platforms mediate and amplify class distinctions through food-related content. By exploring these dynamics, the Chapter offers a nuanced understanding of how advertising and social media shape childhood perceptions of food and social identity. It contributes to broader discussions on consumer culture, social stratification and childhood socialization, highlighting the complex relationship between language, identity and marketing.

WALTER GIORDANO in his “Textual and Visual Strategies for Baby Food Representation in Advertising” starts from the assumption that modern business communication is often conveyed through advertising, and all the promotion strategies are carefully designed. Much of the advertising message today aims at convincing customers via a number of elements, mainly related to emotions, social status, demographics and the promise of quality. Traditional advertising relied on text and/or images only. The Chapter puts out the possibility of sending a promotional message by a tool called “Fold and Swap” strategy. Drawing upon the prototype theory by Rosch (1978) and the consequent script theory (St Amant 2015, 2017), this strategy has been recently developed by St Amant and Giordano (2023) and applied in other studies (Giordano 2022; Giordano & Ammendola 2023). The study presented in the chapter extends the investigation to another sector, baby food, with the aim of explaining the implementation of the fold and swap strategy and its effects. These latter may entail a change in the perception either of the brand and the product, expanding consumer expectations and opening the way to new functions of use of the product. Results are encouraging and are in line with ongoing and previous research, suggesting that the fold and swap strategy finds application in modern advertising.

STEFANIA M. MACI’s Chapter (“Chip Chip Hurray”. How Food Is Described to Children”) presents a study that examines the discursive representation of food in *Snacks Around the World* (Lonely Planet Kids), a tourism-focused guidebook aimed at familiarizing children with diverse culinary cultures worldwide. In particular, it examines how narratives surrounding child-appropriate cuisine are constructed within family-friendly tourism discourse to promote intercultural curiosity, consumption behaviours and favourable travel associations. Drawing on the methodological frameworks of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (van Leeuwen 2008; Fairclough 2010) and corpus linguistics (Baker 2006; McEnery & Hardie 2012), the chapter examines lexical choices, evaluative language, semantic prosody and narrative patterns used to describe snacks and food-related practices. A small corpus is compiled from the textual content of the guide, enabling both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Attention is also given to the representation of national identity, exoticism, fun and familiarity, as well as the implicit ideologies surrounding taste, health and global citizenship.

The chapter entitled “Adapting Food-Related Communication for Children in English: A Corpus-Based Investigation Using the FoRCCE Corpus” by DANIELA CESIRI starts from the assumption that most of the state-of-the-art investigating food-related discourse considers communication mainly aimed at adults, while children have been the focus of a relatively limited number of studies. These are, for instance, James et al. (2009); Rutsaert et al. (2013) and Weintraub Austin et al. (2018).

However, they only consider the role of social media in the communication about food when addressing children and youth. These are individual studies that investigate the subject from the social media perspective, while studies such as Frerichs et al. (2016) or Singh et al. (2022) have focused on marketing strategies in food communication and how they influence parents' and children's dietary choices. What is missing seems to be a broader perspective that investigates more than one genre and communicative situation. The chapter seeks to achieve this goal by investigating the materials composing the so-called FoRCCE Corpus (namely, the Corpus of *Food-Related Communication for Children in English*), specifically compiled for the purposes of a two-year research project funded by the “Ca’ Foscari” University of Venice (the SPIN2023 Project bearing the same name as the Corpus<sup>1</sup>) whose aim is to fill the gap identified in the state of the art. Since the corpus is still under compilation at the time of writing, this chapter examines only some of the materials available so far. The materials collected for the corpus are divided into three typologies (see also Chapter 5). For the purposes of the project, they are divided following the same categories already used in Cesiri (2025), namely: 1) “technical” products,<sup>2</sup> including cookbooks and cookery manuals, domestic manuals and recipes; 2) “commercial” products including advertisements published in leaflets, newspapers, magazines, TV (commercials) and social media; and 3) “institutional” products that includes websites, infographics, booklets and leaflets in which international institutions – such as the European Commission, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNESCO – inform parents and professionals through guidelines concerning the correct nutrition of children. This chapter conducts a corpus-based analysis on the “commercial” products collected so far to compose the FoRCCE Corpus. The aim of the analysis is to investigate how food is represented and narrated to children and to compare and contrast the findings with already existing research on food representations and narration to adults.

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<sup>1</sup> Project Code number “LCC.SPIN2023.CESIRI\_daFSREST, CUP H73C23000900005”.

<sup>2</sup> In the FoRCCE Corpus, as already in Cesiri (2020, 2025), the materials collected and grouped into categories are called products. Baldry and Thibault (2010: 113) have used the term “genre” to refer to “a sequence of optional and obligatory elements through which texts progress from their beginning to their end in order to fulfil some social or communicative purpose”. However, in this chapter “genre” is rather used in the Swalesian sense of a distinctive category of discourse, whose specific organization recurs in similar texts that are assigned to that specific genre. However, in order to avoid confusion in terminology, the term “genre” is used in the chapter in this latter sense, while the term “products” will refer to specific sub-categories of that type (e.g. the materials included in the three typologies forming the FoRCCE Corpus).

Connected with Chapter 4, VALERIA REGGI's contribution is entitled "Compiling the Food-Related Communication for Children in English (FoRCCE) Corpus". Chapter 5 outlines the manual collection and organization of data into a structured corpus, detailing the material types, genres, selection and exclusion criteria and organizational principles. First, it presents the typologies examined: 1) "technical" products, including cookbooks, cookery manuals, domestic guides and recipes; 2) "commercial" products, such as advertisements and social media content; and 3) "institutional" products, comprising booklets, leaflets and informational materials issued by international institutions to provide guidelines for parents and professionals on child nutrition. Next, it describes the genres analyzed, which include food blogs and celebrity chefs' websites (technical texts); social media and corporate websites (commercial texts); and institutional guidelines specifically addressed to families, schools, children and paediatricians. These institutional texts were produced by organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Pediatric Association and the UNICEF. The selection process followed a strict temporal criterion, requiring all materials to have been published or updated between 2023 and 2024; however, some exceptions were made whenever relevant material with no specific date showed on up-to-date websites. Finally, the chapter discusses the organization of the corpus into three sub-corpora corresponding to the typologies under analysis. It also highlights key constraints and technical limitations encountered during the selection process.

Chapter 6 starts by considering that food is often the quintessential example of cultural specificity, hence a challenge for interlingual translation. In addition, its textual representation may serve different functions, notably transactional and interactional ones (Bruti & Masi 2019), which reflect its different roles in our life, for instance, to cook or order meals at restaurants, to socialize and construct our identities or to appeal to our senses and emotions through the depiction of holistic experiences (Masi & Vignozzi 2024). In her approach to the analysis of various kinds of expressive language in translating children's literature, Epstein (2012) emphasizes the importance of identifying the function of linguistic items in the source text (ST) and target text (TT) before choosing what she calls a translatorial strategy. To clarify what she means by "expressive", she underlines that "all linguistic features that fall into this category have signification on two levels at the same time". Food is not included in her survey, yet it certainly has a high expressive potential, as it may have different layers of signification also by way of performing different functions at the same time, especially in children's literature. The chapter explores different representations and functions of food in various genres for children and their correlation with translation solutions for the English-to-Italian language pair. The exploration indeed shows that, in texts for children, food-centred situations are

often geared towards entertainment and/or emotional appeal, which has important consequences for translation. The discussion of a range of examples is based on data from past and current research and from years of teaching in this field, with cases from fiction (e.g. Collodi's *Pinocchio* and some of Dahl's works), audiovisual and non-fiction texts. Drawing on Text Linguistics, the analysis shows how the principles of intentionality (as reflected in the said functions) and acceptability in ST and TT are good predictors of the appropriateness of translation strategies. As a matter of fact, depending on the textual configuration of such principles, the degree of appropriateness and leeway in translation choices can vary significantly, often taking the original food item through "an adventurous path" that eventually transforms it into something completely different in the TT.

The volume, therefore, collects – as already mentioned – the multidisciplinary perspectives of various scholars on themes that consider food-related communication targeting children. However, it is also a publication that contains the results of the SPIN 2023 Project entitled "Food-Related Communication for Children in English: A Multimodal and Socio-Cultural Investigation"; Project Acronym FoRCCE, see note 1 in this chapter and Chapters 4 and 5). The SPIN2023 Project is a two-year (2023–2025) research project funded by "Ca' Foscari" University of Venice, "with the purpose of promoting impact research and strengthening its attractiveness for the best international researchers" (<https://www.unive.it/pag/31926/>). Further details are provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

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# Constructing Class Identity: How American and British Food Brands Shape Childhood Through Advertising

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## 1. Introduction: Advertising as an Enregistering Force of Class Identity in Childhood Food Brands

In an increasingly commodified world, advertising plays a profound role in shaping societal perceptions, particularly in the domain of childhood nutrition and upbringing. This paper examines how food brands use language and cultural cues to reflect class-based social identities in their advertisements targeting parents. Building on indexicality theory (in particular, Silverstein 1976; Peirce 1998 [1903]; Silverstein 2003a, 2003b; Gal 2013; Silverstein 2017), the study explores how words and images in food advertisements convey social status, lifestyle and values. It also draws on enregisterment (in particular, Agha 2007, 2011, 2015; Agha & Frog 2015) to analyse how brands develop distinctive linguistic and visual styles that signal class distinctions. Additionally, it uses multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & Leeuwen 2021 [1996]) to investigate how verbal language, visuals and other branding elements work together not only to reflect but also to actively construct and reinforce cohesive class identities.

Through case studies of American and British advertisements, the paper illustrates how food products are strategically positioned to resonate with specific audiences, reflecting and reinforcing class hierarchies. By exploring these dynamics, the paper aims to shed light on the complexities of how advertising influences parents' perceptions of their children's food and social identity. It contributes to broader discussions on consumer culture, social stratification and parent socialization, highlighting the complex relationship between language, identity and marketing.

Building on the premise that language (verbal and visual) serves as a marker of identity, status and group belonging, Section 1 introduces the two related concepts of indexicality and enregisterment to demonstrate how brands marketing children's food sell not merely taste but also a specific social position,

illustrating them through the example of the “yoga mom” model of parenting and a definition of the aspirational, accessible and inspirational positioning strategies, through which companies seek to engage consumers. To help understand how subtle lifestyle choices, rather than more immediate, palpable attributes, have acquired cultural capital in recent adverts, Section 2 reflects on *The Sum of Small Things: A Theory of the Aspirational Class* (2017). Building on Thorstein Veblen’s idea of the leisure class, which once signalled status through conspicuous consumption, the author, Currid-Halkett, argues that elite consumption has transformed over the last few decades, giving way to a newer social formation: the aspirational class, which signals belonging through inconspicuous consumption. Section 3 provides further evidence of how advertising mobilizes multiple semiotic modes (images, colour palettes, typography, textures, layout, voice, sound, etc.) to construct socially meaningful identities and how these modes work together to enregister classed personae. Section 4 provides specific detail, illustrating how “premium” children’s food brands borrow from the semiotic visuals associated with the foodie register to resonate with aspirational parents. The conclusion pulls the threads together, summing up how “premium” and budget food brands for children adopt distinct verbal and visual advertising strategies to construct and reinforce classed identities, reflecting and shaping opposite parenting ideologies, while also posing that the inherent “goodness” that “premium” brands and aspirational lifestyles claim to offer is, in effect, debatable.

## **2. Language, Identity and Belonging: Indexicality and Enregisterment**

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is a marker of identity, status and group belonging. So, when a brand markets food to children, it is not just selling taste, but a social position. The words, images and tone of adverts all help signal who the product is for and who it is *not* for. Some foods are marketed as “premium” (see below) and aspirational, that is, characterized by the aspiration to achieve social prestige and material success, while others are positioned as convenient and accessible, being budget-friendly and mass-market produced. These distinctions reflect broader class structures embedded in society, and the language (both verbal and visual) used in adverts reflects different values and lifestyles.

Indexicality (Silverstein 1976, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2017) is the property of signs, particularly in language, to point to social meanings. Words, accents and styles at large all index things like class, age, gender or status. The way people talk (their accent, the words they choose, etc.) or even how they dress or the objects they

like and the things they buy can “index” (or point to) their class, age, gender or status. These signs do not directly indicate someone’s class, age, gender or status, but they give listeners/viewers clues about class, age and gender-belonging based on social expectations. Similarly, images and sounds in advertising function as social markers, signalling who the product is meant for. For example, brands cue the “ideal child” through voice, tone or even the strategic use of silence. A well-spoken child does not just appear intelligent or polite; they index class affiliation, parental success and the type of educational environment they have been exposed to.

On the other hand, a child who is active, lively and confident or who expresses positive emotions does not just come across as smart or caring. These emotions index a type of parenting: one that is energetic, perhaps with a focus on emotional development. Similarly, children glued to a screen can evoke yet another style of parenting, possibly associated with convenience or modern-day challenges. Advertising language does not just aim to sell a product; it also sells a vision of “child” and “parent”. These subtle cues shape public perceptions of what a “good” childhood or “commendable” and “successful” parenting should look like.

Let us also consider the second concept I mentioned in the Introduction. Enregisterment (Agha 2007, 2011, 2015; Agha & Frog 2015) is the process by which a speech (or other type of) style becomes recognized and linked with a social group. An example of register in “high-end” food marketing for children (marketing products positioned at the top of the market in terms of price, quality, exclusivity and prestige) is the recurring archetype of what we could define as the “yoga mom voice” featured in some adverts: calm, thoughtful and slow-paced. This is not a naturally occurring voice; it is carefully produced and repeated, performative and constructed. It is an “enregistered” voice that communicates deeply classed ideals of parenting and childhood. Gal (2013) effectively illustrates how, for Charles Sanders Peirce, qualities are “abstract potentialities” – fundamental, unanalysable feelings or possibilities that exist independently of any particular realization. In Peirce’s semiotic framework, these “firsts” or “qualia” (Peirce 1998 [1903]) are purely qualitative possibilities – the “redness” of red, the “softness” of velvet, the “wellness” of a lifestyle – that can only be genuinely experienced or made sensible when they are embodied in material occurrences. They become manifest when they take on actual existence in a specific instance. Within this framework, yoga moms can be seen as quintessential real-time instantiations of abstract qualities profoundly shaped by cultural conventions and categories. The yoga mom embodies a constellation of abstract potentials: “wellness”, “mindfulness”, “natural living”, “ethical consumption”, “active parenting” and a certain “aspirational” aesthetic. These are not the intrinsic properties of an individual

but, rather, culturally constructed ideals that coalesce around a specific persona. The way the yoga mom speaks, the clothes she wears, her proxemics, the products she buys, the activities she engages in all serve to make these abstract qualities tangible and perceptible. In short, the description of a yoga mom is potentially an “enregistered emblem” or “trope” (Agha 2007; Di Martino 2022). This signifies that the yoga mom has become a recognizable social category, a stylized persona whose linguistic and behavioural traits are culturally linked to specific social meanings and values. She embodies a widely circulated cultural figure that encapsulates a particular set of values, a lifestyle and class affiliation into a single, recognizable archetype. These embodiments, or “qualia” made concrete, become powerful semiotic devices. Through the yoga mom trope, abstract ideals of health, ethical living and responsible parenting are materialized in a way that is immediately recognizable and culturally legible. Brands then strategically tap into this “enregistered emblem”, aligning their products with these embodied qualities and allowing consumers to purchase not just goods, but also participation in, and display of, this aspirational cultural capital. More precisely, the yoga mom has become an archetypal aspirational figure that embodies fluent middle-class values, performing “moralized” consumption through the display of purchasing and consumption behaviours primarily driven by ethical and social considerations rather than solely by economic factors. These behaviours emerge primarily through language: the yoga mom fluently navigates the vocabularies of health, sustainability and self-awareness, which she expresses in a tone that mirrors the unhurried pace of sustainable agriculture and artisanal cooking, her voice indexing a parenting style aligned with elite, educated households.

The yoga mom archetype is associated with “premium” food: products that are marketed and perceived as higher in quality, value or exclusivity and are consequently often sold at a higher price point than mass-market alternatives. The term “premium”, originally indicating a bonus or an extra payment for something of added value, has clearly evolved over recent years to signal that a product costs more because it is worth more, not necessarily in functional terms but symbolically and emotionally. This does not have to do with what the product is, but with how it is positioned<sup>3</sup>: in the case at hand, what makes food feel “premium” is the fact that it is certified organic, so it is believed to be healthier, purer and thus “more caring”; moreover, it is most probably locally – and

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<sup>3</sup> See how even hospitals, for example, are beguiled into buying “better” brands of baby formula, when there is substantially no difference between the top brands’ products and the basic ones. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/feb/14/uk-watchdog-proposes-sweeping-changes-for-baby-formula-industry>



certainly sustainably – sourced, so it is believed to be ethical and supportive of local communities. In some cases, it is based on heritage recipes, which contributes to its being perceived as authentic and inspiring trust. In Sections 3 and 4, it is argued that “premium” food often displays a sophisticated, high-end design, thus also producing a somewhat tangible association with the upper-class lifestyle. In short, “premium” food appeals to upper- and middle-class consumers, who display cultural capital through prioritizing taste, ethics and distinction over quantity or price. This social group has disposable income and views food as an expression of identity, values and aspirations.

A brand such as Abel & Cole, a British firm specializing in the home delivery of organic and sustainable (“premium”) produce, fits in with the yoga mom archetype remarkably well, both in terms of brand ethos and aesthetic positioning, despite not being specifically targeted at children (see Section 4 on this point). We have seen that yoga moms’ lifestyles are rooted in intention and ethics, and Abel & Cole specializes in organic produce, sustainable packaging and local sourcing. This speaks directly to the yoga mom’s belief that what you consume is a reflection of your values. Moreover, the brand offers the benefit of convenience without compromise: yoga moms are busy managing homes, kids, wellness routines and – often – careers. Abel & Cole offers weekly deliveries, flexible subscriptions and minimal packaging waste, thus fully satisfying the need for time-saving eating that remains conscientious. The branding is hand-illustrated and focuses on earthy tones, presenting rustic chic as authenticity, which is exactly how the yoga mom wants to be perceived: effortless, grounded and good.

Last but not least, the brand’s carbon-cutting initiatives, reusability schemes and partnerships with regenerative farms mirror the yoga mom’s desire to live a lifestyle that cares for both her family and the planet. It represents a form of educated, empowered consumerism; in this sense, it represents a “prosthetic extension” (what Agha also calls “diacritic” in 2011: 33) of the yoga mom’s social persona and her ethical identity. As such, it also constitutes, for other prospective customers, the gateway to entry into “yoga momness”.

The video ORGANIC FOOD DELIVERY UNBOXING: ABEL & COLE, posted on *The Postmodern Family* channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKUKu-Arjgbs>), well exemplifies the yoga mom archetype in its invocation of slowness as virtue and alignment with upper- and middle-class femininity and the natural connection with a brand like Abel & Cole. In the video, the yoga mom is unpacking a box of organic food, specifically from this brand. Her choices signal cultural capital by suggesting time spent researching ingredients and commitment to wellness. The clothing featured reflects a “woke minimalism” aesthetic, while, on the visual plane, the video plays with natural light,

muted palettes and grainy textures, evoking the “soft chaos” that many yoga moms cultivate: an intentional disorder that is messy but meaningful. Yoga moms often frame emotional labour not as a burden, but as a ritual (Elias et al. 2017; Di Martino 2024), and the woman in this video reframes domesticity as empowerment through choice, like a sort of conscious, feminist and even spiritual labour. The video blurs the line between lived experience and lifestyle branding through oscillation between colour and black and white. The shift acts as a stylistic metaphor, with black-and-white evoking idealism, legacy, filtered memory and colour, bringing the viewer back to the contemporary, chaotic, cluttered now, thus also suggesting a “split” between the woman’s aspirational self and the messy material of actual motherhood. This duality transforms the yoga mom into what Nye (2005) calls a soft-power symbol: a visual icon that exerts non-coercive influence, shaping how others perceive a product and the set of values associated with it or even a specific brand and its philosophy through attraction, admiration and cultural legitimacy. The segment of the video from 0:08 to 0:19 (titled “The Postmodern Mom”, but we could rename it “the domestic monologue sequence”) is particularly interesting. It features the aspirational, soft-yet-disciplined embodiment of fluent middle-class values through a mindful, aesthetically literate female figure immersed in a domesticity that has been edited for softness. A woman in a turban (which suggests she honours tradition or at least shops on sites that talk about heritage) and bold, dangling earrings is in her kitchen sanctuary, catching the morning light while standing over a stove. She is cooking, but not just “making food”. She appears to be engaging in the preparation of sacred nourishment as a ritual. The whole moment feels cinematic. What really counts is not merely feeding the family but feeding souls. This impression is further reinforced by the use of Bach as background music. Its contrapuntal harmony evokes balance, order and serenity, framing the domestic scene not as chaotic or mundane, but as morally elevated and spiritually resonant. Bach’s associations with the sacred and the timeless further distance the setting from the noise of mass consumer culture, situating it instead within a slower, virtuous temporality. In this way, the soundtrack operates indexically to link organic consumption with ideals of cultural distinction, ethical domesticity and maternal authority, constructing an aspirational identity that fuses classed aesthetics with moralized care.

Every motion the woman makes (stirring, turning and tending) looks like a moving meditation. At 0.12, the colour drains from the frames, and suddenly, we are witnessing a black-and-white video, which codes the scene as “serious”, as black and white signify legacy, documentary and truth (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021 [1996]). The woman – we now learn she is a mother – is holding her baby

but looking elsewhere, and when the picture turns to colour again, we realize that her other hand is on her phone. She is tender, yet sharp: a duality embodied. The baby clings, the phone glows and she speaks: “I think there’s such a joy in keeping a good home, and watching your children grow up, and cooking and cleaning, and supporting your husband ...” Every word lands like a curated caption under a well-thought-out picture. At first sight, the perception is sweet, honest and even nostalgic: motherhood and wifedom presented as a sacred contract, not a gendered script. However, when we are suddenly brought back to saturated colour pictures, the myth feels as though it has burst, and the domestic space is less romantic, more real and the counter is cluttered with cooking objects and ingredients (even a dishcloth lying on the floor next to the sink). The woman keeps moving, soothing and scrolling. The black-and-white segments evoke the idealized past, or perhaps a filtered nostalgia: the way we imagine motherhood should feel. The return to colour grounds us in the now: unfiltered, complex and maybe a little lonely. The spoken line, delivered with what sounds like gentle sincerity, acts as a mantra of contentment, but in the yoga mom’s gaze, it is also a performance of feminine fulfilment. The segment closes with a smile in black and white, right after the woman says “... and supporting your husband”. It is a brief, soft statement, and, on the surface, it would appear to be utterly benign. However, framed as it is in black and white, preserved like an artefact, it potentially becomes a forceful little rupture in the visual flow: this is the kind of expression that looks, at first, like uncomplicated joy, but it probably lingers just a second too long, revealing a flicker right at the edge of the woman’s lips. It probably hints at an underlying performance. It suggests that the “virtuous” and “effortless” demeanour of the aspirational class is not innate but a carefully cultivated display that demands significant emotional and social labour. In what we picture as a house of mindful living, where we imagine every smile paired with intention, this one smile feels inherited, like a smile passed down matrilineally, through generations of women who were taught to find satisfaction not just in being, but in being for someone else. The shift to black and white perfectly aestheticizes the contradiction: the moment is timeless, but in a way that invites the question: “Who controls the time?” The smile is a micro-moment of learned pleasure, which questions every gendered norm, all the while performing it. It suggests that even within this seemingly progressive and self-aware class, certain gendered norms and expectations are deeply ingrained, highlighting how deeply societal expectations are embedded, even when cloaked in modern, aspirational narratives. The rupture of the artefact reveals the intense pressure on the aspirational class to constantly project an idealized image, hinting at the psychological and emotional toll of maintaining a flawlessly curated public persona, such as

that of the yoga mom, where every decision, from food choice to parenting style, becomes a performance of status and values.

Branding, in its most sophisticated form, creates distinct registers of communication – highly curated and recognizable semiotic systems that represent brands’ own unique ways of communicating with their public: a consistent blend of verbal and visual language, tone, imagery and even prescribed behaviours that define their identity and resonate with their target audience. Knowing how to “speak the brand” becomes a form of symbolic power. This is not just about understanding a brand’s message, but about internalizing and enacting its particular style, values and even consumption rituals. For consumers, especially in social contexts where brands serve as status markers, aligning with and skilfully performing the brand’s register signals a form of affiliation. This might involve adopting specific vocabulary, aesthetic preferences or even lifestyle choices associated with the brand, that is, performing the “eucharistic” exercise of using the right words and turns of phrase and speaking in the required measured tone of voice that constitute, in the specific case of “premium” products, the paraphernalia of the upper- and middle-class lifestyle and are therefore indexical of an elite identity. In short, words, turns of phrase and tone of voice are capable of constructing identity by audible consumption and production (see Silverstein 2003a): “premium” brands train non-elite consumers in the “finesse” that elite consumers obtain from good breeding (see Silverstein 2017; Di Martino 2023). This connects directly to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984 [1979], 1986 [1983]; Bourdieu & Passeron 1990). Unlike economic or social capital, cultural capital is embodied in one’s manners, tastes and way of speaking, objectified in possessions like art or books, or institutionalized through educational qualifications. When individuals demonstrate proficiency in a brand’s register through participation in its community, echoing its values and appropriating its verbal and visual language, they are, in effect, deploying a form of embodied cultural capital. Possessing a certain brand’s cultural capital thus allows individuals to reinforce or even elevate their social position. The brand is not just selling a product; it is selling access to a symbolic world and a set of shared understandings, functioning as a means by which individuals can assert their place within social hierarchies. Advertising, in this sense, does not merely mirror behaviours, styles and norms; it actively shapes and disseminates them. It teaches consumers what kinds of choices, and by extension, what kinds of people, are associated with specific lifestyles or aspirations. In particular, “premium” brands give access to the “shibboleths” of upper- and middle-class identity performance (see Silverstein 2003a, 2003b, 2017; Di Martino 2023), where “shibboleth”, originally a biblical term for a word

or custom whose pronunciation or execution acted as a test of belonging to a particular group,<sup>4</sup> indicates (following the evolution of the term in linguistic and sociological contexts) the subtle, often unconscious, linguistic, cultural or behavioural markers that signal insider status.

Section 3 provides a more detailed examination of how visual design significantly contributes to this class of signalling in children's food branding. For the time being, it is sufficient to think about the contrast between minimalist packaging and cartoon-heavy packaging. These design choices, paired with verbal language, help build brand registers that consumers recognize and internalize as part of their social identity. Marketers craft stories around products that signal who they are for and, by extension, who they are *not* for. As consumers, parents and even children, we are constantly responding to these carefully crafted messages.

In broad terms, we can think of two dominant strategies in class-based brand messaging.

- Aspirational positioning, which targets consumers who want to move up the social ladder, portraying a lifestyle to aspire to.
- Accessible positioning, which emphasizes value, convenience and inclusion, focusing on where we are now rather than where we might want to go.

In aspirational positioning, brands project an image of exclusivity, prestige or sophistication, suggesting that purchasing their products may grant access to an elite world of some sort. For example, Whole Foods, the American organic food company, does not just sell groceries; it sells a lifestyle of ethical refinement, wellness superiority and conscious consumption. Labels like “organic”, “non-GMO”, “fair trade” and “sustainably sourced” and an emphasis on animal welfare, local farming and regenerative agriculture elevate grocery shopping into a moral choice. In short, Whole Foods enables consumers to develop ethical awareness through their food choices. When buying at Whole Foods, customers are not just shopping; they are aligning with values such as environmental responsibility, social justice and health consciousness, and signalling that they are informed, proactive and exercising control over their bodies and lives. The store has a feel that is artisanal, not industrial, which is ideal for middle-to-upper-class consumers who crave both convenience and taste-driven curation. Packaging embodies a clean, natural and value-driven aesthetic with natural colour palettes, clean

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<sup>4</sup> It was a test to see if someone was a native speaker of Hebrew, since the Ephraimites could not pronounce the initial “sh”.

sans-serif fonts or hand-lettered styles, ingredient transparency, layout clarity, eco-conscious materials, mission statements and ethical sourcing stories (Figure 1).



The Quest For Quality | Whole Foods Market

Figure 1. Still from “The Quest For Quality” Whole Foods Market, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGZyC-YMiw4>

High prices act as a filter: only those with sufficient income or cultural capital feel fully “at home” at Whole Foods. Buying one’s groceries there implies spending enough to invest in one’s health and the planet. The price becomes a testament to commitment: not just to quality, but to values. That investment is part of the performance of ethical, upper- and middle-class adulthood, so Whole Foods basically sells identity validation, transforming customers’ basic needs into acts of refined self-expression.

In a third type of strategy, inspirational positioning, companies aim to engage consumers emotionally, rather than seeking to move upwards. It is about empowering people, evoking shared values and creating a sense of “we” (Figure 2).

This “inspirational” approach still serves the broader goal of class-based signalling or cultural capital acquisition, by making “virtuous” consumption feel more authentic or less overtly status-driven for the aspirational class. Basically, it complements aspirational positioning, offering it in a subtler form, which explains why brands often blend these strategies. Innocent Drinks, a British company that produces smoothies and juice, and Little Dish, a London-based company specializing in food for babies and children, make strong use of inspirational positioning, wrapping their products in moral, emotional and lifestyle





**Eat Real Food® | We Believe in Real Food™ | Whole Foods Market**

**Figure 2.** Still from “Eat Real Food® | We Believe in Real Food™”, Whole Foods Market, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p54AQ77Gqas>

narratives while targeting similar aspirational, upper- and middle-class and family-focused consumers. Innocent Drinks presents smoothies and juices as tiny acts of goodness, allowing consumers to feel like ethical actors through their purchases: buying a smoothie becomes a moral gesture. Little Dish meals mimic what aspirational parents wish they had time to cook, reassuring them that they are making the best choice under modern pressure.

In inspirational positioning, the focus is on cultivating an immersive emotional atmosphere that transcends product features. A Daylesford Dairy advert currently available on YouTube ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) not specifically targeting the children’s marketing segment; see Section 4 on this) is a telling example of this aspect, aiming to engage consumers emotionally and ethically. The voice-over emphasizes sustainable farming practices: “We’ve worked extremely hard to produce a sustainable cow at Daylesford. We’ve been breeding back to the traditional British Friesian”. The calm, earnest narration evokes a sense of stewardship, continuity and respect for rural heritage. The centrality of pastoral visuals (grazing cows, green pastures and traditional farm buildings) positions the viewer as someone who cares about lineage for farms, animals and taste. The calm and idyllic imagery evokes feelings of trust, tradition and emotional well-being, rootedness in the land. Focusing on its opening and closing images, the video represents a full circle of ecological integrity: from grass to glass, converting dairy into a symbol of ecological responsibility and cultural refinement, nudging consumers (Thaler

& Sunstein 2008) to become not only buyers but also “guardians” of wholesome living, emotionally invested in the future of agriculture and caring for the land. The purchase becomes an ideological statement: it is a commitment to supporting ethically sourced, locally produced goods. By framing consumption in this way, essentially as caretaking, the brand signals upper- and middle-class consumers.

Understanding these branding strategies helps to decode the class signals embedded in everyday products and see how brands shape our identities, values and desires, not just our diets.

### **3. Subtle Lifestyle Choices as Cultural Capital: The Shift to Inconspicuous Consumption**

To help understand how subtle lifestyle choices, rather than more visible or tangible attributes, have come to acquire cultural capital in recent forms of branding and advertising, a crucial theoretical lens is provided by Elizabeth Currid-Halkett’s *The Sum of Small Things: A Theory of the Aspirational Class* (2017). Currid-Halkett persuasively argues that elite consumption has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Building on Thorstein Veblen’s seminal idea of the leisured classes, who, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, overtly signalled their status through easily visible opulence, such as grand estates, luxury cars, designer clothing and an abundance of leisure time that demonstrated their exemption from productive labour, Currid-Halkett identifies a newer social formation: the aspirational class. Emerging in the 1990s and gaining cultural dominance by the 2000s, the form of “inconspicuous” consumption embraced by this class became a hallmark of educated elites in the USA, the UK and parts of Western Europe. The shift was driven both by a reaction against the overt materialism of the post-1980s/1990s “bling” culture and a growing emphasis on environmental and ethical awareness. In an era of ubiquitous digital visibility, the traditional markers of opulence lost their power as exclusive signifiers. Consequently, elites began to pursue more discreet forms of distinction.

The new class codes revolved not around designer labels but around discerning tastes, as expressed through the consumption of organic food, artisanal coffee and exclusive cultural experiences, which indexed aesthetic subtlety, restraint and connoisseurship. This subtle form of cultural capital is acquired and displayed through investments in education, health, experiences and a particular set of highly valued, often subtle, lifestyle choices. These might include, as we have already seen, consuming organic, locally sourced food, as well as breastfeeding, prioritizing wellness, practising yoga or Pilates and choosing minimalist, eco-friendly products. The aspirational class invests in human capital, especially in



their children, through high-quality childcare, selecting homes based on the school offer in a specific area, prioritizing extracurricular enrichment and emotional development. By engaging in specific forms of cultural participation, such as attending independent films or niche art exhibitions, these consumers signal a refined taste that values experiences over material goods. In this context, status is increasingly communicated through knowledge-intensive goods and services whose value is tied to specialized expertise rather than raw materials. Brands reframe their products as vehicles for signifying ethical awareness, intellectual pursuits and refinement. In the context of baby and children's food products, this means moving far beyond simply promoting taste or convenience. Brands increasingly leverage the anxieties and aspirations of parents by packaging their offerings, as we have seen, not just as nourishment, but as conduits for cultural capital and markers of "good parenting". The focus shifts dramatically to a consumption of knowledge-intensive choices, manifesting itself, first of all, in the "premiumization" of ingredients and sourcing: advertisements for baby and children's food prominently feature and emphasize attributes such as "organic", "non-GMO", "locally sourced", "sustainable", "plant-based", "sugar-free" or "fortified with omega-3s", which are carefully selected cues that signal parental knowledge about health, environmental concerns and nutritional science. The cost of the product is justified by investment in research and discerning choice, with advertising messages frequently linking consumption to children's cognitive development and overall well-being. A purchase represents an investment in a child's future intellectual and physical capital while simultaneously constituting a performative act that enables parents to project the identity of environmentally conscious and nurturing caregivers. Choosing the "right" baby or children's food becomes an act of self-presentation and social alignment, reflecting a shared understanding of what constitutes responsible and enlightened parenthood in contemporary society.

These choices reproduce class boundaries. They reinforce a model of success built on cultural fluency, linguistic competence and health-conscious behaviour, which ensures intergenerational social mobility. The aspirational class does not just consume differently; it raises children differently. It utilizes cultural capital – non-financial social assets, such as education, intellect and speech style – to maintain social standing across generations. Through curated speech, structured play, healthy food and high-touch parenting, families encode success into everyday life. The norms thus established do not remain contained. They trickle down through branding, advertising and popular discourse, shaping consumer expectations and parenting ideals across a broader public. As such, food marketing and brand language do not just reflect class; they teach it. The consistent

association of healthy, fresh or “natural” food with higher social status is not a given; it is a socially constructed link that serves to create a sense of exclusivity. This process turns food into a signifier of distinction: its value is derived not only from its nutritional content but also from its symbolic capital. So the question is not just “What is being sold?” but “What kind of life is being sold along with it?” In a society where class mobility is limited, branding becomes a form of social currency. By investing in their children’s development through quality food, education and extracurricular activities, the aspirational class ensures the perpetuation of their social status.

#### 4. The Visual Language of Inconspicuous Consumption

Advertising rarely communicates through verbal language alone. It mobilizes multiple semiotic modes – images, colour palettes, typography, textures, layout, voice and sound – to construct socially meaningful identities (Kress & Leeuwen 2021 [1996]). This is particularly true of advertisements for food products targeted at children.

Section 1 has shown how branding uses indexicality and enregisterment to construct recognizable personae for both products and their imagined consumers: a cereal brand might use a child’s giggle and bright primary colours to index innocence and joy, while a luxury baby food advert might pair soft lighting, serif fonts and formal diction to enregister parental sophistication. These are not arbitrary design choices; they are ideological acts that assign value to certain lifestyles, aesthetics and even forms of childhood and parenthood. By selecting particular styles, brands communicate which voices are associated with success, which styles of parenting are legitimate and which forms of childhood are desirable. The idea that styles index social traits is a core concept within the field of linguistic anthropology and semiotics, prominently associated with Michael Silverstein (1976, 2003a, 2003b, 2017), who built directly on Peirce’s semiotic framework, particularly his concept of the icon, index and symbol (1998 [1903]), applying it to social and linguistic phenomena. Linguistic and cultural styles, including ways of speaking, dressing, consuming or otherwise performing identity, do not just reflect social categories but actively “index” or point to them. Agha’s concept of enregisterment (2007, 2011, 2015; Agha & Frog 2015) presupposes and extends indexicality. We have seen in Section 1, how certain stylistic choices become associated with particular social groups, statuses or identities, often in subtle and non-referential ways: repeated use of certain stylistic cues (both linguistic and visual) assigns them to recognizable social types, “enregistering” them as the “yoga mom”, the “value shopper”, etc.; the traits of these social types have

come to “index” a specific set of abstract qualities and a class position. When individuals use these styles, they are actively participating in the performance and recognition of these social traits.

Visual markers strongly participate in the performance of styles in baby and kids’ food products. The visual language and narratives of “premium” food advertisements often move away from the bright, flashy and overtly “fun” aesthetics that are common in traditional children’s food marketing (advertisers historically appealed to children’s preferences for bright colours, engaging characters and playful aesthetics to make food products more attractive) towards more muted, natural palettes, minimalist designs and imagery of calm, engaged family moments. The image in Figure 3 is a good example, with its subtle, oat-toned colours, the mother’s simple hairstyle and makeup, the slightly older but athletic father in his slim-fit shirt playing an active role in preparing food and the well-behaved child.



**Piccolo Organic Baby Food**

Figure 3. Still from “Piccolo Organic Baby Food”, My Little Piccolo,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMtgeTniDo>

The brand’s narrative is not one of indulgence but of mindful choices. This “story” is strategically reinforced by the packaging itself, whose understated visuals function as semiotic signifiers that index the brand’s core values and its alignment with a refined aesthetic. It acts as an index of belonging to a group that prioritizes authentic quality over overt display. These elements index cultural capital, aligning the product with elite values of restraint, taste and informed

consumption. The consumption is thus positioned as not only financially costly, but morally superior, being linked to responsibility, health and knowledge. In contrast, budget items such as mass-market supermarket own brands employ a radically different aesthetic, made up of bright, saturated colours like red, yellow, neon green; cartoon mascots including animals or anthropomorphized snacks; heavy, rounded fonts including friendly, exaggerated typography; busy layouts, focus on taste or price over health or sustainability (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Still from “Cheeky Monkey Cake in Asda”, YouTube Shorts, n.d., <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/qdoPxAtHjc>

These choices index playfulness and abundance, signalling excitement and emotional gratification. Nonetheless, they also carry ideological baggage: because their primary appeal is convenience, taste (which might imply higher sugar content or artificial flavouring) and direct appeal to the child rather than the parent’s values, these features inadvertently position the products outside the “virtuous” register established by “premium” brands, reinforcing the notion that lower cost choices are somehow ethically or nutritionally compromised. The judgement is implicit: since budget products do not align with the aesthetic and value codes of the aspirational class, they become implicitly associated with a lack of such “virtues”. Nothing explicitly states that they are bad, but the absence of “good” signals a

deficiency. Therefore, the contrasting visuals are not just about aesthetics; they are about moral and social worth. While the visual language of “premium” products suggests mindful parenting, the visuals of budget products frame these as indulgent or insufficient, subtly reinforcing class hierarchies through the language of food. Visuals, like linguistic cues, sell values and expensive artisanal foods are framed as the morally superior choice. Even before reading a single word, consumers absorb powerful moral and classed messages through packaging, layout, sound and colour, asking: “What kind of parent are you?”; “What kind of child are you raising?” In this “moralized” visual economy, choosing organic food in minimalist packaging marks us as thoughtful and culturally competent, whereas opting for a cartoon-covered multipack of snack cakes can mark consumers as less disciplined and less responsible, even if the purchase is driven by economic necessity. Like verbal cues, visual semiotic systems do not merely reflect inequality: they help to normalize it, framing taste and parenting choices as markers of morality and worth.

## 5. Borrowing the Grammar of the Foodie Register

In Sections 2 and 3, we have seen how children’s food branding reproduces class distinctions under the guise of ethical consumption, utilizing a precise verbal and visual semiotic system. In this aspect, it is interesting to see how the connection between food and social stratification intersects with foodie discourse, aligning with Johnston and Baumann’s reflections in *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (2015), but also how “premium” food brands for children have adopted the visual grammar of foodie discourse through explicit borrowing of the core visual cues of the adult foodie register. This appropriation of codes for a different, yet related, market segment aims to resonate with aspirational parents seeking “virtuous” and knowledge-intensive consumption choices for their children.

A “foodie” is someone with a genuine passion and strong interest in food. For this type of individual, terms like “authentic”, “artisanal” or “organic” signal more than product quality: they index a consumer’s cultural capital and they appear side by side with a precise visual aesthetics characterized by earthy colour palettes, classic serif fonts, a focus on raw material, the process and the authenticity of products and a typically minimalist and uncluttered layout emphasizing the product itself, to suggest confidence in its quality. Foodie philosophy emerged in the 1980s as a playful, democratic alternative to food snobbery, and the term itself was first popularized in 1984 with the publication of *The Official Foodie Handbook* by Levy and Barr (1985). Foodie culture expanded between the 1990s and 2000s, with the rise of celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson

and Anthony Bourdain, the proliferation of cookbooks, the emergence of food TV, the growth of farmers' markets, the rise of gastro-tourism and a growing interest in regional, authentic and artisanal foods. It is during this period that the "foodie" became a cultural type: curious, urban, educated and often middle class to upper-middle class. Starting in the 2010s, social media began fuelling the visual performance of food, and foodie brands began to emerge. Among them is Daylesford (see Section 1 for a sample of its branding language). Abel & Cole and Whole Foods (again, see Section 1 for a sample of their branding language) are also perceived as adult foodie food brands. Foodie philosophy overlaps with sustainability, cultural appreciation, wellness and mindful consumption, so for the foodie, food becomes a way of demonstrating cultural fluency, moral awareness and aesthetic sophistication.

Among foodie brands, Neal's Yard Dairy is renowned for its artisanal cheeses and dairy products, and its advertising and in-store experience well embody the adult foodie register. The brand appeals to customers who nurture a desire for authenticity, heritage and the appreciation of craft. Its narration centres around discerning taste and valuing the process as much as the product, strongly aligning with the inconspicuous consumption of adults who signal status through informed, often expensive, choices that demonstrate cultural capital and a rejection of mass-produced goods. A comparison between the advertising approaches of Neal's Yard Dairy and Ella's Kitchen, a leading British brand in organic baby and toddler food, can help understand how "premium" children's food brands borrow the grammar of the foodie register, adapting foodie discourse and aesthetics for a different market segment.

Neal's Yard Dairy stands as a prime example of the quintessential adult foodie register in embracing (and selling) a philosophy of food that perfectly encapsulates the foodie discourse. Its brand identity, visual communication and underlying values are meticulously crafted to resonate with discerning adult consumers who prioritize quality, provenance and the story behind their food, through an emphasis on authenticity and craftsmanship, and an almost exclusive focus on artisanal, traditionally made British and Irish cheeses. This immediately positions the brand outside mass production and aligns it with a "slow food" ethos that values skill, time and human touch over efficiency. The branding rarely features bright, attention-grabbing colours. The preference is for muted, earthy palettes (browns, creams, natural whites and deep greens) that evoke the farm, the ageing cave and the natural world. The visual discourse is dominated by rustic imagery, such as cheese wheels, traditional tools and the hands of cheesemakers, that foregrounds the manual, almost sacred, process of creation to signal its artisanal quality. This is complemented by classic, often serif typography that conveys

heritage and timeless quality rather than trendy novelty. This narrative appeals to the knowledge-intensive consumer by providing a rich, detailed account of the origins, from specific farms and animal breeds to the unique microclimates that shape each cheese's character. The brand's communication policy constructs a narrative that de-emphasizes traditional taste descriptors, focusing instead on the product's "terroir", the dedication of the cheesemakers and the preservation of artisanal techniques. This sophisticated narrative turns a dairy product into a cultural artefact. Neal's Yard Dairy avoids flashy promotions. The brand's minimalist layouts and uncluttered design function as a subtle signifier of distinction, implying a confidence in the inherent quality of the product. It appeals to a class that disdains overt displays of wealth. For the aspirational consumer, choosing this brand is an act of signalling a knowledgeable palate and a commitment to ethical, sustainable practices. This act of consumption accumulates cultural capital by demonstrating an appreciation for authenticity and craftsmanship over mere brand recognition or price. The brand deploys an educational tone that involves the consumer in a discourse of expertise, elevating the purchase beyond a simple transaction. By providing detailed information on scientific processes, historical context or sensory nuances, the brand positions the consumer not as a passive buyer but as a discerning connoisseur who understands and appreciates the product's value while simultaneously fostering a community of practice among "the happy few" who see themselves as knowledgeable enthusiasts. This specialized language register, much like what Michael Silverstein (2003a, 2006, 2016) termed *oinoglossia* or "wine-talk", serves not just to describe the product but to profoundly reveal the social context and identity of the group that uses it. Just as wine connoisseurs deploy a specific vocabulary to discuss tannins, terroir and vintage, cheese enthusiasts use a rich, specialized language to index their knowledge, discerning taste and status of belonging to a particular cultural elite. This discourse acts as a powerful shibboleth, signalling an elevated social status for those "in the know". To coin a neologism for this specialized discourse, we could propose *tyroglossia* (τυρογλωσσία) from Greek *tyros* (τύρος, tyros, meaning "cheese", from which "tyrosine" – more familiarly known as "casein" – is derived + *glōssa* (γλῶσσα, meaning "tongue" or "language"). *Tyroglossia*, or "cheese-talk", becomes a crucial component of the adult foodie register. When consumers engage with brands like Neal's Yard Dairy, they are implicitly invited, and often explicitly educated, to participate in this specialized linguistic practice. This cheese register serves several key functions in projecting social status and cultural capital, including lexical precision and nuance, the performance of expert knowledge and social boundary marking. Brands like Neal's Yard Dairy actively cultivate and participate in this *tyroglossia*, which provides a powerful analytical



lens for understanding how the language surrounding artisanal cheese (and, by extension, other high-end, morally inflected food products) functions as a sophisticated register for expressing and reinforcing class identity and cultural capital.

In short, Neal's Yard Dairy represents the quintessential adult foodie register by masterfully employing a visual and linguistic grammar that emphasizes authenticity, craftsmanship, provenance, lexical nuance and understated sophistication. It sells a curated experience and a valued identity aligned with discerning taste and ethical consumption, serving as a powerful emblem of adult cultural capital within the food world. A brand like Ella's Kitchen cleverly translates this foodie register for children's products, explicitly labelling its philosophy as a foodie one and presenting itself as a brand producing organic, nutritious foods for young children, with an emphasis on simple, high-quality ingredients and an overall philosophy aimed at supporting healthy eating habits and caring for the planet to ensure a healthier future for generations to come. For more detail on the brand's positioning and approach, see the "About" section of the company's website (<https://www.ellaskitchen.co.uk/about?srsltid=AfmBOoirsbt1SOg1fA-0fu5kF26fqoUYLne6Tn7mVIPq1e70cNMmTxoA>).

This adaptation takes place through the removal of the overtly artisanal elements of foodie discourse while retaining the core visual cues (natural colours, clean design and focus on pure ingredients) that resonate with aspirational parents seeking "virtuous" and knowledge-intensive consumption choices for their children. At Ella's Kitchen, it is not just food that is sold, but a specific ideology of good living and good parenting. The appropriation of foodie visual codes for a different market segment is a deliberate and highly effective strategy that taps into deeper anxieties and desires related to parental identity, social status and the moralization of care: the muted colour palettes, minimalist layouts and clean typography borrowed from the foodie register instantly signal purity, naturalness and an absence of artificiality. In a market often saturated with bright, cartoonish sweet aesthetics, which can carry the ideological baggage of being less virtuous, this visual restraint stands out, implicitly communicating that the product is closer to homemade or unprocessed and therefore healthier. It constitutes a visual shibboleth. Minimalist typography and uncluttered design choices project qualities of seriousness, trustworthiness and scientific credibility. This visual maturity reassures parents that the brand is not merely playful but is serious about nutrition, quality control and child well-being. It positions the brand as an authority that understands the complex needs of growing children, appealing to parents who engage in knowledge-intensive consumption and want to feel confident in their educated choices. Focusing on real ingredients, natural textures and authentic (rather than hyper-stimulated) depictions of children



enjoying the food, the imagery helps parents visualize a lifestyle that is about raising a child in a healthy, mindful and responsible way. The product packaging becomes an “enregistered emblem” of this parenting philosophy. In essence, the visual codes of the foodie register provide a ready-made semiotic system for “premium” children’s food brands to bypass explicit claims and instead subtly index the values of health, purity, ethical consumption and informed decision-making. This visual language acts as a powerful shorthand, allowing aspirational parents to quickly identify products that align with their self-perceived “virtuous” approach to child rearing and their desired social identity.

If we contrast Ella’s Kitchen and other “premium” organic food companies (Piccolo, Little Dish and Daylesford Organic Baby) with supermarket own brands or McDonald’s Happy Meal, it is evident that they do not attempt to aspire to a higher level in the hierarchy of cultural capital. Instead, they embrace a register of “everyday joy” that speaks directly to a different kind of parental identity, one defined not by sustainable ideals or nutritional virtue, but by practicality, affordability and emotional immediacy. McDonald’s, in particular, operates on the opposite end of the indexical spectrum from Ella’s Kitchen. The key lexical cues in McDonald’s register – words like “fun”, “cool”, “exciting” and “collectable toy” – do not reference health or sustainability, but rather immediacy, pleasure and affordability. The visual language is equally telling. The Happy Meal box features primary colours, cartoon mascots and plastic packaging, evoking a kind of hyper-visibility that indexes a very different form of childhood from that implied by “premium” products. This is a world of everyday indulgence, quick gratification and mainstream appeal. The Happy Meal is a reward, a treat, an easy solution for working parents, especially those navigating time poverty and limited resources. The brand does not try to climb the ladder of cultural capital. Instead, it embraces and markets to what might be called “accessible fun”. In doing so, it indexes budget-conscious families, practical parenting and ordinary childhood pleasures. There is no mention of gut health or early-stage development: just joy and toys. In the register of the Happy Meal, language is not about aspiration; it is about relatability and routine.

Summing up, both adult foodie brands and “premium” children’s food brands appeal to a form of moralized and inconspicuous consumption, but they tailor their registers to their specific target audiences, respectively, of adult gourmards and aspirational parents, reproducing a similar cultural paradox: their discourse features inclusivity in language, celebrating diversity and “real” food, but exclusion in practice since the experience is only accessible to those with the knowledge, time and money to navigate these discourses. This aspect becomes even more pronounced in children’s food branding, where these markers are, first of all,

indexical of the parents' qualities. Brands like Ella's Kitchen (particularly the upper tier, i.e. sub-ranges within the brand that are more "premium" in pricing, ingredients or values messaging), Piccolo, Little Dish and Daylesford Organic Baby, normalize a specific version of good parenting that presumes access to time, knowledge and income. Language like "gentle on the tummy", "real" and "organic" functions not only descriptively but indexically, linking the consumer to an ethical, educated and elite identity. Like foodie taste, parenting becomes classified through subtle linguistic and aesthetic cues. Good taste in food mirrors good taste in language and behaviour, indexing not only health but also education, awareness and moral virtue, with packaging also moralizing the "parental gaze" through its minimalist design.

## 6. Conclusion: Challenging the Authenticity of "Goodness"

This section has explored how, through the powerful mechanisms of indexicality and enregisterment, food advertising becomes a critical cultural site where classed ideologies of parenting, childhood and taste are not merely reflected but actively constructed and reinforced. These pervasive cues shape our collective understanding of what ideal parenthood and a desirable childhood should look like, and, critically, they also determine who possesses the cultural capital to convincingly perform these socially valued roles. American and British food brands actively construct and reinforce class identity through intricate semiotic systems of distinction. As evidenced by brands like Ella's Kitchen, Piccolo, Little Dish and Daylesford Organic Baby, "premium" children's food brands effectively borrow and adapt the established visual grammar of the adult foodie world performed by such brands as Abel & Cole, Whole Foods and Neal's Yard Dairy. This appropriation of codes resonates deeply with aspirational parents. The brands, therefore, function as semiotic tools that enable parents to perform "virtuous" identities, thus signalling their cultural capital. This practice aligns with the broader sociological trend of inconspicuous consumption, which transforms ethical consumption from a simple purchase into a moral performance of privilege and refinement – one conveyed through ethical choices and aesthetic restraint rather than overt display. The advertising for these brands subtly codes good parenting as educated, informed and elite. Conversely, budget brands such as McDonald's and supermarket own prioritize functionality and affordability, adopting plain language, price-forward messaging, bold visuals and primary colours. The focus is on convenience and meeting immediate needs. This portrays a pragmatic and resourceful parenting style that values sufficiency over aesthetics. The child is imagined as active and easily satisfied, the parent a diligent manager of budget, time and appetite. Ultimately, these two competing discourses

of childhood stand in stark contrast: “premium” brands construct parenting as refined, culturally literate and tasteful, imagining the child as a gourmand in training. Conversely, budget brands frame parenting as resourceful and pragmatic, prioritizing convenience over aesthetics.

While Sections 2–4 of this chapter argue that “premium” brands are currently positioned as morally superior to budget brands, being linked to responsibility, health and knowledge, Section 1 raises attention to the fragility of the aspirational ideal they perform, through reflection on a video that displays the performance of a specific “yoga mom”, suggesting that even the most quintessential embodiments of this social persona can reveal moments of fatigue or internal conflict beneath the polished surface. If the expressions of fulfilment or virtue of the yoga mom are subtly questioned, the inherent “goodness” that “premium” brands and aspirational lifestyles claim to offer also becomes debatable. The “rupture” of the artefact created with great effort in the video discussed in Section 1 can be interpreted as a subtle crack in the soft-power symbol of the yoga mom herself, revealing that the values she embodies (health, ethics and mindfulness) might be just as much about social signalling and maintaining class boundaries as they are about genuine conviction.

While this study has predominantly focused on parental identity and consumption choices as shaped by advertising, a compelling avenue for future research lies in exploring children’s own interpretations and responses to these distinct semiotic strategies. Furthermore, the analysis of the yoga mom archetype, by revealing how upper- and middle-class femininity and the reframing of domesticity as empowerment intersect with gendered expectations of care and labour within aspirational frameworks, opens up fertile ground for further scholarly inquiry.

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# Textual and Visual Strategies for Baby Food Representation in Advertising<sup>6</sup>

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## 1. Background

In advertising, linguistic strategies play a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. As a matter of fact, many advertising campaigns leverage specific linguistic techniques to boost consumer engagement and elicit emotional responses. For instance, the language used in advertising is designed to be directed to specific age groups, in order to make it more effective based on social parameters (Koteyko 2015). In addition, some cultural features and signs are added by corporations in their advertising, in order to adapt to various local requirements (Martin 2011).

Promotional strategies are thus designed to influence consumer perceptions of products, and they rely on some linguistic and visual elements or tools to act on how consumers view and evaluate brands.

Some themes are recurrent in the advertising design. First of all, the conjoint use of linguistic and visual techniques. Visual metadiscourse markers have been proven to be a very effective tool in promotional techniques, other than linguistic metadiscourse items (Al-Subhi 2022). Rohach and Rohach (2021) maintain that linguistic and visual elements combined provide eye-catching, memorable and persuasive. Visual metaphors play an important role, too, as they are able not only to shape a positive perception but also make brand differentiation possible; these results are particularly significant if reported to younger age groups (Batool et al. 2020). To corroborate this aspect, Ahlluwalia and Singh (2020) claim that

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demographic parameters are able to affect audience perception of advertising: gender plays a remarkable role as well. Eventually, these parameters generate an emotional connection. The emotional component is, thus, fundamental in the design of the promotional message.

Cheung contributes to this thread, holding that persuasive communication strategies must rely on emotional elements, useful to build trust and credibility (Cheung 2022). Such emotions generate a narrative context, where consumers may build their lifestyles, ideologies and identity (Barroso 2020). Another pillar of persuasive communication in advertising is personal experience and especially the higher consumer interaction. The use of personalized advertisements, with tailored messages to specific target groups, is growing constantly. It has been demonstrated that synchronized advertisements on platforms, which require consumer interactions, make advertisements more memorable and raise audience attention (Segijn et al. 2021).

### 1.1. Baby Food Advertising

The baby food market, like other food sectors, can be said to be a pretty complex and multifaceted. This consideration is true for baby food advertising too, as it has to mirror the complexity in order to grasp all the possible competitive advantages in the eyes of the consumer. First of all, such promotional strategies are not addressed to the final consumers *strictu sensu* (infant and toddlers), but they are directed to parents and caregivers. Advertising in this sector tends to act on customers' perception of the product, trying to shape consumer knowledge and understanding of infant nutrition. Historically, American baby food brands have often aimed at an ideal imagery, with healthy-looking, happy and chubby infants, to strengthen trust in the products and support in the application of parenting norms to foster trust in products and reinforce prevailing norms of parenting (Cesiri 2022). This trend seems to be predominant in modern advertising. The use of familiar words, like "organic", "healthy", "added with ...", may leverage confidence in the consumer and instil a degree of safety in the consumer. Yet these claims should be carefully regulated and vigilantly monitored, as sometimes they can mislead or misrepresent the food's nutritional value in consumers' minds (Pomeranz & Harris 2019). As a matter of fact, this may lead to a wrong perception of highly processed food, instead. This framework of healthy, essential and nutritious food appeals to parents' emotionality towards infant nutrition, reassuring them by adding elements like high convenience and an ideal caring solution (Pomeranz & Harris 2019; Cesiri 2022). Emotional elements seem to be pivotal in the study of how baby food advertising is designed.

As a matter of fact, understanding the psychological and emotional consumer propositions towards baby food advertisements is essential to launch powerful campaigns. Singh and Ahluwalia state that some elements, like desire for safety, health and love for their children, deeply affect how parents and caregivers perceive online advertising (Singh & Ahluwalia 2021). Consequently, this information is valuable to advertisers to convey emotional and cognitive stimuli to consumers, boosting the effectiveness of their campaigns. Not surprisingly, emotional elements, conveyed through massive television and social media advertising, generate brand loyalty: thus, the longer the exposure to advertising, the higher the brand loyalty. Kaur and Hundal affirm that effective advertising strategies can affect the behaviour of consumers: if they trust the brand as it is communicated, and it is in line with their values, they strengthen their brand loyalty (Kaur & Hundal 2017). This process allows companies to cultivate brand loyalty in the consumers' minds, especially if there is minimal regulatory control (Pandey 2018).

Other research is on the same track: the extensive framing of affect and emotion foregrounds health and purity but backgrounds technical nutrition information (Martin & White 2005; WHO & UNICEF 2022). In fact, front-of-pack (FOP) micro-texts represent a paralinguistic strategy to favour evaluative lexis such as *gentle*, *pure*, *natural*, *organic*, *little*, *first* and *tiny*. Consequently, such represented products are "eligible" to be adopted in the parents' and parenthood aims, nurturance and responsibility (Martin & White 2005). Another pretty common strategy is the "absence" claim, like *no saturated fats*, *no preservatives* and *non-GMO*, which takes advantage of the negative instance to communicate better quality and a higher standing compared to competitors (UConn Rudd Center 2020). Baby food companies, through their advertisers, also rely on celebrity endorsement. Several baby food brands collaborate with trusted parenting influencers, nutritionists and paediatricians so that their credibility increases and their presence on online platforms and social media can strengthen trust among consumers. Wang (2012) reckons that choosing the right celebrity may boost consumer purchase proposition, especially if the advertising message is in line with the product's brand image.

## 2. The Fold and Swap Strategy

This study originates from a broader project examining how script theory can be applied to advertising (St Amant 2015, 2017; St Amant & Giordano 2023). The project investigates different advertising formats to identify the introduction of unusual elements or contextual modifications that might disrupt the script in



which a product is embedded. The guiding research question is: can shifts in scripts – through the insertion of new elements (“folds”) or contextual changes (“swaps”) – be detected in such a way that the advertised product suggests an expanded or alternative use?

To grasp the notions of folds and swaps, it is useful to begin with Rosch’s (1978) prototype theory, subsequently refined and extended by scholars such as Geeraerts (2006, 2016); Ross and Makin (1999) and Aitchison (1994). Prototype theory links words to visual and conceptual representations, in which each concept corresponds to an idealized model of what an item should look like, how it functions or how it is used (St Amant 2017: 116). New objects or events are processed by comparison with these mental models. If an exact match is unavailable, the object is assessed against prototypes that share acceptable similarities. This cognitive mechanism explains how individuals acquire and refine prototypes, which in turn shape their ability to recognize and categorize objects in their environment (St Amant 2017: 120).

Building on this, script theory offers a further layer of analysis. A “script” has been defined as the patterned sequence of actions in a given situation, shaped by contextual variables that influence how individuals behave in specific settings (Schank & Abelson 1977; Tomkins 1978, 1987; Shore 1998; Goddard & Wiezbircka 2004; Ekblom & Gill 2016; St Amant 2017: 119). Prototypes and scripts are closely interrelated: understanding how to act in a setting requires identifying the location through prototypical cues, which then trigger the script governing expected behaviour and object use (Giordano & Ammendola 2023). Advertising – whether in the form of television spots or digital campaigns – operates along similar lines. Consumers develop mental models of advertising itself, allowing them to recognize an ad both in general terms (distinguishing it from other media, such as news) and in specific product categories (e.g. a car ad versus a soda ad). Such recognition relies on culturally informed prototypes, which guide individuals in identifying typical features of particular kinds of advertising (Giordano & Ammendola 2023). As a matter of fact, components such as images, headlines, captions and textual descriptions are combined to capture the audience’s attention and foreground the product (Wernick 1991: 27). These elements typically highlight, directly and explicitly, the intended use or function of the item being promoted. Cook (1992/2001: 8) refers to such straightforward examples as *prototypical advertisements*.

When a script is altered – either through the addition of unexpected items or the modification of context – the meaning of the message shifts. St Amant and Giordano (2023) describe these changes as folds (the introduction of a new element) and swaps



(a contextual substitution). For instance, in a prototypical pet food commercial, the focus is on the primary function of the product: feeding pets. The imagery usually depicts a dog eating, while the verbal components emphasize words such as “dog”, “friend” or “hungry”. The setting tends to be neutral, free of additional narrative layers. Departures from this prototype, however, can redirect attention and imply alternative functions (Giordano & Ammendola 2023). Accordingly, this study analyses baby food advertisements to detect script changes – folds and swaps – that highlight meanings beyond the product’s basic function. The Fold and Swap strategy, as put out by St Amant and Giordano (2023), proposes an innovative angle to observe communication. It aims at expanding understanding and affect perceptions through metalinguistic adjustments. The concept lying behind the idea of St Amant and Giordano is the focus on utilizing cognitive scripts and prototypes to align communication with audience expectations in order to get a more effective comprehension. In their seminal study, St Amant and Giordano hypothesize that scripts – mentally stored representations of events – shape consumers’ behaviours, actions and perception of products and brands. By applying fold and swap techniques, communicators can adapt information to existing cognitive structures, thus suggesting changes in audience perspectives and behaviours (St Amant & Giordano 2023). Such strategies may ease the understanding of complex messages, resulting in remarkable adjustments in product perception.

In a pilot application of this idea, Giordano and Ammendola (2023) elaborate on how fold and swap strategies operate at the meta-level by engaging individuals’ mental models, exemplifying the market of bottled mineral water in the USA. They demonstrate that this approach not only modifies the presentation of information but also encourages audiences to re-evaluate their preconceived notions about a subject. By strategically *folding* content – alien items that help recognize and stimulate new usability – advertisers can make complex messages easier, while *swapping* elements within scripts, they can prompt new and unexpected dimensions that challenge existing consumer perceptions and generate new mental associations (Giordano & Ammendola 2023; St Amant & Giordano 2023). Such alterations inevitably reshape the overall advertising message and the prototypical representation of the product. Mineral water, for example, is often repositioned not simply as a beverage, but as a sports supplement or even a therapeutic aid (St Amant & Giordano 2023).

In particular, the alien elements (fold), creatively and deliberately added to enhance the effectiveness of the advertising message, can be classified – at a first empirical observation – as pictorial (images), textual (words, sometimes, e.g. domain-specific words), paratextual (the size, the shape and the position of the

text) and cultural (items related to a particular culture, e.g. everything related to Halloween games and traditions) (Giordano 2022).

In a nutshell, “folds and Swaps” are the changes in a script: such changes may influence the consumer perception of the product and/or its function of use. This research aims at exploring the way fold and swap strategy is detectable in the baby food industry, along with the main linguistic and rhetorical promotional strategies and the way it (they) may influence consumers’ (parents and caregivers) perception of the product. To provide an example of fold and swap in the baby food industry, the empirical observation of the following pictures, Figures 1 and 2, may help understand the point. Figure 1 shows a clear example of swap, the script of advertising the food is “swapped” from the prototypical baby chair to a garden. To follow, Figure 2 provides an example of a fold: some doctors pour food into the baby’s bowl. They represent an alien element in the script of baby food advertising, projecting the consumer perception of the product in the medical and drug treatment domain.



Figure 1. Example of a swap.



Figure 2. Example of a fold.

### 3. Corpus Construction

To examine advertisements, with the aim of establishing a scientific link and validating my initial observations, it was necessary to compile a representative corpus. For this purpose, I set parameters designed to be both systematic and easily replicable. Specifically, I relied on data from Mordor Intelligence, an independent and high-reputation global market research and consulting firm and selected the top five holdings by revenue in the US “Infant and Toddler Food” sector for 2024 (Table 1). The assumption underlying this choice was that the leading firms in one of the most representative market areas – Food and Beverage – would provide a sufficiently meaningful sample. As Biber (1993: 243) notes, representativeness concerns “the extent to which a sample includes the full range of variability in a population”, that is, the degree to which the language or variety of language gathered in a corpus reflects its broader context. A relatively large number of advertisements were therefore analysed to ensure that the corpus captured the diversity of promotional discourse around baby food, offering varied examples of Instagram advertisements and the marketing strategies employed within them.

**Table 1.** Holdings and their main brands in the baby food sector.

Holding	Baby Food Brand
Abbott Laboratories	SIMILAC
Nestlé S.A.	Gerber
Hain Celestial Group, Inc.	Earth's Best
Hero Group (Beech-Nut Nutrition Corporation)	Beech-Nut
Danone S.A.	Happy Family Organics

Each holding group encompasses several brands. I chose to investigate the US Instagram (IG) pages of all the most representative baby food brands, as can be seen in Table 1, due to the highly visual nature of Instagram posts.

Table 2 shows the first quantitative set of data, the posts that the companies investigated released on their Instagram pages in the last five years, from 2020 to 2024.

**Table 2.** Posts and advertisements on the brands' Instagram pages.

	2024		2023		2022		2021		2020	
	POST	ADS	POST	ADS	POST	ADS	POST	ADS	POST	ADS
Gerber	93	19	193	51	199	54	114	34	219	69
Earth's Best	24	21	46	33	54	47	35	29	64	18
Similiac	131	60	0	0	18	3	83	41	75	46
Beechnutfoods	52	34	35	18	53	16	11	6	12	7
Happy Family Organics	161	75	89	44	95	39	179	49	228	79

In order to identify advertisements, I adopted Vestergaard and Schroeder's (1985: 50) classification, as I did in a previous work in the same research thread (Giordano & Ammendola 2023). Their model suggests that a prototypical advertisement typically includes five elements: an illustration (a pictorial component depicting the product), a headline (ranging from a single word to a full sentence), a body copy (a descriptive text), a signature (the product or brand name) and a slogan (a payoff phrase linked to the product). However, these criteria were applied with a certain degree of flexibility, as advertising practices and promotional strategies evolve rapidly. For instance, in many cases, the product does not appear directly in the illustration but is implied, while the body copy may be extremely concise or even absent. By contrast, the presence of the brand name or logo remains consistent across all advertisements. In short, the defining features of the advertisements in my corpus are the inclusion of the logo, the explicit or implicit presence of the product and the presence of captions or other promotional text, when available.

## 4. Methodology

A multimodal perspective is required to examine how meaning emerges through the interplay of different semiotic resources (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996/2020; Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen 2003). Images, in particular, are made up of interconnected components, which may function independently or in relation to language (Giordano & Ammendola 2023).

Research on the grammar of multimodal communication (e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen 1996/2020; Martinec 2000) and on the interaction among semiotic modes (e.g. O'Halloran 2003; Zabalbeascoa 2008) has shown how these elements cooperate in meaning-making. Within this field, Kress and van Leeuwen's *Grammar of Visual Design* (1996/2021) offers particularly valuable tools for analysing visual communication in digital advertising. Their framework was applied here to Instagram advertisements, focusing on three interrelated compositional principles: information value, salience and framing (Giordano & Ammendola 2023).

These principles do not only apply to isolated images but also to “the way the whole field of meanings is mapped across different semiotic modes” (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996/2020: 3), where text, visuals and other graphic resources interact. Information value refers to how spatial organization contributes to meaning: on the horizontal axis, for example, the left typically signals “given” information (assumed as known), while the right indicates “new” information. Salience highlights the relative weight of visual elements, determined by factors such as size, foreground/background placement, colour contrast or sharpness. Framing, finally, concerns the degree of connection or separation among components, which may be achieved through frames, lines, empty spaces or continuity of colour (Giordano & Ammendola 2023).

For the present study of baby food advertising, the methodology adopted was the same as that used in a previous paper (Giordano & Ammendola 2023), which was also part of the broader research project that the author is carrying out on folds and swaps, on bottled mineral water advertising; in such an investigation, both verbal and non-verbal dimensions were examined according to three main aspects:

- discourse design: the interaction of linguistic and visual resources in structuring meaning;
- type of information: the distribution of content between verbal and non-verbal modes;
- production and consumption: the nature of the product being advertised and the cultural scripts underlying the promotional discourse.

All advertisements were examined manually to identify recurring tendencies from both a linguistic and communicative perspective. This analysis also sought

to determine whether modifications to the script – such as the addition of unexpected elements or the alteration of the setting – could influence the overall promotional message.

5. Discussion of Results

The first investigation of the advertisements has provided figures reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Occurrence of folds and swaps in the investigated corpus of advertisements.

	2024		2023		2022		2021		2020	
	FOLD	SWAP	FOLD	SWAP	FOLD	SWAP	FOLD	SWAP	FOLD	SWAP
Gerber	2	2	5	10	3	11	2	1	2	6
Earth’s Best	2	3	2	7	1	6	1	3	4	2
Similiac	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	2
Beechnutfoods	0	2	0	6	2	6	1	2	0	3
Happy Family Organics	0	5	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	4

After having sorted advertisements from posts, Table 3 reports the occurrence of folds and swaps in the advertisements. The very first observation provides evidence that Gerber seems to adopt this strategy more than others, especially in swapping the product into new scripts and unusual milieus. For example, in 2023, Gerber advertising shows fifteen folds and swaps out of fifty-one advertisements, and in 2024, folds and swaps account for a significant fourteen out of fifty-four. The brand that seems to rely less on such a strategy is Similiac, with several 0s in the count. The average number that the other brands show allows to imply that a percentage of advertisements scrutinized is featured by a fold or a swap, which can be significant in the total number. All the figures show no common or steady trend (e.g. an upward or downward trend over the years), which makes time and advancement in promotional communication independent of the use of fold and swap strategies. Yet the constant presence over the years may point out that the strategy is effective, as adding alien elements or swapping the product in very different contexts seems to please the audience. Another pretty interesting result is that swaps are higher than folds. It is possible to explain this evidence by framing the communication of baby food producers according to the goal to be targeted. If baby food is considered an easy-to-carry item to successfully manage baby care, swaps are easily demonstrated, showcasing the product in settings like school, beach,



playground or even holiday settings. If baby food is, for example, considered as a pharmaceutical-like product to take care of children's health, folds are more likely to appear in the form of doctors, medical equipment or medical terms. In fact, as explained in Giordano (2022), folds are added creatively and deliberately to enhance the effectiveness of the advertising message, and their form can be pictorial, textual, paratextual or cultural (Giordano 2022). Textual folds, as a matter of fact, are those words that redesign and reshape the perception of the function of use of the product. From the general overview of the advertisements collected, it was possible to define some domains where the product is cast after applying the fold and swap strategy.

Baby food as a celebratory item during the holiday time. The product is often embedded in some holiday context (Christmas, Easter, Halloween, etc.). This feature is detectable in all the brands scrutinized. Most advertisements fold items in the setting: the Christmas tree (Gerber 2022; Earth's Best 2021), the Easter basket (Beech-Nut 2022; Happy Family 2022), the Halloween related symbols, such as the pumpkin-shaped basket (Gerber 2023) or the ghost (Earth's Best 2024), or some holiday related terms, like Santa Claus (Similac 2024), trick or treat (Happy Family 2024).



Figure 3. Gerber advertisement (2022).

In these advertisements, the product is coupled with the folded element, the baskets, for example. Baby food fills the Halloween basket as if it were the treat to be earned after the universally known “trick or treat” game that children play on Halloween night. The same pattern is followed when Easter baskets are displayed. They are filled with formula, snacks and packaged baby food, implying, again, that Gerber of Beech-Nut, Gerber or Happy Family food is the reward after egg hunting. In a Gerber 2022 ad, baby food packs are hanging from the Christmas tree like candies. In the Happy Family 2024 Christmas ad, packaged baby food is contained in the socks hanging over the fireplace. As mentioned earlier, the pattern of Similac ad in 2024 relies on folding the word Santa Claus in the ad, asking him to take the cookies and leave the Similac milk, implying that the milk is tastier than the cookies. The strategy is similar for the Happy Family 2024 ad, where the displayed mom is “making sure to have treats for any babies that are trick or treating!” Folding such words in the advertisement, the strategy is to convey baby food as a treat that any baby would crave. Gerber ad in 2022 follows the same pattern, even though no text is present. The picture (Figure 3), where baby packaged food is placed in the bucket as candies and chocolates, exploits the same strategy: not food but a sweet award. As it is possible to perceive, such strategies can affect audience perception, suggesting a different function of use of the product. As we will see in the following sections, this aim is common in all the detected fold and swap occurrences. In particular, here, the shift in the function of use goes towards the consideration of food as a joyful moment of the holiday, in the context of gifts, treats and games. Elsewhere, Giordano and Ammendola (2023) demonstrated that the change in the function of use creates a new purchase proposition, which, in the consideration of the analysis carried out here, may entail a new sub-sector and, consequently, opportunities for business in the brands’ reference market.

Baby food as drugs, recommended by the paediatrician. There are several examples where brands communicate baby food as a pharmaceutical product via the application of fold and swap strategies. This strategy is not new at all. Elsewhere, Giordano & Ammendola (2023) demonstrated that mineral water<sup>7</sup> shows the same strategy, as if medical recommendations would attribute higher credibility, higher perception of better quality and higher perceived reliability. Baby food communication is directed to parents and caregivers; thus, paediatricians are credible figures as well as the setting where the product is advertised.

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<sup>7</sup> Further current research by the same author and research group in the same thread, namely on pet food and energy drinks, will demonstrate the same trend. Surprisingly, another ongoing study on prescription drug advertising shows exactly the opposite trend, that is, trying to pull the product out of the pharmacy



In the advertisements scrutinized here, this shift towards the medical domain is realized in some peculiar ways: through folds, as can be seen in Figure 4, which displays a post on the Gerber Instagram page in 2023, where the food, packaged in bags, is hanging from the intravenous feeding holder. This holder represents a strikingly clear example of a fold, an alien element in the ordinary family setting. Surprisingly, there is no real swap in medical settings: no hospital, no pharmacy. But a few of them are present (Gerber seems to be particularly active in involving paediatricians to speak, in 2021, 2022 and 2024), to recommend and endorse food, being professional physicians and parents at the same time. Similac (owned by Abbott, a medical multinational) presents food in a typical pharmaceutical packaging (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024), but there is no medical-related setting to back the message. In particular, in 2021, a Similac post claims “Who needs a superhero when you have a doctor?” with the image of a doctor opening his/her uniform showing a stethoscope, a clear fold in the script. In a 2024 Happy Family ad, a nutritionist is present, giving advice on food habits. Furthermore, the same brand puts the consumption of vegetables under the spotlight, explaining all the time the importance of consuming broccoli, pumpkin, carrots, etc. Other advertisements that display medical-related advertisements are present in the Beech-Nut (2022 and 2024) and Earth’s Best (2020 and 2022) pages. A peculiar kind of fold strategy is detectable in the pages as regards the medical domain: very often, the fold is not an item but is a word, a medical term or a group of words.



Figure 4. Gerber advertisement (2023).

In the case of baby food, words like *probiotics*, *folic acid*, *symptoms*, *choline*, *colic*, *allergy*, *lactose*, *beta-carotene* and *immune system* can sell baby food as a drug to “treat” infant and children’s dietary needs, thus framing it in the pharmaceutical domain, casting it, metaphorically, in a pharmacy window directly.

Baby food as a learning tool or game. There are many advertisements where brands swap the product into scripts, which are pretty different from the dining table or dining chair, that is, the learning and game environment. Such advertisements are divided into those collocating the baby food product in the school environment and those framing it in the learning by playing environment. In the first case, food is displayed as a snack, a healthy break in ordinary school activity. All the brands report such contextualization throughout the whole-time span considered, displaying backpacks, books, desks and all the school tools along with the product. Sometimes, this strategy overlaps with the medical domain one, as the promotional message refers to nutrients useful to the brain and attention needs. Many ways to learn by eating are detectable: drawing, puzzles, logic games and flashcards. The second strategy is displaying the baby food product in a gaming or learning by playing activity. For example, a specific advertisement created by Beech-Nut in 2023 links the general topic of learning by eating with a particular focus on the world of dinosaurs. It promotes a new dinosaur-shaped biscuit through events held in zoos across the USA, where children can take part in archaeological-style experiences – such as examining dinosaur bones and engaging in other dino-themed activities. The goal of this campaign is to connect the product with a stimulating, educational experience that encourages children’s curiosity and nurtures their interest in history and nature. There are also other games displayed, for example, on the Earth’s Best page, where, in 2024 and 2023, in multiple advertisements, snacks are used in a mathematics game to learn how to count. Several advertisements are performing this feature. In Figure 5, for example, the tic-tac-toe game becomes “tic snack toe” to explain the nutrients contained in the product.

Earth’s Best shows a peculiar characteristic throughout its page over the entire time span analysed. Most advertisements are “sponsored” by Sesame Street characters. They are displayed on the packaging and are constantly present in the advertisements. It is interesting to point out that this “game domain” resembles the domain of sport detected and investigated in previous research (Giordano & Ammendola 2023), which provides an important element in considering the possible repetition of patterns in the fold and swap strategies.

Baby food as an exclusive product at a premium price. Another pattern singled out by the advertisements scrutinized is the construction of a perception of exclusiveness related to the brands in the corpus. It must be said that not all



Figure 5. Happy Family advertisement (2022).

the brands investigated adopt this strategy. In one ad, Beech-Nut 2022, a child is portrayed in an upper-class restaurant, wearing a tuxedo-shaped bib, and he is served and fed baby food by cotton-gloved hands (Figure 6).

A silver tray, the white cotton gloves and the tuxedo-shaped bib represent examples of folded items to stimulate a different perception of the product. Similarly, other Beech-Nut advertisements in 2022 place the product, fruit juice, for instance, at a party, with an extensive presence of flutes, generally used for



Figure 6. Beech-Nut advertisement (2022).

champagne. This feature was detected elsewhere in a similar study (Giordano & Ammendola 2023) where mineral water was promoted in luxurious contexts, including cocktail and wine glasses. Other examples of “premiumization” of baby food are found on the brands’ pages, and it refers to communicating the product as one certified or approved by studies or bodies. This is pretty much common in the pages scrutinized (Earth’s Best 2020; Gerber 2024; Happy Family 2024); this kind of information, due to its nature, gives the product more credibility and a competitive advantage over competitors’ products. The peculiarity of this latter fold strategy is its textual nature. While most of the former fold occurrences were mainly pictorial, the certification of quality is mainly textual; thus, the folds are words (committee, award, certified, “voted as the first ...”, etc.). There is also another pretty peculiar example from Gerber in 2021, where there is a post, not an ad, that portrays a cartoon character, Baby Boss, with a jar of Gerber truffle and leek purée. It is important to point out that the caption of the picture says that it is not a real Gerber product. It is possible, anyway, to assume that the presence of truffles, maybe one of the most expensive foods on the market, might shape consumer perception towards exclusiveness and expensive gourmet food.

## 6. Conclusions

The initial research question at the basis of this study, and of other studies carried out by the same author or group of study, was to demonstrate the presence of “fold and swap” strategies in baby food advertising. Not only did these strategies appear, but they were also recurrent enough to say they are significant in the description of the promotional strategy of every single brand. Several “swaps” in the script have been identified (beach, school, outdoors, sports, etc.), which place the product in different contexts and expand the spectrum of consumer perceptions of the products’ functions of use. Similarly, many “folds” – alien items cast in the advertising script – have been detected, too. They range from cartoon characters to intravenous feeding hangers, to Christmas trees, tuxedo-shaped bibs and several more. Both fold and swap seem to have the deliberate role of catalysing the attention of the consumers on the products’ functions and the way they can operate with them (in the case of baby food, as games, as drugs, as snacks outdoors, etc.).

In this study, some specific frames in which the products are embedded have been identified: baby food communicated as a part of learning activities, as a premium or exclusive item, as a pharmaceutical product or as a part of holidays and celebrations.

It is remarkable that some of the frames identified here are very similar to those detected in previous studies, namely on mineral water brands: the product seen as a drug, or related to sports and games, or considered a luxury and exclusive item. This allows the next research in the field to start considering a common and reliable pattern to be taken as a reference, in order to assess the effectiveness, due to the extensive use across various industries. Ongoing and future research, in fact, is focusing on and will focus on other sectors and products, ranging from pet food to insurance products to cars. The aim is to demonstrate common patterns behind the fold and swap strategy, which can expand consumer expectations of new functions of use, boost new consumption and push new market sectors. It is open to debate whether artificial intelligence can suggest advertisers on the occurrence and the effectiveness of the fold and swap strategy. This would imply the design of promotional strategies deliberately built upon the behavioural and mental shift among scripts.

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# “Chip Chip Hurray”. How Food Is Described to Children: A Case Study

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## 1. Introduction

This chapter investigates how food is linguistically framed and represented in *Snack Time Around the World* (Lonely Planet), an educational tourism book for children, by analysing the linguistic strategies used to engage child readers and stimulate curiosity towards diverse culinary traditions. The broader objective is to reveal how language acts as a cultural pedagogy, shaping attitudes towards food, identity and global exploration. The study is guided by the overarching research question (RQ):

*How does language scaffold intercultural curiosity, consumption behaviours and positive travel associations?*

which can be divided into the following sub-RQs.

1. How is food linguistically framed to children in terms of identity, fun and cultural significance?
2. What lexical and rhetorical strategies are used to promote curiosity, emotional engagement and consumption behaviours?
3. How does food discourse in this book intersect with tourism promotion and interculturality?

Drawing on a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective supported by a triangulated corpus linguistic methodology (WMatrix, CorpusSense and LancsBox), the study explores how language promotes intercultural curiosity, encourages specific consumption behaviours and fosters favourable associations with travel. We will move through some analytic dimensions found in the text under scrutiny to show the following:

- How food is represented to children – the ways snack time is framed as fun, cultural storytelling, identity work, etc.
- What linguistic strategies are employed – the key moves the text makes, from direct address to metaphor and enumeration. These may include lexical choices

that foreground sensory appeal and positive valence; evaluative language patterns, such as exclamative and wordplay, all working to heighten excitement and approval.

- How semantic prosody shows snack names are always surrounded by glowing collocates, ensuring an overall upbeat tone.
- How the overall tone of the book utilizes family-friendly tourism discourse and intercultural curiosity, which turns eating into a kind of “armchair travel”, primes openness to other cultures and even nudges consumption behaviours.

The findings suggest that the book under examination constructs food not only as sustenance but as a culturally rich and emotionally charged experience, functioning as a form of armchair tourism for its young readers.

For this purpose, this chapter is developed as follows: after this introductory paragraph, Section 2 offers the literature background supporting the investigation and Section 3 offers the methodological approach. Data analysis can be found in Section 4, while the discussion and concluding paragraphs are in Section 5.

## 2. Literature Review

The study of discourse surrounding food offers a fertile ground for applied linguistic inquiry, revealing how language and other semiotic resources construct, represent and mediate our experience of it. From infancy, food is central to socialization, initiating children into cultural norms and values through shared meals in various settings, from family dinners to school lunches and celebratory feasts. These procedural acts are fundamental to building social connections and transmitting cultural identity across generations (Marshall 2005).

While the symbolic and social functions of food are well-documented in anthropology and sociology (Lévi-Strauss 1965 [2004]; Douglas 1972), applied linguistics specifically examines the discursive practices through which these functions are enacted. Drawing on social learning theory (Bandura 2002), research shows that children acquire eating habits and associated language through observation and imitation. Communication about food is a primary site of language socialization, where novices learn socio-cultural competence (Schieffelin & Ochs 1984; Szatrowski 2014). Mealtime interactions, for instance, are crucial for socializing children into cultural worldviews through discourse (Szatrowski 2014; Karrebæk 2020). This extends beyond vocabulary to encompass performing social actions and identities. Through conversations about food – such as praising, refusing or negotiating – children learn and enact familial roles, gender norms and cultural dispositions (Szatrowski 2014). In these moments, they actively construct their own

linguistic and cultural identities, using multilingual and multimodal resources to assert knowledge and preferences (Ward 2024). Therefore, the discourse of food is not merely a reflection of culture but is actively involved in constituting it, shaping identities through everyday verbal and non-verbal interaction (Szatrowski 2014).

Communication about food, especially when directed at children, is profoundly multimodal. Advertisements, packaging and digital media combine language, images, sound and colour to create meaning and persuade consumers (Yong & Mei 2018; Dania & Sari 2020). These semiotic choices are not accidental but are carefully orchestrated to appeal to young audiences and their caregivers, often constructing a narrative of health, happiness or convenience (Yong & Mei 2018; Nuryanti 2024). In advertisements for nutritionally poor foods, for instance, vibrant colours, cartoon characters (gestural mode) and upbeat music (audio mode) are systematically deployed alongside persuasive linguistic choices to foster positive associations and drive consumption (Brear et al. 2024; Nuryanti 2024). This goes side by side with persuasive language (Schlosser 2002), characterized by the use of hyperbole, repetition and simple, catchy slogans to entice children, and which can lead to unhealthy dietary habits (Taras 2006).

Food representations are never neutral, as in children's media, they can perpetuate cultural values and norms (van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001) and can reinforce stereotypes and socio-cultural beliefs about food items and eating practices. CDA provides a powerful framework for interrogating the relationship between discourse, power and ideology in food-related communication (O'Sullivan 2007; Susanti 2022; Younes 2023). This critical lens reveals how marketing discourse can exert power by shaping children's desires and influencing family consumption patterns (Gilbert 2014; Younes 2023). This implies that the development of food literacy in children needs to involve a linguistic component that goes beyond vocabulary: children need to be equipped with language skills to understand and communicate about food, including its origins, nutritional value and cultural significance (Bell & Marshall 2003).

Research at the intersection of food discourse, child-focused communication and tourism has grown in recent years, especially as destinations and food-based attractions recognize children not only as consumers but also as influential co-travellers and cultural learners (Canosa & Schänzel 2021; Zhu & Liu 2024). For instance, tourism perceptions and behaviours are influenced by the way food and travel are constructed in children's TV shows such as *Peppa Pig* and *Thomas the Tank Engine*, which, by using humour and anthropomorphism, construct positive attitudes towards travel and eating. In certain child-targeted websites, the role of children as food-centred consumers is constructed through linguistic strategies interplaying with visual and interactive contents (Dolón 2014): food

plays an emotionally resonant role in shaping children's tourism memories and contributes to family bonding (Zhu & Liu 2024).

While prior literature has emphasized how food discourse in media and websites engages young audiences through humour, sensory appeal and cultural cues, fewer studies have been conducted on in-depth linguistic analyses of how such strategies operate within print tourism media targeted specifically at children. This chapter addresses that gap by investigating how language in *Snack Time Around the World* functions as a scaffold for intercultural curiosity, consumption behaviours and the development of positive associations with global travel. Guided by the RQs delineated in Section 1, the analysis explores: 1) how food is framed in terms of identity, fun and cultural significance; 2) what lexical and rhetorical strategies are deployed to stimulate emotional and cognitive engagement; and 3) how these discursive patterns intersect with broader objectives of tourism promotion and cultural pedagogy. In doing so, the chapter contributes to a growing conversation about the role of language in shaping how children imagine, desire and relate to diverse food cultures within the context of global mobility.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method approach that combines manual reading with corpus-assisted discourse analysis. The dataset consists of the entire text of *Snack Time Around the World* (Lonely Planet), a children's educational tourism book which deals with food, snacks and desserts; it contains a diverse range of snack and dessert recipes, together with descriptions and cultural references from various countries around the world. In addition, it also covers a variety of ingredients used in these snacks and desserts, such as fruits (strawberries and bananas), dairy products (milk cream and sour cream) and various sweeteners (sugar and honey). This is realized through the inclusion of keywords related to: 1) specific types of snacks such as chocolate milk, jelly beans, fried dough, ice cream and various candies like chewing gum and caramel; 2) specific dishes and their preparation methods (like omelettes and cakes); and 3) popular snacks in different regions, including McDonald's, Samgak Kimbap from South Korea and Gozinaki from Georgia.

The book was scanned, converted via OCR, cleaned and then uploaded to three open-access corpus tools: WMatrix and #LancsBox for quantitative analysis and CorpusSense for semantic prosody computation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Semantic prosody refers to the consistent aura of positive, negative or neutral meaning that a word or phrase acquires through its typical collocates, that is, words that frequently appear near it (McEnery & Hardie 2011; Brookes & McEnery 2019).

WMatrix (Rayson 2008) is a software tool for corpus analysis and comparison. It provides a web interface to natural language processing (NLP) tools such as the USAS<sup>9</sup> and CLAWS<sup>10</sup> corpus annotation tools for English, plus the multilingual semantic tagger PyMUSAS,<sup>11</sup> and standard corpus linguistic methodologies such as frequency lists, keyness statistics, n-grams, collocations and concordances, extending the keywords method to key grammatical categories and key semantic domains.<sup>12</sup>

#LancsBox (Brezina et al. 2020) is a new-generation software package for the analysis of language data and corpora developed at Lancaster University. It automatically performs part-of-speech tagging and lemmatization using TreeTagger. Furthermore, it scales to millions or even billions of words using Lucene for efficient indexing<sup>13</sup> and integrates R<sup>14</sup> for advanced statistical scripting. It offers standard corpus linguistic methodologies such as frequency lists, keyness statistics, n-grams, collocations and concordances, but also visually offers a frequency and dispersion analyser (called *Whelk*) and collocation network visualizer (*GraphColl*).<sup>15</sup>

CorpusSense (Moreno-Ortiz 2024) is a corpus query tool that incorporates advanced functionalities not available in existing applications and is specifically designed for content and discourse analysis. Built on spaCy<sup>16</sup> for core NLP tasks, it employs Transformers<sup>17</sup> for word embedding, enabling semantic search and graph-based keyword extraction sans reference corpus. It thus combines

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<sup>9</sup> USAS is the UCREL Semantic Analysis System, a framework for undertaking the automatic semantic analysis of text developed at the University of Lancaster (cf. <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/>)

<sup>10</sup> The Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System (CLAWS) is the commonest form of corpus annotation developed at the University of Lancaster (<https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/>)

<sup>11</sup> PyMusas, the *Python Multilingual UCREL Semantic Analysis System*, is an open-source version of the semantic tagger under development from 2021 onwards at the University of Lancaster (cf. <https://pypi.org/project/pymusas/>).

<sup>12</sup> <https://ucrel-wmatrix7.lancaster.ac.uk/wmatrix7.html>

<sup>13</sup> Lucene is a free and open-source search engine software library, powering the search capabilities of numerous applications, providing efficient indexing and retrieval of textual data (see <https://lucene.apache.org/>).

<sup>14</sup> R is a programming language and environment specifically designed for statistical computing and data visualization. Available at <https://www.r-project.org/>.

<sup>15</sup> Available at <https://lancsbox.lancs.ac.uk/>

<sup>16</sup> spaCy is an open-source Python library for Natural Language Processing (NLP). Available at <https://spacy.io/usage>

<sup>17</sup> A Transformer is a type of deep learning architecture introduced by Vaswani et al. (2017). It revolutionized the field of NLP by allowing models to process and understand language more efficiently and effectively than previous architectures like RNNs or LSTMs.

quantitative, qualitative and AI features to offer users a unique set of tools that can easily obtain useful insights of a corpus with minimal effort.<sup>18</sup>

The adoption of the three open-access software facilitates data triangulation to gain a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the findings.

The resulting 19,867-word corpus was tagged for parts of speech, lexical and narrative patterns, as summarized in Table 1, where in the last column can be seen the total count of tokens and types<sup>19</sup> split in substantive (second column), adjective (third column), verbs (fourth column) and adverbs (fifth column).

Table 1. Corpus breakdown.

Frequency	Substantives	Adjectives	Verbs	Adverbs	Total
Tokens	5,474 (27.48 %)	1,652 (8.3 %)	2,455 (12.35 %)	706 (3.55 %)	19,867
Types	2,098	653	687	162	8,617

The analysis is framed within a CDA perspective (Fairclough 1995; Bourdieu 1984), with specific attention to affective language, metaphor and narrative structures.

#### 4. Linguistic Analysis and Results

In contemporary educational tourism discourse targeted at children, food is not merely presented as sustenance but is framed as an exciting, playful and culturally enriching experience. Snack time often becomes a narrative space where eating is transformed into an act of discovery, fun and identity formation. The representation of food to children often aligns with broader goals of edutainment: combining enjoyment with learning and fostering a sense of global citizenship through everyday activities like eating. In particular, the representation of food to children in tourism-oriented texts such as *Snacks around the World* is a multimodal and multilayered effort. It blends linguistic creativity, sensory appeal and cultural storytelling to produce a discourse that is not only appetizing but ideologically resonant – one that promotes joy in difference and cultivates both gustatory and cultural literacy.

<sup>18</sup> <https://corpus-sense.uma.es/>

<sup>19</sup> While *tokens* represent the total number of words included in a corpus, *types* are the unique words contained in a corpus (McEnery & Hardie 2011).

The following paragraphs explore how these themes are articulated across some key analytical dimensions observed in the text. Specifically, we will examine the following:

- the representation of food to children;
- the linguistic strategies employed;
- the role of semantic prosody;
- the power of discourse as interculturally framing tourism.

#### 4.1. The Representation of Food to Children

The book under examination positions snack time as a joyful and culturally meaningful experience. This is reinforced by multimodal cues – bright colours, playful fonts and cartoon illustrations of anthropomorphized food – which contribute to a visually engaging experience tailored for younger readers. These multimodal elements seem to serve as cultural signifiers, reinforcing the geographic and ethnic origins of the featured foods through visual motifs, attire, settings and symbolic cues. In doing so, the book communicates cultural context in ways that are intuitive and accessible to children.

From the outset, *Snack Time Around the World* frames food as a source of delight and cultural richness and presents snack time as a joyful, almost celebratory experience, positioning food as emotionally rewarding rather than merely functional or nutritional, as can be seen in example 1).

1. Whether you call it a tasty treat, a midday munchie or an afternoon snack, a nibble of something sweet (or salty or savoury) between meals is one of the great delights in life! (p. 6).

This rhetoric evokes sensory pleasure, inviting readers to embrace snack culture as part of everyday joy: the text constructs snacking as an act of cultural participation, embedding identity and curiosity within a playful framework.

The narrative explicitly links food with personal and collective identity. Early on, the text states:

2. The food we eat tells an important story about who we are. Our culture, where we live, where we come from [...] can be shared in the meals and snacks we eat (p. 6).

This overt framing supports a storytelling approach to food discourse, where snacks are treated not only as consumables but also as cultural narratives, markers

of place, heritage and belonging. Such framing encourages children to consider both in-group pride (recognizing familiar foods) and out-group curiosity (exploring unfamiliar ones). For example, on p. 27, *popcorn* is presented as a longstanding North American snack with dual cultural roots: indigenous culinary tradition and its rise as a mainstream treat during WWII due to sugar shortages. This dual framing elevates popcorn as a distinctly American cultural icon; *seaweed*, meanwhile, is introduced as a staple in East Asian cuisine, particularly Japanese (p. 24), whose globalization is acknowledged without erasing its cultural specificity. Its treatment maintains a balance between accessibility and cultural authenticity. It seems the text uses micro-narratives of origin to build intercultural understanding while affirming the symbolic role of snacks in shaping both local identities and global connections.

The titles and subheadings throughout *Snack Time Around the World* reveal a strong reliance on wordplay, idioms, portmanteaus or blending, rhyme and alliteration – linguistic devices known to stimulate emotional engagement, mnemonic retention and reader amusement, particularly among children [see Table 3 in the *Appendix*, where the heading and the titles (first column) are checked for such linguistic devices listed above (second column) and the explanation of their real meaning (last column)]. This playful language not only creates a sense of fun and approachability but also subtly conveys messages about food's cultural and social significance, aligning directly with the book's pedagogical aims.

From a discursive perspective, such linguistic strategies scaffold intercultural curiosity (RQ1), shape consumption behaviours (RQ2) and support positive associations with global food cultures and travel (RQ3), as emphasized in recent literature (Dolón 2014; Azariah 2024; Zhu & Liu 2024). For instance, titles and subheadings are characterized by idiomatic play and cultural puns, blending and music and rhyme and repetition.

3. Chip, Chip Hooray.
4. Well, Fry Not?
5. Veg Out!
6. Toast-tacular.
7. Choc-o-licious.
8. Rice, Rice Baby!
9. Fruit-Scootin' Boogie.
10. Yummy Gummies, Ooey, Goey and Very Chewy.

As can be seen in excerpts 3)–5), cultural puns activate prior knowledge and recontextualize familiar phrases in culinary settings. This aligns with Azariah's (2024)



findings on carnivalesque humour and child media, where humour operates as a tool for cultural engagement. Examples 6) and 7), on the other hand, offer examples of blending, while excerpts 9) and 10) are examples of musical parodies used to blend sensory and emotional registers. In addition, excerpt 8) is the perfect example of the use of rhyme and repetition, which increases phonological playfulness. At the same time, recurring alliterative titles, such as *Snack Spotlight: Seaweed*, *Tasty Timeline: Pizza* or *Perfect Pastries*, serve as structural cues, reinforcing rhythm and clarity while maintaining an accessible tone. Though not always idiomatic, they contribute to a cohesive and stimulating reading environment – an important component in engaging young readers in cultural narratives (Canosa & Schänzel 2021). In total, forty-seven out of forty-nine headings include some form of linguistic play, with idioms, songs and puns being particularly frequent in sections focused on more culturally diverse or “exotic” foods (e.g. seaweed, hawthorn berries and Turkish delight). This seems to indicate that linguistic creativity is strategically used to normalize unfamiliar foods through humour and fun, an act of subtle intercultural scaffolding.

## 4.2. Linguistic Strategies

### 4.2.1. Direct Address and Reader Engagement

The text makes extensive use of second-person pronouns and the imperative mood to construct an inviting and participatory reading experience. With over seventy-five instances of “you” and twenty-four imperative constructions, the book actively interacts with the child reader, creating a conversational tone that encourages exploration, decision-making and sensory imagination.

Phrases like *Check out these far-out flavours!* (p. 6) and *Raise a glass to these yummy drinks!* (p. 94) are directives, inviting the reader to engage cognitively and emotionally with the content. The imperative mood is most commonly realized through the verb *check (out)* (18 occurrences), used to direct attention and stimulate curiosity. Other imperatives such as *go*, *try*, *choose*, *get*, *let* and *raise* expand the repertoire of reader actions, ranging from imaginative tasting (*Let these sweets dissolve in your mouth*, p. 104) to performative excitement (*Raise a glass*, p. 94). These forms align with persuasive rhetorical strategies found in tourism discourse, emphasizing ego-targeting, sensory involvement and agency (Tenca in press; Dann 1995; Maci 2020).

Additionally, the book frequently poses questions (16 in total), such as *Fry not?* (p. 66) and *What to dip?* (p. 44), which are designed to prompt personal reflection and playful speculation. These rhetorical questions function dialogically, simulating conversation and encouraging children to position themselves as active participants in global snacking cultures.

#### 4.2.2. Lexical Evaluation: Appetizing Enthusiasm

The language of *Snack Time Around the World* is saturated with evaluative adjectives that go beyond description to express attitudes, preferences and affective judgements. A total of 1,652 adjectives were identified (30 % of total tokens), with 653 unique types, including highly frequent terms such as *sweet* (98 hits), *popular* (66 hits), *crispy* (42 hits) and *delicious* (26 hits). These adjectives contribute to a semantic prosody of approval (Hunston 2000), whereby even neutral food items, like “popcorn” or “crackers”, are consistently collocated with positively charged descriptors such as *yummy*, *favourite*, *super* or *great*. This prosodic tendency ensures that nearly every snack is framed as inherently pleasurable, desirable or fun, reinforcing a tone of excitement. Words like *beloved*, *favourite* and *hot item* do more than describe: they encode cultural and emotional legitimacy, especially when attached to traditional or regional foods. For instance, the excerpts below function both referentially and persuasively: they present information while simultaneously shaping affective expectations.

11. Apple strudel has been a beloved dessert in Czechia for hundreds of years (p. 112).
12. Spicy Takoyaki is the hot item at every summer festival in Japan (p. 64).

A striking aspect of the text is the repetition and density of evaluative adjectives. With an average of 5–7 positive descriptors per snack entry, the book constructs a semantic field in which every food is a winner. The lexical field includes flavour terms (*sweet*, *savoury*, *salty* and *tangy*), texture words (*crispy*, *crunchy* and *chewy*) and global popularity markers (*favourite*, *beloved* and *popular*). These reinforce a persuasive ideology of universal tastiness and cultural worth and foreground sensory appeal and emotional reward.

Such repetition contributes to the normalization of excitement: children are encouraged to expect joy and novelty with every bite. This aligns with marketing strategies in tourism discourse, where sustained use of evaluative language is designed to build emotional associations and drive curiosity, desire and consumption behaviours (Zhu & Liu 2024). Such an affective register is further heightened by the presence of intensifiers, which occur 617 times (3.1 % of all tokens), averaging 3–4 per page. Terms like *so*, *such*, *super*, *really* and *absolutely* and phrases like *one of the great delights in life* (p. 6) or *such a hot item* (p. 10) function to amplify the affective charge of evaluative adjectives. They can emphasize exceptional pleasure in eating a snack.

13. One of the great delights in life! (p. 6).

They can also position a snack as trend-worthy and irresistible.

14. Such a hot item (p. 10)

or even push up the sensory appeal with extra emphasis, as in excerpt 15).

15. This snack mixes salted duck egg yolk with crispy salmon skin for a super flavourful – think salty, savoury and spicy – snack! (p. 15).

These constructions not only elevate the sensory appeal but also position certain snacks as trend-worthy, exciting and globally desirable. The cumulative effect is a rhetorical environment in which the child reader is constantly nudged towards anticipation, engagement and appetite, aligning everything with the persuasive aims of tourism discourse.

Terms like *beloved*, *favourite* and *super tasty* are not just sprinkled in; they are woven into nearly every chapter entry. This creates a uniform tone of excitement and approval. When every dish is *beloved* or *favourite*, children learn to approach snack time with high expectations of enjoyment. This contributes to normalizing the idea that every snack is inherently fun and desirable.

16. Apple strudel has been a beloved dessert in the Czechia for hundreds of years (p. 112).
17. These nuts are popular in Italy and a favourite flavour in many of their beloved desserts (p. 22).

#### 4.2.3. Enumerative and Rhythmic Listing: Mapping the Snackable World

A prominent feature of *Snack Time Around the World* is its systematic use of enumerative listing, a discourse strategy that serves both rhetorical and pedagogical functions. Enumeration (of countries, snack types, ingredients and flavour profiles) constructs a vivid *linguascape* (Dann 1995; Pennycook 2010): a discursive map that indexes global food diversity through language. These listings help children visualize the vastness of global snack culture, transforming the reading experience into a verbal world tour. For instance, the opening pages include geographically diverse country lists, as in excerpts 18) or a list of snack names across countries, as in excerpt 19).

18. Mexico, Chile, Morocco, Sweden, France, Hong Kong and Australia (p. 6–7).
19. Carada Cuttlefish Balls (Thailand), Monster Munch, Roast Beef (UK), Przysmak Świętokrzyski (Poland) and Vorontsovskie Rusks (Russia) (p. 28–29).

These evoke what may be termed a “global snack atlas”, particularly when they are over-imposed on a world atlas (as on pp. 6–7). Likewise, lists of far-out flavoured chips offer culinary variety while inviting taste-based exploration, as can be seen in example 20).

20. Check out these far-out flavours from across the globe: Honey Soy Chicken Chip · Calbee Honey Butter · Lays Pickle Flavour · Hot Chilli Squid (p. 10–11).

These sequences function as what Appadurai (1996) calls a gastro-national imaginary, where food becomes a metaphorical proxy for intercultural knowledge.

Beyond their referential role, these enumerations also exhibit a rhythmic, phonological quality. This “rhythmic listing” as found in examples 21) (*crispy* [...] *crunchy* [...] *crackers*) and 22) (*tasty treat*, *midday munchie*) employs repetition, parallelism and alliteration to enhance mnemonic retention and cognitive engagement, a technique commonly found in children’s literature (Nikolajeva 2014).

21. They’re crispy, they’re crunchy – they’re crackers! (p. 12).  
 22. When you call it a tasty treat, a midday munchie or an afternoon snack, a nibble of something sweet (or salty or savoury) between meals is one of the great delights in life! (p. 6).

They follow a triplet rhythm, as in excerpt 21) (*crispy* [...] *crunchy* [...] *crackers*) or paired apposition, as in excerpt 22) (*tasty treat*, *a midday munchie* or *an afternoon snack*; *chips and fries* to *tots and hash browns*), or even parenthetical flavour contrasts, as in example 22) [*sweet* (or *salty* or *savoury*)]. The sing-song cadence not only mimics the auditory patterns of nursery rhymes but also emphasizes the many ways to enjoy snack time. This reinforces learning, enabling children to internalize global food lexicons and cultural contrasts through phonological play.

#### 4.2.4. Metaphors

One of the most ideologically potent rhetorical strategies in *Snack Time Around the World* is its use of conceptual metaphor, specifically the dominant metaphor TASTE IS TRAVEL. This metaphor turns the act of eating into a form of exploration, inviting children to imagine culinary experiences as symbolic journeys across cultures. Example 23) illustrates this clearly.

23. When you try a delicious dish from somewhere else in the world, you are doing more than eating food – you are exploring faraway lands and being introduced to the people who live there (p. 6).

Here, eating is redefined as cultural immersion, and the sensory act of tasting becomes ideologically aligned with tourist exploration, echoing what Dann (1995) and Urry and Larsen (2011) describe as the experiential and aspirational logic of tourism.

The use of metaphors is made especially accessible to children through vivid personification. For instance, example 24) frames *taste buds* as autonomous travellers, capable of embarking on culinary adventures independently of the body.

24. So even when you haven't left your home, your taste buds can travel the world (p. 6).

This trope encourages children to associate tasting unfamiliar foods with experiencing and “visit” foreign places simply by sampling their flavours, creating a sense of symbolic mobility even in static or domestic settings. This metaphor is reinforced with recurring expressions such as example 25).

25. It's a party for the taste buds! (p. 11).

Here, once again, *taste buds* are personified as celebrants, emphasizing pleasure and sociability.

These metaphors serve a deeper ideological function. By aligning food consumption with the language of travel, the book positions children as aspiring global citizens who can participate in multicultural exploration through taste. The framing suggests that even without physical movement, one can gain cultural exposure and knowledge, making the sensory act of eating a proxy for cross-cultural understanding.

### 4.3. Semantic Prosody

Semantic prosody is the consistent positive or negative “aura” that surrounds a word through its habitual collocates (McEnery & Hardie 2011). As can be seen in Table 2, most neutral terms are collocated almost exclusively with positive adjectives or celebratory contexts, creating an overall positive prosody around snack culture.

Table 2. Examples of positive semantic prosody.

Neutral Terms	Positive Collocates	Example Citation
<i>crackers</i>	<i>crispy, crunchy</i>	They're crispy, they're crunchy – they're crackers! (p. 12)
<i>doughnuts</i>	<i>favourite, savoury, spicy</i>	These O-shaped, fried-dough delights came in a wide range of flavours – from sweet (glazed!) to savoury (maple bacon!) to spicy (hello, hot-spicy doughnuts!) (p. 32)
<i>popcorn</i>	<i>buttery, hot, fun</i>	Go to any movie theatre in the USA and you're sure to find big buckets of salty, buttery popcorn (p. 24)

In this way, the text guarantees that every snack mentioned reinforces enthusiasm. However, this may pose some problems as it is hard for young readers to adopt a critical distance, given that every snack feels inherently exciting and desirable.

In addition, words such as *favourites*, *favourite treat*, *super-popular* and *magic* work to neutralize, or even valorise, methods that might otherwise repel, such as fermentation, pickling and drying, as can be seen in the following.

- 26. Here are some pickled and fermented favourites from all around the world (p. 58).
- 27. This super-popular ingredient is fermented soybean paste, and it adds umami magic to pastas, meat marinades and even desserts (p. 59).

4.4. The Power of Discourse as Interculturally Framing Tourism

*Snack Time Around the World* functions as a cultural tourism primer, transforming food consumption into a form of symbolic travel. By merging culinary storytelling with playful, persuasive discourse, the book aligns closely with the logic of family-friendly tourism. Through metaphor, evaluative language and enumeration, it not only promotes global culinary awareness but also cultivates intercultural curiosity, emotional engagement and aspirational travel associations among child readers.

One of the book's dominant narrative frameworks is what scholars such as Dann (1995) and Urry and Larsen (2011) refer to as "armchair tourism", that is, the idea that travel can occur cognitively or symbolically through *mediated* experiences. We have seen that this is most clearly realized through the TASTE IS TRAVEL metaphor (Section 4.2.4), in which tasting becomes a form of geographic exploration. These metaphors position the act of eating as an entry point into cultural learning, promoting openness to difference while simultaneously enhancing the

child's emotional experience of food. Destinations are thus constructed in the mind of the reader and accessed through language (Dann 1995).

The text subtly frames food not just as nourishment but as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). By sampling global snacks, such as “Carada Cuttlefish Balls (Thailand), Monster Munch Roast Beef (UK) or Przysmak Świętokrzyski (Poland)” (p. 28), children are positioned as cosmopolitan tasters, engaging in a form of symbolic collecting. These snack lists are often presented in a format that mirrors “mini tour packages”, turning each page into a passport-style curation of global tastes.

Evaluative adjectives like *beloved*, *favourite* and *delicious* transform food into cultural objects of desire that signify both belonging and worldliness. As Bourdieu (1984) notes, the ability to appreciate “refined” or “foreign” tastes reflects one's cultural distinction, a lesson implicitly transmitted here through joyful, affect-rich exposure to difference, as can be seen in the following example.

28. Check out these far-out flavours from across the globe: Honey Soy Chicken Chip · Calbee Honey Butter · Lays Pickle Flavour · Hot Chilli Squid (p. 6–7).

In addition, through carefully constructed evaluative language, the book builds emotional scaffolding that links eating with sensory delight, fun and the thrill of discovery.

29. A nibble of something sweet [...] is one of the great delights in life! (p. 6).
30. Raise a glass to these yummy drinks! (p. 94).
31. Check out a few of these fabulous fruits (p. 76).

This positive emotional framing not only elevates food as a source of joy but also positions travel itself as inherently pleasurable and exciting. Metaphors such as *out of this world* (p. 72) and *adventurous popcorn flavour* (p. 24) confirm this and evoke narratives of global exploration, suggesting that even mundane snacks can offer extraordinary experiences.

In keeping with the language of tourism marketing, the book features several implicit “calls to action” that simulate promotional discourse through the use of directives.

32. Just try saying it three times fast! (p. 25).
33. Choose all the toppings you want and get a hamburger made to order ... (p. 17).

Such directives do not merely invite entertainment; they prime children to respond to persuasive prompts, training them to associate “trying something new” with immediate reward and experiential gain. This anticipatory structure mirrors travel brochures that urge (adult) readers to “book now!” or “don’t miss out!”, and places children in the role of active participants in a sensory and cultural adventure.

Emotional scaffolding and evaluative language (*adventure, cosmic voyage, ongoing discovery* and *migration*) used in the book make both children (and parents) to equate sampling with fun: travel appears as an extension of the already-enjoyable “taste adventure” where you can find *adventurous popcorn* (p. 24). This creates positive expectancies that family holidays will be just as *tasty, yummy* and *delightful* as the snacks they have sampled.

34. These bags of yummy goodies are as unique and full of flavour as the countries they come from! (p. 28).

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that *Snack Time Around the World* constructs food as a multimodal pedagogical tool aimed at encouraging emotional, cultural and consumer engagement. The interplay between sensory language and metaphor invites children to view food as both an exciting adventure and a form of cultural exchange. This aligns with Dann’s (2011) notion of tourism discourse as a semiotic system that transforms readers into symbolic travellers. Through its framing of food as both delightful and exotic, the book fosters what Bourdieu (1984) would consider a form of cultural capital, subtly preparing children to participate in global consumer culture. This answers our overarching RQ. Indeed, in this volume for kids, discourse is used to scaffold intercultural curiosity, foster positive emotional engagement and normalize global consumption behaviours in an age-appropriate yet persuasive way. Linguistically, it seems to rely on a repertoire of strategic moves designed to directly engage the young reader. The use of direct address (*You’ll love [...], Imagine tasting [...]*) constructs an inclusive and participatory tone, while metaphor and enumeration serve to enhance the imaginative appeal and provide sensory-rich descriptions. These strategies invite the child to envision themselves as part of the story, making the food experience not just understandable but emotionally engaging.

Lexical choices are particularly telling in this context. Adjectives are overwhelmingly positive and sensory-oriented (*crispy, sweet, gooey* and *zesty*), amplifying the



food's appeal and ensuring it is perceived as desirable. Flavour terms are carefully selected not just for accuracy but for effective impact, foregrounding indulgence and pleasure.

Alongside this, all the chapters in the book deploy a consistent pattern of evaluative language. Intensifiers (e.g. *super tasty* and *incredibly crunchy*), exclamatives (*Yum!* and *Wow!*) and playful expressions contribute to a heightened tone of excitement and approval. These devices do not merely describe the snacks: they celebrate them, creating an affective environment in which trying new foods is framed as thrilling and rewarding.

Semantic prosody further reinforces this positivity. Even when the snack names themselves are neutral or unfamiliar, they are almost always embedded in glowing collocational environments. The surrounding language – adjectives, verbs and adverbial phrases – constructs a positive semantic field that subtly shapes the child reader's expectations and emotional responses.

Beyond language alone, the texts often function as examples of family-friendly tourism discourse, where food is framed as a low-stakes, enjoyable entry point into intercultural exploration. Eating becomes a form of “armchair travel”, that is, a way of experiencing global diversity from the comfort of one's home. This framing encourages intercultural curiosity and even subtly primes children (and, by extension, their parents) towards openness in both taste and attitude, gently nudging consumption behaviours while affirming inclusive, global values.

While *Snack Time Around the World* offers an engaging and culturally rich introduction to global snacking cultures, its consistently affirmative tone raises important pedagogical questions. The uncritical use of evaluative language, though effective for emotional engagement, risks cultivating an unquestioned positivity around food and cultural representation. This delight saturation may inhibit critical reflection on issues such as nutrition, cultural stereotyping or food inequity. Moreover, the text's pervasive emphasis on choice, novelty and indulgence aligns with a consumer-socialization logic, potentially encouraging children to adopt an “always-on” consumption mindset without interrogation of what is being consumed and why. These concerns open the door for future research. First, comparative studies across multiple children's food-themed texts could reveal whether this model of “edible globalism” is widespread or text-specific. Second, cross-generational comparisons with adult-oriented food and travel guides could help identify shifts in tone, complexity and ideological framing across age groups. Such studies would illuminate how different demographics are positioned in tourism discourse and how intercultural consumption is variously constructed for learning, leisure or lifestyle branding.

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Appendix

Table 3. Analysis of the table of contents.

CRUNCHY SNACKS		
SECTION	Wordplay?	Reason
Chip, Chip Hooray!	Y	Pun on “Hip, hip, hooray!”
What’s Cracking?	Y	Informal idiom meaning “What’s going on?” & play on “crackers”
Crispy Crunchies	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Snack Spotlight: Vending Machines	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Belles of the Bars	Y	Pun on “belle of the ball” (beautiful girl at a dance), referring to snack bars
Veg Out!	Y	Idiom meaning “relax” and pun on “vegetables”
Snack Spotlight: Seaweed	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
So Nutty	Y	“Nutty” means both “containing nuts” and “crazy/silly” (idiomatic pun)
Pop Til You Drop!	Y	Pun on “Shop till you drop!”
Tasty Timeline: Popcorn	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
CHEWY SNACKS		
SECTION	Wordplay?	Reason
Dough-licious	Y	Portmanteau of “dough” and “delicious”
Snack Spotlight: Doughnuts	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom

Breads Up!	Y	Pun on “Heads up!”
Toast-tacular	Y	Blend of “toast” and “spectacular”
Say Cheese!	Y	Common idiom when taking photos
Tasty Timeline: Pizza	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Extras, Extras! Dips, Spreads and Sauces	Y	Reference to “Extra! Extra! Read all about it!” (newsboy shout)
Rice, Rice Baby!	Y	Parody of the song title “ <i>Ice Ice Baby</i> ” by the American rapper Vanilla Ice (1990)
Snack Smorgasbords	Alliteration	Descriptive (no pun, though the word is unusual)
Yum, Yum Chewing Gum	Y	Child-like rhyme and repetition
Snack Spotlight: Gum Ban in Singapore	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
<b>SALTY SNACKS</b>		
<b>SECTION</b>	<b>Wordplay?</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Fermentation Station	Y	Rhyme; catchy phrase
One Potato, Two Potato ...	Y	Traditional children’s rhyme
Snack Spotlight: Stadium Food	Y	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Well, Fry Not?	Y	Pun on “Why not?”
It’s a Meat Pie Party!	Y	Informal phrase with alliteration; festive and playful
Snack Spotlight: Street Food	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Smoked & Dried Meats	NO	Straightforward description
<b>SWEET SNACKS</b>		
<b>SECTION</b>	<b>Wordplay?</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Fruit-Scootin’ Boogie	Y	Pun on “Boot Scootin’ Boogie” (country song) by Ronnie Dunn (1992)
With Fruit to Boot	Y	“To boot” = in addition (idiomatic)
Snack Spotlight: Hawthorn Berries	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Piece of Cake!	Y	Idiom meaning “very easy”
Sweet Spreads	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Ice Cream Party!	Y	Playful, party-themed phrase
Anatomy of a Snack: Ice Cream Sundae!	NO	Informative
Perfect Pastries	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued).

<b>SWEET SNACKS</b>		
<b>SECTION</b>	<b>Wordplay?</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Cheers!	Y	Idiomatic toast
Snack Spotlight: South Korean Convenience Shop Drinks	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
It's Biscuit Time!	Y	Playful expression, not idiomatic but energizing tone
<b>CONFECTIONERY SNACKS</b>		
	<b>Wordplay?</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Hard Sweets	NO	Descriptive
Lollipop, Lollipop	Y	Pop song by Beverly Ross and Julius Dixson (1958) parodied films (as in The Addams Family)
7 Fun Facts About Sweets	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Ooey, Gooney and Very Chewy	Y	Child-like rhyme; pun on Eeny, Meeny, Miny, Moe; sensory language
Yummy Gummies	Y	Rhyming, playful child-style phrase
Fizzy Pop!	Y	“Pop” as slang for soda
Tasty Timeline: Turkish Delight & Jelly Beans	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom
Sweet Treats	Alliteration	Pun on the song “Sweet Dreams” by Eurythmics (1983)
Choco-licious	Y	Portmanteau of “chocolate” and “delicious”
Quirky Confectionery Favourites	Alliteration	Descriptive; playful alliteration but no pun or idiom

# Adapting Food-Related Communication for Children in English: A Corpus-Based Investigation Using the FoRCCE Corpus

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## 1. Introduction

Since at least the early twentieth century, food has been represented and marketed to children in such a way to make it appealing and to influence children’s dietary choices not based solely on the food’s nutritional value but on its attractiveness and pleasantness to the palate, promoting junk food to be consumed as regular meals rather than as treats, thereby transforming children into a “child-consumer” who would in turn influence the whole family’s dietary choices (James et al. 2009; Shepherd & Shepherd 2014; Moshenska 2019).

Disciplines such as marketing, media and cultural studies have considered this aspect with greater attention, concluding that media have a central role in influencing children’s dietary choices and unhealthy eating habits (Linn & Novosat 2008; Jenkin et al. 2014). However, social media can also have more positive role, for instance, experiments conducted on children and adolescents have found out that influencers might play a positive role in promoting healthier eating habits that children would follow more gladly than when parents want to “enforce” on them by means of impositions (De Jans et al. 2021), while adolescents seem also likely to be more open to the adoption of healthier food choices if exposed to more “virtuous” examples via social media (Neufeld et al. 2021), with particular preference for “vegan, homemade and organic food” (Pilař et al. 2021: 1).

Despite the fact that the representation, narration and promotion of food to younger customers by means of traditional, digital and social media is a well-known communicative mechanism, research in the domains of linguistics and related disciplines has been, surprisingly, relatively scarce (see Section 2). This chapter seeks to fill this gap by investigating the materials composing the

so-called FoRCCE Corpus (namely, the Corpus of **Food-Related Communication for Children in English**).

The chapter conducts a corpus-based critical analysis on the materials collected so far to compose the FoRCCE Corpus with a specific focus on the so-called “commercial” products, namely, digital texts that promote food to children. The companies selected, in fact, are specific brands from Nestlé, Danone and Abbott, specialized in infant and baby food, and via their websites they seek to inform the public not only about the products they sell but also about the nutritional value they hold as well as about the appropriate nutrition for infants and young children as indicated by international health organization and health professionals that are quoted as sources on the companies’ websites. The aim of the analysis is to investigate the strategies of the companies included in the corpus whose communication seems to be at the crossroads between promotional discourse and specialist knowledge dissemination.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 presents an overview of the state of the art available on food- and nutrition-related communication with a specific focus on the disciplines of linguistics and communication studies, and some mention of the studies available on food-related communication specifically targeting children. Section 3 introduces the SPIN2023 Project, of which this chapter presents some preliminary results. Section 4 describes the dataset and the method of investigation, while Sections 5 and 6 contain the corpus-based analysis on the verbal component of the so-called “commercial” products composing the FoRCCE Corpus. Finally, Section 7 concludes the chapter by discussing the results of the analysis and by providing indications for future studies connected to the corpus and the project in general.

## **2. Food-Related Communication: State of the Art**

The discourse of, and on, food has been investigated in several domains. Already in the 1930s, anthropologist Audrey Richards, through her work, “launched the formal acknowledgment of foodways as an effective prism through which to illuminate human life” (Counihan & Kaplan 1998: 1). The language of/about food has thus been so widely investigated over the years to the extent that it would almost be impossible to provide here the full list of studies and scholarly investigations that have dealt with this topic in different languages and cultures. As regards the language of/about food in English, and in English-speaking communities, which constitutes the specific focus of this chapter, a sketchy overview might include relatively recent studies that have considered the topic from an anthropological perspective, whereby food is considered a means to construct social hierarchies,



class and identity (Anderson 2005; Counihan et al. 2019). Another perspective comes from the domain of psychology in which the connection between food, morality and body size has been considered (Conner & Armitage 2002). Communication about food has also been revealed to be consistently gendered by feminist and gender studies that have also connected gender-based stereotypes and ethnicity (e.g. Counihan & Kaplan 1998).

From the viewpoint of linguistics and communication studies, the subject has been investigated from a variety of perspectives, such as – to name only a few examples – the relationship between food and translation in several media (Chiaro & Rossato 2015; Desjardin 2021), food and identity (Cherry et al. 2011; Almerico 2014) and food and humour (Jackson & Meah 2019).

The specific interplay between language, media and food studies has also been widely researched. For instance, some contributions have investigated the role that traditional and digital media play in establishing the public's identity through food-based media campaigns (e.g. Bradley 2016; Lupton & Feldman 2020; Johnston et al. 2022; Tovaes & Gordon 2022), while other studies have considered the role that communication plays in people's dietary choices and the importance on their general health (e.g. Gunter 2016).

The traditional genres in which food discourse is constructed for specific communities are recipes and cookbooks, and these are indeed some of the most studied genres. For instance, scholars have consistently revealed the highly conventionalized nature of recipes (e.g. Görlach 2004; Garzone 2017; Cesiri 2024a), while cookbooks have been analysed as a complex genre that reproduces gender- and class-based inequalities (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Neuhaus 2003; Innes 2006; Matwick 2017). Furthermore, the construction of food-related discourse has been studied in relation to visual media such as cookery shows and YouTube videos (Gerhardt et al. 2013), as well as food blogs, which allow collaborative participation between food experts and members of the public, in contrast with the unidirectional communication of more traditional media. Food blogs have been investigated in particular by Diemer and Frobenius (2013) and Cesiri (2017, 2020, 2024b) with specific attention to communication in English. These studies have illustrated how the affordances of the digital media give chefs and food bloggers new opportunities to share not only recipes but also travel experiences and personal memories, thus creating a complex, multidimensional foodscape that centres around their digital culinary personae rather than around food (Cesiri 2019, 2020).

Most of the state-of-the-art investigating food-related discourse considers communication mainly aimed at adults, while children have been the focus of a relatively limited number of studies. These are, for instance, James et al. (2009);

Rutsaert et al. (2013) and Weintraub Austin et al. (2018). However, they only consider the role of social media in the communication about food when addressing children and adolescents. These are individual studies that investigate the subject from the social media perspective, while studies such as Newman and Oates (2015) or Frerichs et al. (2016) have focused on marketing strategies in food communication and how they influence parents' and children's dietary choices. More recent contributions, along with the present volume, include Cesiri (2022), who conducts a visual and verbal analysis of a sample of baby food advertisements commissioned by Allenbury and Mellin from the late 1880s to the 1940s. The aim of the study is to understand the extent to which baby food advertisements are a reflection of the changing role of children in British and American society. Results point to a change in the way the relationship between children and food was represented: in the earliest samples, priority was given to promoting alternatives to breastfeeding and to raising children without nutrient deficiencies, while in the later advertisements, greater emphasis was given on representing children's playful vitality and how this derived from the promoted food. In both cases, advertisements targeted mothers as solely responsible for the children's nutrition, while fathers and families are absent from the narration. Another contribution, Cesiri (2025), integrates corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and multimodality to analyse the verbal and visual components in several genres that represent and narrate food to children and their families, also taking into account the extra-linguistic factors that shape food-related communication. In applying this perspective to a diverse range of food-related communication materials, such as food blogs, advertisements and institutional websites, the study seeks to understand the features characterizing food-related communication targeting children. Results on the case studies investigated reveal that, for instance, food bloggers showed that most reinforced traditional gender stereotypes, prioritizing motherhood over professional expertise in nutrition. The case study that considered a diachronic analysis of Nutella's advertisements in Italian and in English markets revealed shifts in marketing strategies reflecting changing nutritional trends but persistent gender stereotypes. Children were often depicted with male figures prioritized over girls; mothers were shown as responsible for children's diets (as in the Cesiri 2022 study), while fathers were portrayed as detached. The third case study, a corpus analysis of the institutional websites of World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), showed mixed results in terms of content accessibility. While FAO used simpler language that reflects its practical mission, WHO and WFP used more formal and complex language, which might reduce the effectiveness of communication to lay audiences, that

is, children, their families and schools. Overall, the research conducted in Cesiri (2025) has identified a gap between growing nutritional awareness and persistent gender stereotypes in food-related communication targeting children, which leads to the conclusion that effective communication should integrate health promotion with progressive societal values. Moreover, the investigation sheds light on the complex interplay of marketing, socio-cultural norms and language in shaping children's food-related communication and points towards more inclusive and health-conscious strategies for the future, which is also at the basis of the SPIN2023 Project.

### 3. The SPIN2023 Project<sup>20</sup>

The present chapter aims to partially fill the gap present in the state of the art highlighted in the literature available on communication representing and narrating food to children. To do so, the chapter presents part of the results achieved by means of the SPIN 2023 project, which is a two-year research project funded by “Ca’ Foscari” University of Venice, the present author’s home institution. The university has started this funding opportunity “with the purpose of promoting impact research and strengthening [their] attractiveness for the best international researchers” (Supporting Principal INvestigators (SPIN) n.d.; <https://www.unive.it/pag/31926/>).

The SPIN2023 Project, which in turn started in 2023 and will be concluded in 2025, is entitled “Food-Related Communication for Children in English: A Multimodal and Socio-Cultural Investigation”. Its goal is to investigate the verbal and visual strategies used in both traditional and digital/social media in order to understand how these strategies occur and vary by examining the genres through which food-related communication targeting children happens. For the purposes of the project, they were categorized into three main typologies. These categories are “technical”, “commercial” and “institutional” products.

The material thus gathered is being collected to form a corpus, called the FoRCCE Corpus, from the acronym of the project itself.<sup>21</sup> The corpus will be investigated through the use of discipline-specific software and then analysed applying several theoretical-methodological frameworks, which include corpus

<sup>20</sup> Project Code number “LCC.SPIN2023.CESIRI\_daFSREST, CUP H73C23000900005”.

<sup>21</sup> For more detailed information on how the Corpus was collected and the categories of products included in the FoRCCE Corpus, together with a general overview of the composition of the corpus so far, see Chapter 5, which details the process of compilation of the corpus, and was written by a postdoctoral fellow within the SPIN2023 project.

linguistics, critical discourse analysis and multimodality. The innovative aspect is the application in the project of all the above-mentioned theoretical-methodological approaches to examine the genres composing the FoRCCE Corpus through a multidisciplinary approach. In fact, no investigation seems to have considered food-related communication aimed at children using these three approaches together to investigate all the products combined into one single corpus. The project unites for the first time several theoretical frameworks and methods of analysis to characterize different genres, which are used not only to communicate nutrition-related information to children and their families but also to promote and to represent and narrate food to the same target audience.

As already mentioned, the chapter presents the results that ensue from the preliminary analysis of the material composing the FoRCCE Corpus, considering in particular the category of “commercial” product since the aim is the investigation of how companies communicate food- and nutrition-related contents to their targeted audience of parents of infants and young children.

#### **4. Dataset and Methodology: The FoRCCE Corpus**

The materials composing the corpus are here called “products” instead of “texts” since they include material of different nature (videos, text-only material, image-only material, etc.; see also Cesiri 2025). Moreover, the three typologies of products through which food-related communication happens are, then, “technical” products that include cookbooks and cookery manuals, domestic manuals and food blogs; “commercial” products, which include advertisements published in leaflets, newspapers, magazines, on websites and social media, as well as commercials available through traditional and digital/social media; and, finally, “institutional” products, namely, products that include websites, infographics, booklets, brochures and leaflets in which international institutions – such as the European Commission, the WHO, the FAO, the World Food Programme or UNESCO – inform through guidelines parents, schools and professionals about the correct nutrition for infants, young children and adolescents.

The products thus collected form the Corpus: a general overview of the FoRCCE Corpus and its collection is provided in Chapter 5. This section describes the specific dataset investigated in this chapter, namely, the category of “commercial” products that include, so far in the corpus compilation, the advertisements created in the years 2023 and 2024 (the years in which the SPIN2023 Project was developed) by the companies Nestlé, Danone and Abbot. The material was selected from the websites of those brands that are specialized in children’s food, by which it was meant baby food, as well as products for weaning and early infancy

nutrition. Moreover, the websites were selected to include only those that not only produced advertisements but also informed parents about the appropriate nutrition for their children. The aim was to analyse the communicative strategies of these brands, between marketing and specialist knowledge dissemination. The sub-corpus is therefore composed as follows.

**Table 1.** Distribution of products in the sub-corpus.

Brand	Nr. of Total Texts	Product & Nr. of Texts/Product
Nestlé	59	KLIM 3
		Nan 3
		Nestum 8
		Nido 18
		Nesquik 20
		Cerelac 7
Danone	48	Nutricia 19
		Aptamil 29
Abbott	57	Similac 26
		Go & Grow 2
		Pedialyte 1
		Phenex-1 1
		PediaSure 12
		Glutarex 1
		Pro-phree 1
		Hominex 1
		Cyclinex 1
		Tyrex-1 1
		Propimex-1 1
		Ketonex-1 1
		PureBliss 4
		EleCare 2
		Volu-feed 1
		Calcilo 1
Texts in Total	157	

#### 4.1. Nestlé

The first company considered in this chapter is Nestlé (n.d.). A multinational food and beverage company that is headquartered in Vevey, Switzerland, and was first founded in 1866 (<http://www.nestle.com>). Its first product was infant

formula but, since then, it has become one of the largest food companies known globally, with a presence in almost every country and the acquisition of several other brands, such as those included in the FoRCCE Corpus, namely, KLIM, Nan, Nestum, Nido, Nesquik and Cerelac, all specialized in infant formula, supplements and young children's several kinds of food.

Nestlé's presence in the infant and children's food market is indeed characterized by the offer of a wide range of products designed to meet the nutritional needs of babies and young children at different stages of development (*ibid.*). As already mentioned, their key products include infant formula under the brands Nan and Nido, which are designed for non-breastfeeding babies who, therefore, need supplementation. KLIM is also a brand producing several kinds of powdered milk for children from one year onwards or for toddlers, while baby food is produced under brands such as Cerelac, which includes purees, cereals and balanced meals. These products are commercialized for weaning babies, but Nestlé also offers products specifically designed for toddlers and young children, such as growing-up milks (e.g. Nido), snacks and supplements to support their continued growth and development (*ibid.*). While most of these products often focus on providing essential vitamins and minerals, Nesquik produces a variety of flavoured milk products for older children, typically toddlers or even older age groups. The most well-known product in the brand is the soluble powder designed to be mixed with milk to create a chocolate, other flavoured drink or Nesquik-flavoured cereals (*ibid.*).

#### **4.2. Danone**

The second company investigated in this chapter, Danone, is a global food and beverage company. Its mission is to "bring health through food to as many people as possible" (Danone World Food Company n.d.; <https://www.danone.com/group/about-us/our-mission.html>). The company was originally founded in Barcelona (Spain) in 1919 but is currently headquartered in Paris (France). While its first products were yoghurts to help children fight malnutrition (*ibid.*), today Danone operates across several segments of the food market, including essential dairy and plant-based products, special or flavoured waters and specialized nutrition. The latter focuses in particular on providing nutritional solutions for vulnerable populations, including babies, young children and individuals with specific health needs (<https://www.danone.com>).

As regards the production of infant and children's food, the company specializes in products that support the healthy growth and development during the early years with the key categories included in the FoRCCE Corpus of Aptamil

and Nutricia. Aptamil, for instance, is a brand that produces infant formulas that are scientifically developed to meet the nutritional requirements of infants from birth onwards, while Nutricia specializes in foods and formulas for babies and children with specific medical conditions or dietary needs such as allergies or intolerances.

#### 4.3. Abbott

The third and last company considered in this chapter is Abbott (n.d.) (<https://www.abbott.com>). The company is a global healthcare company specialized in the production of health-related products such as diagnostics, medical devices, infant formulas and children's food and established pharmaceuticals. The company is headquartered in Abbott Park (Illinois, USA), but it has a global presence in over 160 countries worldwide (ibid.). The company's sector that deals with infant and children's food market is the Abbot Nutrition division. They produce a range of science-based nutritional products that cater to infants and young children. Their products are designed to support healthy growth and development in early life with a specific focus on special dietary needs and children with specific medical conditions that require specific nutritional supplements and food in general (ibid.), as testified by the names of the brands included in the FoRCCE Corpus (see Table 1).

#### 4.4. Method of Investigation

The collected small-scale corpus, investigated in three sub-corpora named after the companies from which the materials were collected, was searched by means of the software for corpus analysis *WordSmith Tools Version 8* (Scott 2020). The software was used to examine the terminology of the material, focusing on the accessibility of the information it provides. This assumption is based on the fact that the material is primarily intended for parents with infants and young children; therefore, the aim of the communication should be to promote the products and to inform the public of their nutritional value, ousting the competitors. Quantitative data from the corpus are used to conduct a stylistic analysis on the corpus itself. Special emphasis is placed on evaluating the frequency and occurrence of lexical words, such as nouns, considered as indicators of domain-specific vs. popularizing terminology (cf. Gotti 2003). The next step in the analysis, the qualitative one, aims to identify key terms within the corpus that contribute to the "accessibility" of its content from the lay audience's perspective and to confirm the preliminary assumptions drawn from quantitative data.

## 5. Corpus-Based Analysis

This section provides the stylistic description of the “commercial” products sub-corpus that comprises the main FoRCCE Corpus. More specifically, Table 2 outlines the corpus’s quantitative aspects, namely, its stylistic features. Comparing its characteristics with existing BNC data clarifies what kinds of features the FoRCCE Corpus displays, considering both general language use and language unique to the specific domain.

To understand Table 2 properly, we need to define its items within corpus linguistics: “tokens”, in fact, refers to all the running words in a corpus; “types” refers to the classes of words in the same corpus, while the acronym “STTR” stands for “standardized type-token ratio” and indicates the normalized proportion between the number of tokens and types. Interpreting this STTR value gets more support from the “Average word length” figure, which tells us the average letter count of words in the corpus. This is relevant because, in English, content words are generally longer than grammatical words (Biber et al. 1999). Moreover, in corpus linguistics, “standardized” typically means adjusting proportions based on a set benchmark. Therefore, in the corpus under investigation, the software we used automatically adjusted the STTR per 1,000 words. This happened when we compared our main corpus to reference corpora of different sizes and also when we compared our own sub-corpora, which varied slightly in size. This adjustment process ensures that type-to-token ratios from different corpora are directly comparable. As Biber et al. (1998: 263) point out, “when corpus-based studies examine the frequency of features across texts and registers, it is important to make sure that the counts are comparable. [...] ‘Normalisation’ is therefore a way to adjust raw frequency counts from texts of different length so that they can be compared accurately”.

Table 2 also includes “Sentences” and “Average sentence length”, rounding out our look at the corpus’s stylistic traits. These figures detail the sentence count and their typical lengths, offering clues about the formality level of the material we are analysing. Indeed, extensive previous research on larger English corpora has established that spoken English tends to use fewer, shorter sentences. In contrast, written English usually features more sentences, and they are generally longer (Biber et al. 1998; Biber et al. 1999; McEnery & Wilson 2001; de Haan & van Esch 2007; Egbert et al. 2022).

### 5.1. Corpus Analysis

The introduction provided in Section 5 has been useful to clarify the organization of Table 2, which, reading from right to left, is organized as follows: the corpus of “commercial” products as a whole (as investigated in this chapter, which will be part of the larger FoRCCE Corpus). Next, data appear for the Nestlé Sub-Corpus,



followed by the Danone Sub-Corpus and the Abbott Sub-Corpus. Finally, the last column provides figures for our reference corpus: the British National Corpus, serving as the standard reference corpus for comparing the three sub-corpora.

**Table 2.** Quantitative data from the FoRCCE Corpus and its sub-corpora.

	<b>“Commercial” Products Corpus (FoRCCE)</b>	<b>Nestlé Sub-Corpus</b>	<b>Danone Sub-Corpus</b>	<b>Abbott Sub-Corpus</b>	<b>BNC</b>
<i>Tokens</i>	64,063	17,073	8,352	38,559	97,860,872
<i>Types</i>	2,881	1,297	1,261	1,556	512,588
<i>STTR</i>	33.71	28.19	33.78	35.98	42.66
<i>Average word length (characters)</i>	5.01	4.85	5.41	4.99	4.68
<i>Sentences</i>	3,531	614	220	2,654	4,754,513
<i>Average sentence length</i>	15.57	14.00	31.17	12.60	20.59

By comparing the statistics for the entire corpus and then for each of the three sub-corpora against the chosen reference corpus, we can observe stylistic differences and similarities. To begin with the latter, the STTR of the Danone Sub-Corpus and the Abbott Sub-Corpus show figures that are closer to the corpus as a whole shows, indicating that the language employed is rich in word use. Previous studies have indeed found that “a high type/token ratio suggests that a text is lexically diverse” (Baker et al. 2006: 162). Therefore, since the corpus here under investigation is much smaller than the BNC reference corpus but shows similar STTRs, the figures point to a lexical richness of the former. These data also suggest that the texts composing the main corpus and the two sub-corpora that its documents are closer to popularizing texts than to specialist ones, which should be semantically dense but lexically poor (Gotti 2003). Specialized texts, in fact, are characterized by the preference for the use of lexical words and, more specifically, of nouns over verbs (a specific feature of specialized discourse known as “nominalization”; cf. Gotti 2003). In addition, the specialized lexical words used in these texts are monoreferential, that is, their meaning is domain-specific to that particular discipline. For this reason, specialist texts are characterized by the repetition of terms to indicate domain-specific concepts, hence their semantic density, accompanied by lexical poverty since authors cannot use synonyms, which might indicate different concepts in that specific discipline (ibid.). The presence of a rich and varied vocabulary, indicated by the high STTR in the corpus (and two of its three sub-corpora), seems to indicate that the language that is employed

in this part of the FoRCCE Corpus is closer to general language rather than to domain-specific discourse, and it is also rich in lexical words (i.e. it is semantically dense but also lexically rich). Data from the Corpus are confirming data already emerged in Cesiri (2025), namely that – unsurprisingly – corpus stylistic data reveal the communicative aim of the companies that is of producing texts whose content is accessible to a lay audience composed of parents and families of the babies and young children to whom the products are aimed for; a common tendency already seen in companies and international organizations and agencies that wish to disseminate food- and nutrition-related specialist knowledge to the same category of public (cf. Cesiri 2025).

The only exception seems to be Nestlé whose sub-corpus shows a much lower STTR, therefore indicating a less varied lexical variety of language, pointing to a specialized lexicon which, in turn, might suggest the use of domain-specific and monoreferential terms that, as already mentioned, need to be repeated in a text since they cannot be replaced with synonyms due to their specialized nature and meaning that is unique to the semantic domain in which they are employed. All these elements seem to suggest that the Nestlé Sub-Corpus is the most specialized of the three sub-corpora under investigation.

Interesting data are revealed from the mean word length values. The main corpus shows unexpectedly longer words than the BCN. The number of sentences is clearly proportionate to their respective size, while it is again interesting to notice that, despite showing features of general language for what concerns the vocabulary used, the Danone Sub-Corpus surprisingly shows very long sentences. It has been found that, in a corpus, this is an indicator of sentence complexity, namely, longer sentences suggest that a corpus includes more complex sentences, which is typical of a formal style, while shorter sentences are indicative of an informal, colloquial style (de Haan & van Esch 2007: 198). However, while this is in contrast with the Sub-Corpus's STTR, it is in line with the average word length (5.41), which is the highest among the three sub-corpora and significantly higher than the BNC. We might interpret data from the Danone Sub-Corpus by hypothesizing that its texts are written with long sentences, indicating a formal written style, while the words they use, albeit lexically varied, are long and complex.

In conclusion, all three sub-corpora reveal some unexpected results from the quantitative analysis: while Danone employs a formal writing style, it seems to use non-specialist words; Nestlé, on the other hand, seems to prefer the employment of a more specialist approach to communicate nutrition-related contents to its target audience, while Abbot – the company that is oriented more towards health-care and medicine rather than recreational food of the three companies – seems the one to use the shorter sentences and less complex words in its sub-corpus. The qualitative analysis in Section 5.2. will confirm or refute these preliminary

interpretations on the communicative approaches by the three companies as provided by the quantitative analysis.

## 5.2. Keyword Analysis

The qualitative analysis aims to examine the key keywords identified by means of the corpus search. In corpus linguistics, keywords are defined as terms holding particular significance within a specific corpus (Baker 2004). According to Baker (2004: 346), in fact, “a word is key if its frequency in a text reaches or exceeds a user-specified minimum, and its occurrence compared with a reference corpus produces a statistically significant probability computed by an appropriate method”.

The study, however, focuses only on the terms that can be considered “key keywords” (e.g. Scott 1997) in the three sub-corpora. Key keywords are terms appearing at least a minimum number of times in a given corpus, showing how many texts a keyword is identified as significant within the corpus investigated (Baker 2004: 350). Therefore, given that the aim of the study is to identify patterns in the specific linguistic choices in the three sub-corpora, selecting the terminology that is truly relevant in the material composing the sub-corpora would help to understand the strategies employed by the three companies to inform the public on the correct infants’ and young children’s nutrition.

Moreover, the key keyword (henceforth referred to only as “keyword” or “keywords”) analysis aims to ascertain whether the preliminary assumptions of the quantitative analysis in terms of the stylistic description of the three sub-corpora can be confirmed or rejected through the examination of the key nouns used by the three companies. As a matter of fact, the keyword analysis centres on nouns occurring a minimum of twenty times in each of the three sub-corpora. Only the nouns were considered for investigation as typical examples of domain-specific language and instances of a monoreferential and nominalized terminology that can help differentiate a specialist from a non-specialist or a popularizing text (cf. Section 5.1. and Gotti 2003). Therefore, by looking at the kinds of nouns the three companies utilize with greater frequency we can understand whether 1) the hypotheses formulated concerning the specialist/popularizing language of the sub-corpora as indicated by the figures in Table 1 can be actually confirmed and 2) the effectiveness of the companies’ communicative strategies of the companies in disseminating nutrition-related information to infants’ and young children’s parents when using a specific kind of terminology can be ascertained.

Table 3 shows the keywords obtained from the search of the three sub-corpora. As already mentioned, only nouns that occurred at least twenty times in the corresponding sub-corpus were selected. In the table, the keywords are listed as they were returned from the corpus search.

**Table 3.** Key keywords in the three sub-corpora.

<i>Nestlé</i>	<i>Danone</i>	<i>Abbott</i>
Vitamin/Vitamins, Nutrition, Serving/ Servings, Fat, Calcium, Amount, Iron, Daily, Months, Total, Nido, Powder, Protein, Oz, Minerals, Food, Ingredients, Acid, Nesquik, Value, Product/Products, Sodium, Zinc, Sugars, Infant, Calories, Container, Diet, Soy, Development, Ingredient, Potassium, Sulphate, Allergen/ Allergens, Oil, Nutrient/Nutrients, Day, Chocolate, Corn, Acetate, Sugar, Tbsp, Wheat, Bottle, Probiotic/Probiotics, Toddler, Age, Fibre, Flavour, Strawberry, Size, Dietary, Advice, Baby, Low, Carbohydrate, Facts, Information, Riboflavin, Cerelac, Cholesterol, Cup, Package, Place, Syrup, Cereals, Item, Label, Preparation, Growth, Health, Nestum, Benefits, Instructions, Lecithin, Step, Taste, Whey, Biotin, Child, Source, Cholecalciferol	Vitamin, Milk, Acid, Nutrition, Oil, Sodium, Protein, Children, Calcium, Chloride, Sulphate, Potassium, Range, Mg, Food, Growth, Dietary, Management, Infants, Product, Purposes, Energy, Phosphate Supervision, Riboflavin, Ingredients, Preterm, Biotin, Allergy, Age, Acetate, Monophosphate	Vitamin/Vitamins, Mg, Mcg, Milk, Acid, Potassium, Formula/Formulas, Calcium, Oz, Oil, Sulphate, Water, Chloride, Feeding, Sodium, Ingredients, Protein, Container, Infant/Infants, Soy, Powder, Source, Choline, Instructions, Nutrition, Phosphate, Store, Hydrochloride, Fat, Similac, Magnesium, Iron, Bottle/Bottles, Biotin, Cap, Riboflavin, Zinc, Copper, Inositol, Lutein, Citrate, Manganese, Baby, Children, Monophosphate, Ascorbic, Health, Palmitate, Room Temperature/Temperatures, Carnitine, Directions, Hour/Hours, Lactose, Taurine, Result, Eye, Ring, Total, Storage, Doctor, Corn, Cows, Phosphorus, Acetate, Kosher, Pyridoxine, Thiamine, Tocopheryl, Development, Niacinamide, Pantothenate, Phylloquinone, Halal, Selenate, Brain, Gluten, Growth, Scoops, Iodide, Niacin, Amount, Hydroxide, Calories, Carbonate, Chain, Cup, Product, Weight, Level, Salt, Chromium, Selenium, Hands, Carbohydrate, Disodiud, Nucleotides, Thiamin, Breast, Premature, Schizochytrium, Microwave, Coconut, Refrigerator, Safflower, Utensils, Value, Galactosemia, Guide, Iodine, Lecithin, Minerals, Oven, Carotene, Failure, Foil, Supervision, Syrup, Nipples, Rings, Sugars, Fibre, Hygiene, Opening, Dairy, Hormones, Surfaces, Feedings, Ascorbyl, Amounts, Fluid, Measure, Molybdate, Whey, Birth, Bones, Carrageenan, Monoglycerides, Sensitivity, Tocopherols, Triglycerides, Abbott, Diet, Dietary, Fructooligosaccharides, Nutrient, Olein, Palm, Preterm, Seconds, Toddlers, Adenosine, Bitartrate, Cytidine, Guanosine, Paediatrics, Sole, Sugar, Supplement, Uridine

As shown in Table 3, a few keywords are common to all three sub-corpora, while others are used only in some, or in one, of them. In terms of the semantic fields of the keywords, they pertain to the following domains:

- food and nutrition (nutrients, kinds of food, chemical elements or compounds composing infant formula and baby food and so forth): for example, VITAMIN/VITAMINS, DIET/DIETARY, SUGAR/SUGARS, FIBRE/FIBRES, SYRUP, CORN, CALCIUM, SOY, ACETATE, etc.;
- groups of people/age groups: for example, BABY, TODDLER/TODDLERS, INFANT and CHILDREN;
- instructional terms (i.e. keywords used to instruct parents how to properly prepare formula or baby's food): for example, INSTRUCTIONS, PRODUCT, REFRIGERATOR, MICROWAVE, ROOM TEMPERATURE, etc.

As for the distribution of the keywords in the three sub-corpora, the Nestlé Sub-Corpus shows the use of keywords that belong to the three semantic fields and are overall accessible to an audience of non-specialists with a few notable exceptions that are constituted by the nouns RIBOFLAVIN, SULPHATE, BIOTIN and CHOLECALCIFEROL. These nouns might be opaque for the non-specialist audience if not properly explained. The concordance analysis was conducted in Section 5.3. will ascertain whether Nestlé's website compensates for the opaqueness of the term by providing its explanation to the parents accessing the corresponding text.

The list of keywords in the Danone Sub-Corpus is significantly shorter, proportionate to the size of the corpus. However, it shows the same trend noticed in the Nestlé Sub-Corpus, namely, that nouns can refer to names of foods (MILK and OIL) or accessible terms (PRODUCT and DIET), but they can also be domain-specific terms such as CHLORIDE, SULPHATE, RIBOFLAVI and MONOPHOSPHATE, which might not be understandable by the lay audience, if not properly addressed in the main text. As in the previous case, Section 5.3. will conduct a concordance analysis to see whether Danone's website disseminates specialist knowledge by adopting popularizing strategies and making these terms more accessible to parents.

The Abbott Sub-Corpus provides the longest list, in line with its size. In this case, domain-specific terms outnumber general nouns, making the terminology of the sub-corpus more similar to specialist language rather than to popularizing discourse. Terms such as CHOLINE, HYDROCHLORIDE, INOSITOL and PALMITATE might be completely opaque to the target audience, making the texts inaccessible and, therefore, communication ineffective. The concordance

analysis in Section 5.3. will explain whether Abbot's website clarifies these terms for the target audience.

In conclusion, the keyword analysis has partially confuted the quantitative analysis results. In that case, the figures from both the Nestlé and the Danone Sub-Corpora indicated texts that were rich in word use but with traits typical of formal written texts (long sentences and long words), therefore pointing towards mixed results, which were confirmed by the keywords analysis in which general terms are mixed with domain-specific terminology. The extent to which the latter are explained to the target audience and, therefore, made accessible by the websites will be revealed by the subsequent concordance analysis. The Abbot Sub-Corpus, instead, contradicted the results from the quantitative analysis, which suggested a corpus rich in word use (looking at the STTR), with texts made of short sentences (the shortest value in the three sub-corpora) and relatively short words. This suggested a rather popularizing approach in terms of communicative style and the use of terms from general language. However, the keyword analysis revealed that these short terms are indeed domain-specific, specialist nouns and prevail over equally short general, non-specialist terms. This usage is in line with the company's main line of production, which is healthcare and medical products, but it does not align with the website's target audience and target customers of the product, who are parents of infants and young children. As in the case of the other two sub-corpora, Section 5.3, in which the concordance analysis is conducted, will reveal whether these terms are explained (or not) to the target audience of non-specialists.

### 5.3. Concordance Analysis

The terms to be investigated in the concordance analysis of the three sub-corpora were chosen as case studies of the first four most recurrent keywords occurring in the corresponding sub-corpora. Thus, the keywords searched in the WordSmith Tools software Concordance tool were the following ones (as extracted from Table 3).

- Nestlé Sub-Corpus: Riboflavin, sulphate, biotin and cholecalciferol.
- Danone Sub-Corpus: Chloride, sulphate, riboflavin and monophosphate.
- Abbott Sub-Corpus: Choline, hydrochloride, inositol and palmitate.

In the Nestlé Sub-Corpus, the search produced a total of 112 concordances. All the searched keywords appear as listed ingredients composing the baby formula or infant food with no corresponding note to explain their nutritional value, definition or provenance. However, they are usually associated with another component that they specify, as illustrated in examples 1)–4), which represent

all the occurrences of the corresponding keywords found in the sub-corpus, one for each keyword (emphases added):

1. vitamin B2 (riboflavin);
2. ferrous sulphate (iron);
3. vitamin B7 (D-Biotin);
4. vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol).

The examples show that the domain-specific nouns are associated with another term that corresponds to the same ingredient indicated with its more commonly known term. Linguistically speaking, these are all examples of the so-called juxtaposition strategy, a defining technique that has been found to be very productive in popularized texts, whereby “the specialized term is [typically] followed by its periphrasis with the two separated by a comma, dash or parenthesis” (Gotti, M. (2008). *Investigating specialized discourse*. Bern: Peter Lang; 209). Therefore, in this case, even though no further comments or explanations are provided, parents are made aware of the nature and nutritional value of the ingredients they are giving their children and, as a consequence, communication is made accessible and transparent.

As far as the Danone Sub-Corpus is concerned, the eighty concordances returned reveal some different results from the previous sub-corpus, even though some keywords were the same. For instance, in the case of CHLORIDE, SULPHATE and MONOPHOSPHATE, these terms are only listed as ingredients and never indicated in their common names (unlike Example 2), for instance), nor does Danone provide any explanation or definition (see examples 5) and 6), bold type added):

5. magnesium acetate, potassium **chloride**, high docosahexaenoic acid oil from *Cryptothecodinium cohnii* and sugar;
6. magnesium hydrogen phosphate, ferrous **sulphate** and vitamin C;
7. Cytidine 5'-**monophosphate**.

As for the term RIBOFLAVIN, it is sometimes indicated alone (example 8), bold type added) and sometimes with its corresponding common equivalent (example 9), bold type added):

8. DL-alpha tocopherol, **riboflavin** and thiamin hydrochloride;
9. **Riboflavin (B2)**      0.19 mg/27 %.

The two examples refer to two different products, namely, example 8) is contained in the list of ingredients of Nutricia Human Milk Fortifier, “a food for special medical purposes for the dietary management of preterm infants under 1800 g”

(<https://www.nutricia.com/products/preterm/nutrilon-human-milk-fortifier.html>), while example 9) in Aptamil Profutura Growing Up Milk, “nutritionally tailored for toddlers 1–2 years” (<https://www.nutricia.com/products/first-1000-days/profutura.html>). The two products are aimed at two different targets of parents who are not likely to access both types of information. In addition, example 8) is extracted from the list of ingredients, while example 9) is from the product’s nutritional value table, so they are also reported on different parts of the container. This lack of a homogenous way of reporting information on the same part of the product’s container and on all the product does not make the company’s communicative strategy efficient nor transparent, especially in consideration of the fact that both products are for infants and toddlers in delicate conditions or phases of their growth, so parents would need to access that kind of information as easily as possible.

Finally, the search in the Abbott Sub-Corpus produced 387 concordances. As in the previous cases, the four keywords searched were contained either in the list of ingredients or in the tables with nutritional values. They are represented in examples 10)–13), which report one example for each keyword and the first one produced by the software in the concordance search (bold type added):

10. calcium phosphate, ascorbic acid, **choline** chloride and ferrous sulphate;
11. thiamine **hydrochloride**, pyridoxine hydrochloride and riboflavin;
12. potassium hydroxide, carrageenan, **inositol**, taurine and sucralose;
13. riboflavin, vitamin A **palmitate** and copper sulphate.

As we can see from the extracts in the examples, in neither case, however, were they accompanied by their corresponding common term or any other explanation that would give parents a clarification or any form of information concerning the nature, origin or nutritional value of the substance, elements or ingredients they are about to give to their children. Therefore, the communication produced by Abbot in this case is neither transparent nor effective and is based solely on the fact that the parents are entrusting their children’s nutrition during a delicate stage of their lives to a specialized company.

## 6. Conclusions

The present study has investigated a corpus of “commercial” products, namely, promotional materials written in English collected from the websites of three companies (Nestlé, Danone and Abbott) specialized in infant and baby food. The aim of the analysis was to investigate the communicative strategies used by



these companies and whether they managed to effectively transmit nutrition-related specialist knowledge concerning their products to the children's parents. The quantitative part of the analysis revealed that the Nestlé and the Danone Sub-Corpora showed mixed results, revealing communicative strategies that indicate a language typical of a formal written style, but with a terminology that points to general terms. This was later confirmed by the qualitative analysis that showed how the keywords in both sub-corpora included both general terms and specialist nouns, which the concordance analysis revealed to be explained to the parents by means of the juxtaposition strategy, a defining technique typical of popularizing text. This was interpreted as an indicator that favours effective and accessible communication between the company and the target audience of non-specialists who are made aware of the composition, in terms of nutrients and nutritional value, of their children's special food, especially in the case of preterm babies or of toddlers with medical conditions. As for Abbot, a company specialized in medical nutrition and healthcare devices, the quantitative data indicated a corpus that used short sentences and short words, all elements that could be signals of a popularizing language. On the contrary, the qualitative investigation revealed opposite data and the keywords revealed that domain-specific terms are used with no explanation or juxtaposition strategy, despite the fact that the website addresses parents and the wider audience. Therefore, the company's communicative strategy to communicate the nutritional value of its products appears ineffective, and this was all the more surprising considering that most of its products are devised for infants and young children with specific conditions such as preterm babies or food intolerances, so informing parents of the nutritional composition of the products through a transparent terminology and accessible information should be the company's priority, which, however, does not transpire from the present analysis.

Future research will integrate the results of the present study into the main FoRCCE Corpus and the larger SPIN2023 Project. Moreover, it will examine the nature of food-related communication directed at children across a more comprehensive range of media, encompassing traditional formats such as television and print, as well as other contemporary digital platforms such as social media and websites of other companies. A primary objective will be to ascertain how these communicative strategies manifest and diverge across various genres. For example, the presentation of food within "technical" products, a category defined by the project to include items such as cookbooks and food blogs, which has already been anticipated to differ significantly from its depiction in "commercial" products like advertisements and social media campaigns, or within "institutional" products, which include guidelines issued by health organizations.

To achieve a comprehensive understanding, future projects will employ integrated methodological frameworks. This involves the application of corpus linguistics for detailed language analysis, critical discourse analyses to investigate underlying messages and power structures and multimodality to consider the interplay of textual, visual and other communicative elements within the collected materials (as already tested in Cesiri 2025). The synergistic application of these three methodologies to the diverse array of products within the FoRCCE Corpus represents a novel and significant contribution to the field.

Finally, the overarching aim is to advocate for and contribute to the development of more health-conscious and inclusive strategies to narrate and represent food and nutrition to children. This entails not only the promotion of sound nutritional practices but also ensuring that these representations align with contemporary societal values and actively address and counteract anachronistic gender stereotypes identified in prior research (e.g. Cesiri 2022, 2025). The ongoing compilation and analysis of materials for the FoRCCE Corpus will serve as the empirical foundation for these future investigations. For a more detailed exposition, Chapter 5, in which this study is situated, provides a thorough overview of the FoRCCE Corpus and its methodological compilation.

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# The Manual Corpus of Food-Related Communication for Children in English: Challenges and Results

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## 1. Introduction

The compilation of a manual corpus is a central step in qualitative discourse analysis, as it determines both the scope of inquiry and the validity of findings. Unlike automatically generated corpora, a manual corpus allows researchers to exercise critical judgement in selecting texts, ensuring that the material aligns with the research questions and analytical framework (Baker 2006). When working with online sources, this process requires careful consideration of criteria such as genre, platform, authorship and audience in order to capture discursive practices in their socio-cultural context (Fairclough 2013).

A key issue in compiling such corpora is the representativeness and appropriateness of the data. Researchers must define clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, for instance, focusing on specific forums, social media posts or news outlets, and justify these choices in relation to their analytical goals (Krippendorff 2019). Since online discourse is often vast and heterogeneous, manual selection ensures that the corpus remains manageable while still providing depth for qualitative interpretation. At the same time, attention must be paid to ethical considerations, including the visibility of content, user consent and anonymization of data (Snee 2013).

Once the sources are identified, the corpus can be compiled through systematic collection procedures such as screenshotting, manual transcription or downloading posts while preserving metadata like dates and interactional context (Wodak & Meyer 2016). Documentation of each step is essential for transparency and replicability, allowing other researchers to understand the rationale behind corpus construction. In this way, the manual corpus functions not only as a corpus but also as an analytical lens that foregrounds specific discursive patterns and practices (Gee 2014).

The aim of this chapter is to offer an overview of the data collection process for the FoRCCE Corpus. In particular, the first section presents a discussion of the rationale for selecting specific websites, blogs and social media platforms and explains how the different corpora were organized. Section 2 focuses on

the brands, chefs and institutions included in the study, examining not only their presence online but also the strategic choices underpinning it – such as the platforms they prioritize, the kinds of material they share and the forms through which they engage their audiences. Finally, the chapter concludes with some reflections on the features and relevance of the corpus.

## 2. Methods: Data Collection and Corpus Compilation

The corpus was compiled through targeted online research, drawing exclusively on sources originally authored in English to ensure linguistic authenticity and alignment with the research objectives (Baker 2006; Fairclough 2013). Besides web pages and blogs, the research targeted social media posts from Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG) and YouTube.

When analysing online discourse aimed at parents about children's nutrition, these platforms offer clear advantages over other social media environments. **Instagram, Facebook and YouTube** rank among the first four platforms in terms of time spent on social apps globally (Digital 2023: Global Overview Report 2023). Facebook and Instagram are widely used by parents, with demographic surveys consistently showing that these platforms attract a significant proportion of adult users aged 25–45, a group that overlaps substantially with the parenting population (Pew Research Center 2023). In particular, men in the 25–44 age range show a stronger preference for Facebook, while women's choices lean more in favour of Instagram (Digital 2023: Global Overview Report 2023). In contrast, adolescents display a distinct pattern of engagement: teens aged 13–14 years gravitate towards YouTube as their primary platform, whereas those aged 15–17 years also prefer YouTube (*ibid.*). This demographic reach increases the likelihood that nutritional content encountered on these platforms is tailored to and engaged with by the intended audience. In contrast, platforms like TikTok or Snapchat, while popular among younger users, have a smaller proportion of adult users in the parenting age range, potentially limiting the relevance of the discourse for this specific research focus (Pew Research Center 2023).

Moreover, **Instagram, Facebook and YouTube** are central channels for brand marketing, public health campaigns and peer-to-peer exchange on parenting topics, including child nutrition (Abbar et al. 2015; Klassen et al. 2018). The affordances of these platforms – such as the ability to combine text, images and videos in a single post, alongside threaded comments and sharing functions – allow for the dissemination of both informational and persuasive content. Multimodality is particularly valuable for qualitative discourse analysis, as it enables the examination of not only linguistic features but also visual strategies, layout choices and



interactional patterns (Klassen et al. 2018). Additionally, these platforms maintain relatively stable content archives compared to ephemeral formats on platforms like Snapchat, making them more suitable for systematic corpus compilation and longitudinal study (Abbar et al. 2015).

A further advantage lies in the algorithmic targeting and community-building features of **Instagram**, **Facebook** and **YouTube**, which actively promote content to users based on their interests, search history and engagement patterns. Parenting groups, recipe pages and health-oriented communities thrive on these platforms, fostering sustained interactions between content producers (brands, institutions and influencers) and their audiences (Klassen et al. 2018). Such environments create rich datasets in which nutritional messages are embedded within broader conversations about parenting, lifestyle and well-being, providing valuable context for discourse analysis. This interplay between targeted delivery and community engagement not only amplifies the visibility of nutrition-related messages but also shapes the ways in which these messages are interpreted, adapted and shared among parents (Abbar et al. 2015; Klassen et al. 2018).

Despite these advantages, using **Instagram**, **Facebook** and **YouTube** for research also introduces certain limitations and potential biases. First, the algorithmic curation of content means that users are exposed selectively to posts based on prior engagement and inferred interests, which can skew the representativeness of the material (Abbar et al. 2015). Second, these platforms tend to favour visually appealing and highly shareable content, potentially over-representing commercial or sensationalized messages at the expense of more nuanced informational material (Klassen et al. 2018). Third, privacy settings, deleted posts and platform moderation practices can limit access to user-generated discussions, resulting in gaps or distortions in the corpus. Finally, the demographic composition of users – while advantageous for targeting parents – may still exclude certain populations, such as low-income families or those less active on social media, which should be acknowledged when interpreting findings (Pew Research Center 2023).

The selection of materials was guided by the typologies of sub-corpora defined in the project framework.

- *Institutional products*<sup>22</sup>: Official guidelines addressed specifically to families, schools, children and paediatricians, issued by international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Union

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<sup>22</sup> For further information on the conceptual differences between “material”, “genres”, and “products” used in the FoRCCE Corpus (and in the SPIN2023 Project), see Note 2 in the Introduction of this volume.

(EU), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Pediatric Association (IPA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Only documents explicitly addressing nutritional guidelines, access to food or related issues were included.

- *Commercial products*: Content produced by brands specializing in food products for infants and children, particularly where such brands also engage in informational and educational initiatives. This category included websites, YouTube channels and social media profiles.
- *Technical products*: Texts sourced from the websites of celebrity chefs, cooking blogs and culinary programmes aimed at families or single parents with children, as well as resources designed exclusively for children engaged in cooking.

Since the study focuses on material produced and published in English, all sources were selected according to their geographical and cultural origin. This criterion was applied to ensure that the discourse analysed reflects the linguistic, social and cultural contexts in which it was originally created, rather than content adapted for other audiences. Consequently, particularly in the case of international corporations, social media accounts and websites that were both translations from other languages were excluded from the corpus. This approach helped maintain the authenticity of the material and avoid distortions introduced through translation or localization.

The compilation process followed structured phases to ensure the corpus was systematically constructed. The first phase consisted of operationalising the corpus boundaries, which meant determining the units of analysis (e.g. post or article), the temporal scope and the genre, alongside explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria (Baker 2006; Krippendorff 2019). For example, the selection of data on commercial profiles focused on informational and educational content, leaving aside purely commercial advertising with no text or collateral initiatives. Particular attention was also devoted to check the publication/update year of web pages to ensure that they belonged to the selected time range. Whenever this was not explicitly declared, the "HTML" source of the page was examined to retrieve the information. In a few cases, relevant pages were included in the dataset even if the information was not available because their prominent positions in updated websites were considered equivalent to a time stamp. The next phase consisted of mapping sources and conducting a pilot scoping exercise. This involved identifying candidate sites and search strategies, collecting a preliminary dataset and refining the selection criteria

in light of feasibility and analytical fit (Baker 2006; Krippendorff 2019). To avoid redundancy, identical posts on Facebook and Instagram were collected only once, with preference given to Instagram due to its more compact and operationally effective visualization on screen.

A third step concerned the design of a metadata schema. For websites, a data dictionary was created as an Excel spreadsheet to store additional comments on relevant pages, as well as information about potentially useful content that did not exactly meet the selection criteria. This was followed by the systematic manual capture of material, aimed at preserving both textual/visual and contextual information through plain-text files and PDFs (Wodak & Meyer 2016). Finally, a file structure and version control system was established by implementing a transparent directory organization and consistent naming conventions (Wodak & Meyer 2016; Krippendorff 2019).

Each document was stored in two formats: plain text (.txt) for linguistic analysis and PDF for the preservation of graphic and visual features. While social media posts could generally be saved as plain text in a relatively straightforward manner, this approach was not always feasible in the case of downloadable material and, more rarely, some web pages. In situations where content could not be saved directly as a .txt file with the necessary level of accuracy, it became necessary to first obtain the corresponding PDF file, then convert that file into a Word document and finally save it in plain-text format. In many cases, the plain-text files obtained from web pages needed to be checked to eliminate all unnecessary metadata, such as embedded descriptions of images or hyperlinks.

All files were assigned unique identifiers according to their type. Webpages were labelled with the title of the page (e.g. *How to raise a healthy eater*), while downloadable texts retained the original name assigned to the document (e.g. *Pediatric Overweight*). Social media posts were coded using the initials of the platform followed by the year, month and day of publication (e.g. *IG\_2024\_12\_03*). In cases where multiple posts were published on the same day, the files were distinguished by adding sequential suffixes such as *\_B\_*, *\_C* and so forth.

The files were archived in folders organized by typology (Institutional – Commercial – Technical), each containing one or more levels of sub-folders. The “Institutional” folder contained sub-folders named after the individual organizations examined (e.g. *Institutional > UNICEF*). The “Commercial” folder was divided according to the companies involved, with an additional level of sub-folders for different brands where necessary (e.g. *Commercial > Danone > Nutricia*). The folder labelled “Technical” was further divided into genres (blogs and websites), followed by the name of the chef involved (e.g. *Technical > Websites > Jamie Oliver*).

The search process yielded 1,548 documents, comprising webpages, social media posts and downloadable materials. The documents consist of the following:

- 1,033 social media posts;
- 360 web pages;
- 148 blog pages;
- six PDF downloads (total: 715 pages);
- one video transcription.

Considering the different formats used when saving the documents, the final corpus resulted in a total of 3,218 files. The classification of the products, however, needs a few clarifications. First, the distinction between blogs and websites has become increasingly fuzzy (Puschmann 2013). Technically “a form of personal record or narrative that first appeared in 1997” (Jackson 2010: 11), blogs are characterized by reverse-chronological posts, frequent updates and interactive features such as comments and social sharing (*ibid.*). Websites, on the other hand, are traditionally conceived as “a collection of files and related resources accessible through the World Wide Web”.<sup>23</sup> Blogs typically adopt a more informal, conversational tone and encourage reader engagement, reflecting personal or niche interests, whereas websites tend to present information in a more formal, structured style. Yet in real scenarios – such as professional chef blogs or corporate content hubs – the distinction often blurs (*ibid.*): blogs frequently behave like mini-websites, and websites may include a blog-like section for updates and news. Second, in the context of this study, a “page” can be of varied length and may or may not include drop-down texts, according to the website/blog layout. More importantly, the division of social media posts by platform was far from straightforward. While some brands published identical content on both platforms, others alternated between duplicating posts and producing distinct ones, as we shall see in Section 3. Algorithms further complicated the picture, as they did not retrieve posts in the same sequence, making it difficult to determine which items overlapped and which were unique.

However, if we include the number of verified identical posts repeated on Facebook and Instagram for the commercial sub-corpus, we obtain a total of 1,397, which corresponds to 607 for the former and 790 for the latter. The distribution between the two platforms, therefore, presents a slight prevalence of Instagram (see Figure 1), which may correspond to the choice to address women

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Web-application>, accessed September 2025.

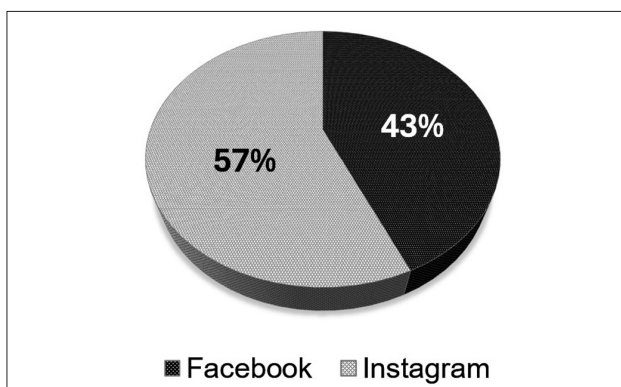


Figure 1. Distribution of Facebook and Instagram posts in the corpus.

more specifically. This interpretation is consistent with the demographic data mentioned above, indicating that women aged 25–34 tend to favour Instagram over other platforms.

### 3. Notes on Products<sup>24</sup>

#### 3.1. Institutional Products Corpus

Most institutions primarily disseminate reports and guidelines intended for internal stakeholders, such as officers, government bodies and policymakers, which fall outside the intended target audience of this research. Among them, however, IPA, UNICEF and WHO<sup>25</sup> also provided nutritional guidelines addressed to parents or professionals. The other institutions were excluded from the scope of the research due to constraints affecting the timeliness, accessibility or relevance of their available resources. FAO provided materials that largely date back to the early 2000s, with some files inaccessible via their official repositories, rendering them unsuitable for inclusion in a study focused on current practices. UNHCR mainly offered older downloadable documents or web content addressing specific local emergency situations, while the EU addressed the topic only very marginally, with no material intended for end users.

Although the IPA website was primarily devoted to congresses, activities and action plans, it also included a booklet containing recommendations on paediatric

<sup>24</sup> In the following comments, YouTube will be considered separately from Facebook and Instagram due to its significantly different relevance in the corpus.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.ipa-world.org/>, <https://www.unicef.org/>, <https://www.who.int/>, accessed September 2025.

overweight and obesity. UNICEF and WHO, on the other hand, provided searchable archives of information pages and documents related to nutrition. These materials showed some ambiguity regarding their publication or update year, as well as considerable variability in length and structure, partly due to the use of drop-down menus in the web pages and downloadable content. As a result, this sub-corpus also includes pages with no clear publication date that nonetheless remain prominently featured on the current website.

### 3.2. Commercial Products Sub-Corpus

The search engine selection process for this sub-corpus was conducted in three stages to ensure both relevance and representativeness. First, a list of the most prominent businesses was compiled using search queries that combined keywords such as *best/most famous* with *baby/children* and *food brands/companies*. Given the role of “organic” as a defining attribute for a significant number of companies in this sector, sources explicitly referencing this term were also included to capture this market segment. Second, the brands recurring most frequently across multiple independent sources were shortlisted to reduce selection bias. Third, the shortlisted companies’ online commercial communication was reviewed to confirm compliance with the language criteria.

The final sub-corpus comprises six companies – Abbott, Cerebelly, Danone, Ella’s Kitchen, Little Spoon and Nestlé – covering a spectrum from relatively small, direct-to-consumer enterprises to large international, multi-brand corporations. In total, the sub-corpus includes fourteen brands, with products ranging from organic foods to nutritional supplements formulated for specific dietary requirements. This diversity in product offerings and company scale is naturally reflected in differing approaches to commercial communication, which are examined in the following observations with specific reference to the time of data collection.

Abbott,<sup>26</sup> a multinational healthcare and nutrition company, offers a product portfolio that focuses primarily on specialized nutritional solutions addressing specific health conditions, which are often designed for both adults and children. Specific information on these products was mainly delivered on their corporate website. While the company maintains an active presence on social media, its channels were largely used to promote charity initiatives, awareness campaigns and other corporate social responsibility activities, rather than product-focused communication relevant to this study. The company’s YouTube presence similarly offered little direct relevance to the research topic, as most content centred

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.abbott.com/>, accessed September 2025.

on brand image, corporate information or general advertising unrelated to the specific product category under consideration.

Cerebelly,<sup>27</sup> a US-based direct-to-consumer brand founded by a neuroscientist and a team of paediatricians, specializes in organic baby and toddler foods formulated to support early brain development. Its website combined an e-commerce section with a dedicated information hub for parents, offering guidance on weaning, dietary suggestions and child nutrition. Product description pages consistently provided detailed dietary information, key nutrition facts and health-related insights, highlighting the brand's educational as well as commercial focus. This approach extended to social media, where Facebook and Instagram feature identical content, primarily centred on nutrition education and product promotion. The presence on YouTube, however, was limited to a few miscellaneous videos.

Danone,<sup>28</sup> a global multi-brand food and beverage corporation, operates a broad portfolio that spans multiple product categories and markets; its communication includes both corporate and consumer-facing channels. Navigating its online communication presented several challenges that limited the consistency and accessibility of product information. Some of its key brands, such as Mellin (Italy), Blédina (France) and SGM Eksplor (Indonesia), were not available in English, while some landing pages redirected to local websites (e.g. the UK site), which followed different organizational structures. In some of these cases, product descriptions were incomplete or entirely absent.

Danone's corporate website and YouTube channel were primarily focused on company information, with local branches maintaining only a limited number of videos and subscriptions. The company's social media presence in English was relatively recent and confined to the Instagram account @lifeatdanone, where much of the content was presented in infographic format, with some repetition. In contrast, the online communication of Danone's brands was generally more product-oriented, with the notable exception of YouTube, where videos were often several years old and mainly addressed mothers with pregnancy-related advice. For this reason, the sub-corpus concentrated on Aptamil and Nutricia, both of which specialize in foods for infants and children and demonstrated some relevant online activity. Aptamil operated through country-specific accounts that publish distinct content tailored to each market: Aptamil UK<sup>29</sup> presented a wide range of products on its website and maintains identical posts across Instagram

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<sup>27</sup> <https://cerebelly.com/>, accessed September 2025.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.danone.com/>, accessed September 2025.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.aptaclub.co.uk/products/view-all-products.html>, accessed September 2025.

and Facebook, while Aptamil US<sup>30</sup> listed only three products, was active solely on Instagram and had no Facebook profile. Nutricia,<sup>31</sup> by contrast, focused on its website and did not maintain any social media accounts.

Ella's Kitchen, a UK-based organic baby and toddler food brand, is known for its playful, child-focused branding and emphasis on healthy, natural ingredients. The company's web pages combined product-related information with general nutritional guidance, whereas its YouTube channel predominantly featured short videos or teasers on a variety of topics, with limited informative content. The company's social media presence spanned Facebook and Instagram, where content was sometimes duplicated across platforms and sometimes varied, potentially due to differences in how the platforms display posts. While the brand maintained a steady online presence, much of the relevant content preceded the time span of this study.

Little Spoon, a US-based direct-to-consumer company, specializes in fresh, organic meals and snacks for babies, toddlers and children. Its website is primarily product-oriented, offering detailed descriptions of its various food lines, but little supplementary content. The company's YouTube channel consists mainly of testimonial videos, highlighting customer experiences rather than providing broader nutritional or educational information. This communication strategy reflects a strong focus on brand visibility and customer engagement, which is also reflected on Little Spoon's Instagram account, which frequently features teasers that preview tips or advice, directing users to the link in bio for the full content.

Nestlé, one of the world's largest multinational food and beverage corporations, manages an extensive portfolio of brands that includes infant and child nutrition products alongside a wide range of other food categories. Its corporate website was primarily devoted to company information, with sections covering different topics. However, due to the large number of brands, research activities and product lines, accessing information was sometimes non-linear and navigating the site was challenging because of multiple redirects. For example, the section on nutrition redirected users to the Nestlé Nutrition Institute, a website intended for healthcare professionals.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, some brand-specific pages were organized by food type; although its sub-section called "Family Nutrition", divided by age range, provided some information and links to brands specializing in foods for infants and children, some of these brands or products were only accessible

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<sup>30</sup> <https://us.apamil.com/>, accessed September 2025.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.nutricia.com/products.html>, accessed September 2025.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.nestlenutrition-institute.org/>, accessed September 2025. This website included a publication titled *The Nest*, which is available for download exclusively upon registration. At the time of data collection, only a single booklet (no. 54) was accessible, and this was therefore incorporated into the corpus.



through other multi-brand platforms, such as GoodNes.com and *Baby and Me*, now renamed Nestlé FamilyNes.<sup>33</sup>

Cerelac, one of Nestlé's flagship infant cereal brands developed by Nestlé in the 1940s, offered a mix of product information and dietary articles on its website, though most of this content dated back to 2022 and was, therefore, excluded. In terms of social media, the brand had no Instagram posts in English and only limited activity on Facebook. Its YouTube presence featured multiple local branch channels, with content in various languages.

Gerber is a US-based baby food and nutrition brand founded in 1927. A Nestlé-owned brand, it maintained a website with several sections. The part dedicated to products was minimal and not relevant for research purposes, whereas the "ParentTalk" section contained dietary information for parents. Further details about products and nutritional advice were provided on the associated website *Gerber Medical*.<sup>34</sup> All Gerber's videos on YouTube were older than the time span under consideration and consisted of a miscellany of topics without a specific focus on infant nutrition. On Facebook and Instagram, the brand featured mainly photo competitions (particularly between May and July 2024), recipes, holiday celebrations and miscellaneous content ranging from customer-generated videos to horoscopes. This content was sometimes identical on both social media, though not consistently, which may have been due to platform-specific display differences. On Instagram, some advertisements did not explicitly mention the product but only commented on it, with the product itself appearing solely in the accompanying photo.

When redirected from Nestlé's corporate website to the Nancare or Nestum brands, users were taken to local websites, making it impossible to access content in English. Information about these products was instead available through the Baby and Me website. It was not possible to access any specific social media profile or YouTube channel in English.

Nesquik is one of the most famous global brands owned by Nestlé specialized in flavoured milk powders, ready-to-drink beverages and other products aimed primarily at children. Like Nancare, its product descriptions were accessible on another multi-brand website, in this case GoodNes.com. Like Cerelac, Nesquik's YouTube channels featured multiple local branch profiles with limited material, mostly outdated or not relevant. Social media communication, on the other hand, was modestly present: activity on Facebook was limited to regional

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.nestlefamilynes.info/products>, accessed September 2025. It is worth noting that the country selection in the home page often redirected users to other Nestlé brands.

<sup>34</sup> [medical.gerber.com](https://medical.gerber.com), accessed September 2025.

accounts, such as Nesquik UK & Ireland and other local branches, with no global brand profile, while the presence on Instagram was primarily focused on the US market. Communication on these platforms largely emphasized product promotion and brand visibility directed at children, with limited educational or nutrition-related content.

Nido – another Nestlé brand, which offers a wide range of milk-based products for children and families – was accessible through GoodNes.com. Its content included both product descriptions and advice for parents. On YouTube, Nido's presence was dispersed across numerous local channels, each tailored to regional markets. While on Facebook, the brand was present with a Pakistani profile, on Instagram, the brand maintained an English-language profile under @nestle-nidous, which focused primarily on the US audience.

### 3.3. Technical Products Sub-Corpus

The technical sub-corpus revealed a marked preference among chefs for the blog format (ten units, comprising 148 documents) over traditional websites (three examples, comprising sixty-four documents) when offering recipes. While some chefs also maintained websites, these were generally focused on promoting their venues and restaurants or specific product lines, rather than providing extensive recipe collections. Following a thorough cross-check using search engines, the selected blog sources were *Vuelio* (UK), *Fine Dining Lovers* (USA) and *100 Best Food Blogs*.<sup>35</sup> Each blog was first assessed for the publication date of its most recent recipes; only those updated in 2023 or later were included. Within these, the keywords *kids*, *children*, *babies* and *family* were used to retrieve relevant recipes, which were then filtered to ensure they fell within the appropriate time range.

This selection yielded ten blogs: Hungry, Healthy Happy, Inspired Taste, Lavender and Lovage, Mel's Kitchen Café, Recipes from a Pantry, Sandhya's Kitchen, That Girl Cooks Healthy, The Recipe Critic, Vikalinka and Well Plated.<sup>36</sup> Notably, all the channels – except for Inspired Taste – were managed by female chefs representing diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, a factor that further enhanced the heterogeneity of the corpus. Although all selected blogs contained

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.vuelio.com/uk/social-media-index/top-10-uk-food-blogs/>; [https://bloggers.feedspot.com/food\\_blogs/](https://bloggers.feedspot.com/food_blogs/); <https://www.finedininglovers.com/explore/articles/20-famous-chefs-usa>, accessed September 2025. Due to time constraint, only the first 20 blogs of *100 Best Food Blogs* were examined.

<sup>36</sup> <https://hungryhealthyhappy.com/>; <https://www.inspiredtaste.net/>; <https://www.lavenderandlovage.com/>; <https://www.melskitchencafe.com/>; <https://recipesfromapantry.com/>; <https://sandhyahariharan.co.uk/>; <https://thatgirlcookshhealthy.com/>; <https://therecipecritic.com/>; <https://vikalinka.com/>; <https://www.wellplated.com/>, accessed September 2025.

references to children or family within their recipes, none featured sections explicitly dedicated to these categories. Such references ranged from direct (e.g. “my children love it” or “it’s a fun way to get your kids involved”) to more general (e.g. “I love recipes that I can change to meet my family’s tastes”) and were, interestingly, found in blogs authored by women. In cases where the publication or update date of a recipe was not specified, it was still included, provided the blog’s copyright information was current. A few blogs also targeted families indirectly by mentioning specific publications that were advertised but not available for download.

Besides blogs, the technical sub-corpus contains two websites by celebrity chefs (Lidia Bastianich and Jamie Oliver), one dedicated to a project for sustainable food for children (The Edible School Project<sup>37</sup>) and the only YouTube video that was considered interesting for the relevance of the author and the topic (Gordon Ramsay cooking a recipe for kids with his teenage daughter<sup>38</sup>).

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

Collecting data from online food-related communication addressed to families and children revealed several recurring challenges in accessing and interpreting materials. Above all, navigating some websites proved difficult, particularly in the case of corporate brands such as Nestlé, whose content was dispersed across different websites, presented in multiple languages and managed through local channels or profiles. Retrieving materials from social media was further complicated by algorithms, which often limited the visibility of less-promoted content despite the chronological order of posts and made detecting duplicated content very challenging. While in some cases material was abundant – as with certain social media accounts – YouTube channels appeared to be used primarily for corporate communication rather than product-focused or educational purposes. In addition, social media content often relied heavily on visual elements, with accompanying text that was cryptic, partial or kept to a minimum. Further challenges were also posed by the frequent absence of clear publication or update dates. Overall, even when visual elements seemed to target children, direct communication aimed specifically at this audience was very rare.

Despite these challenges – or possibly because of them – the corpus exhibits a notable variety of sources (including contributions from chefs of diverse backgrounds) and communication approaches, reflecting the strategies employed by key actors in infant and child nutrition. This variety provides insight into

<sup>37</sup> <https://edibleschoolyard.org/>, accessed September 2025.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sby27TlIlbM>, accessed September 2025.

how guidelines, product promotion and educational content are produced and disseminated across multiple online platforms.

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# Translating the Adventures of Food in Different Genres of Children's Literature

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## 1. Introduction

References to food, in literature and in society at large, are the quintessential manifestations of culture (Van Coillie 2025), whose specificities may pose serious challenges for the purposes of interlingual translation. That is especially true of children's literature, where food-related items, which matter enormously to young audiences (Lathey 2016), also tend to be associated with a range of connotations and functions. In fact, such readers may not be fully equipped with the necessary background to make sense of them. Despite its importance and the challenges it presents, the translation of food in children's literature remains relatively under-researched (Panou 2022).

The present contribution explores food-related language in texts addressed to young audiences from the perspective of translation in the English-to-Italian language pair. The main goal is to shed light on the factors that shape the transition from one language to the other, especially when the comparison of source texts with target ones highlights divergent solutions. The qualitative analysis is grounded in data from my past and ongoing research in children's literature and its translation, as well as from years of teaching in this field, with selected cases from fiction and non-fiction.

## 2. Translating Food in Children's Literature: Key Aspects and Research Objectives

Food-related language is a marker of specific cultural identity in society as well as in literature, particularly in works addressed to young audiences, where it features prominently, elicits affective meaning and may play a symbolic role (Van Coillie 2025). Indeed, in texts for children, 'food is a ubiquitous trope, theme, motif and flavour' (Hunt 2024: 207). From the perspective of translation, the cultural specificity of much food-related language, paired with varying affective-symbolic associations,

may easily lead to unpredictable solutions, because of the entailed interlinguistic, intercultural gaps in need of bridging through mediation to ensure understanding. Mediation is all the more important when translating for children, due to their limited background knowledge and life experiences. A consequent dilemma is, for instance, whether to introduce young readers to cultural differences for their enrichment or obliterate them for fear of their possible incapacity to handle strangeness. Furthermore, the varying associations attached to food may be distributed unevenly across different interpretive levels of texts addressed simultaneously to children and adults, as children's literature is inevitably destined to both, due to its communicative asymmetry (O'Sullivan 2006), most clearly exemplified by the dual address often found in the classics (Masi 2014). All of these aspects pose a significant challenge for text comprehension and translation. Nevertheless, this remains a relatively neglected area of study, particularly with regard to non-fiction.

In the tension between foreignization and domestication, the attractiveness of a given approach to translation over another is subject to change over time, depending on translators' child image or idea of *superaddressee*, namely 'of a reader who fully understands the translator's thoughts and texts but who does not exist in the flesh' (Oittinen 2025: 21). This is also shaped by society, the economic interests of publishers and, as far as food references are concerned, by the more recent migration of food practices in our global world (Chiaro & Rossato 2015). The latter factor has brought about a higher degree of recognisability of foreign items than in the past, but in the transcultural setting of contemporary society, it has also made some cultural references unstable to define (Van Coillie 2025). Food and drink references are likewise abundant in children's films, and a diachronic comparison between older and more recent films has highlighted different translation approaches in the English-to-Italian dub, with several examples of loanwords in films produced after 2010, likely as a result of globalization and a more prominent role of images (Minutella 2025).

Although the translation of food in fiction for children seems to have involved less domestication since the 2000s (Paruolo 2010), some degree of domestication nevertheless appears to be necessary to enable young readers to immerse themselves in the stories as fully as possible (Van Coillie 2025), in line with their need for engagement and identification. Quite aptly, food is probably the type of item that is most engaging, that is, appealing to senses, also referred to as the 'sex' of children's literature (Daniel 2006). Food may generate desire, but it can also evoke abundance, privation, disgust or provide reflections on characters and social relations (Gasperini et al. 2024). It may also have an educational function, by regulating childhood eating practices, especially through the classics (Daniel 2006).

This multiplicity of food functions<sup>39</sup> is a widespread trait of literature addressed to young audiences (Masi 2017; Panou 2022). It actually aligns food-related items with what Epstein (2012) regards as language with expressive potential, which the scholar associates with a range of linguistic features. In literature for children, these linguistic features often carry signification on multiple levels at the same time, e.g. aiming at entertaining while educating, arousing emotions, helping characterization, creating irony, referring to taboos, etc. This adds to the challenges posed in text interpretation, especially for younger children,<sup>40</sup> and text translation, due to the necessity of prioritizing certain functions over others to choose a translation solution or a combination of solutions.

As a preview of my findings, the examples at the basis of the present study show that this expressive potential and need for functional prioritization in translation applies both to fiction and non-fiction genres, which are focused more on informing about real facts (Mallett 2004). Although the first type of literature that comes to mind when thinking of texts for children is probably fiction, non-fiction for young audiences has become a commercial success in Italy and Europe (with plenty of co-productions) since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Grilli 2020). In fact, research in this area, including translation, has long been neglected, and it is still true that such texts have not received as much critical attention as other children's literature. Possible reasons include their perceived lack of creativity, lower entertainment value compared to fiction and uneventful quality in translation (Borodo 2025).

However, recent studies have highlighted the inventiveness, jocularity and hybrid format of such texts, with consequences for translation too (Borodo 2011; Sezzi 2017; Cappelli & Masi 2019; Dymel-Trzebiatowska 2021; Masi 2021; Woźniac 2021; Paprocka & Wandel 2022; Borodo 2025). These materials tend to provide edutainment (Buckingham & Scanlon 2004) by triggering intellectual as well as emotional and aesthetic reactions in children, which spring from the combination of diverse activities, linguistic phenomena, styles and communicative modes. Similar translation trends have been found in non-fiction on different topics across different languages, e.g. in translations from English into Italian (Sezzi 2017; Masi 2021) and Polish (Woźniac 2021), which appear to promote formality and educational purposes, although more research is

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<sup>39</sup> This is also found in filmic genres, see Bruti & Masi (2019) and Masi & Vignozzi (2024).

<sup>40</sup> There is no full agreement as to when children display understanding of phenomena such as metaphor and other expressive language, but children older than seven are usually regarded as having the required skills (Epstein 2012).

needed. Additionally, translations into new target languages and cultures may be responsible for introducing new types of rhetoric of knowledge dissemination (Cappelli & Masi 2019), modelled on the original publications, which may foster alternative values and points of view (Borodo 2025).

The remainder of the chapter introduces the methodology for the investigation of the expressive potential of food and then presents the qualitative analysis of selected examples. In more detail, how does this expressive potential manifest itself across the sample of different genres taken into account? Which functions does it contribute to? What guides functional prioritization in the target versions?

### 3. Methodology: A Checklist for the Analysis

My past and ongoing interest in, and research on, the translation of children's literature has highlighted the need for close scrutiny of its expressive potential with reference to different textual aspects. This applies to food-related language as well. The present study is based on data from such research and years of teaching a course on translating literature for children for the Master's degree in translation at my university. More than fifty source texts, mainly in English, together with their Italian translations (with the exception of *Le avventure di Pinocchio*, which involved the transition from Italian into English), were examined. The source texts belonged to diverse genres (i.e. some classics, audiovisual products, contemporary fiction and non-fiction), covered various topics and addressed target audiences across different age groups. The corpus was intentionally hybrid on several dimensions to underline the role of the rich expressive potential of food, and its consequences for translation, across them. A broad conception of food-related language was taken into account, for example, comprising names of dishes or food items, their description and the description or representation of their taste. Relevant occurrences were identified and a selection of cases involving divergent translations from the original versions was focused on and analysed from a qualitative point of view. An explanatory framework was devised for this aim, based on some of the principles of textuality from text linguistics (De Beaugrande & Dressler 1981) and further integrated with a checklist for the qualitative analysis inspired by a functionalist approach (Epstein 2012).

In more detail, the expressive potential of language may rest on different components or textual levels (sounds, semantic meaning, pragmatic meaning, etc.), which altogether contribute to a global effect. Awareness of 'the intricate relationships among text levels is essential to both the language analyst and the translator' (Melini Barbaresi 2002: 120). This relationship is shaped by the requirements of different principles for the appropriate functioning of the text



(De Beaugrande & Dressler 1981). Situationality (which generally defines the demands of the situation of use), intentionality (expressed by the text producer's intentions) and acceptability (of such intentions for the text receiver) are text-external dimensions setting the stage for communication. Intertextuality (the extent to which a text rests on other texts), informativity (the degree to which the content provided is new to the text receiver) and cohesion and coherence (understood, respectively, as continuity on the textual surface and in the construction of sense) concern different aspects of the text itself, clearly dependent on the previous ones.

While the functions of food-related language can be said to express source text intentionality, it is target text acceptability that largely shapes translation solutions depending on the situation of use (e.g. genre conventions) in the target culture. In more detail, acceptability refers to the receiver's perception of a text as being understandable, relevant and appropriate for a given communicative goal, and factors like age and dual address may modulate it in different ways. It is, in fact, a broader notion than accessibility (usually mentioned in the context of translating for children), as it goes beyond understanding via reference identification and includes what is perceived as culturally acceptable, that is, satisfactory, suitable and tolerable.

The requirements of text principles can be integrated with Epstein's (2012) checklist for the analysis of the translation of children's literature, grounded in the functions associated with different instantiations of expressive language.<sup>41</sup> Especially useful is the set of steps followed in the process of identifying appropriate translations. They involve the analysis of the function of the items in question, the role of the type of expressive language in the source and target cultures and previous translations of the linguistic features, which finally leads to the choice of a translation strategy or a combination of strategies. The latter<sup>42</sup> are deletion, standardization, replacement, addition, explanation, compensation, different types of representation (e.g. orthographic, suitable for the translation of dialect), literal translation, adaptation and retention (to keep the expressive language and, possibly, its associations, or only the latter).

Table 1 proposes an adapted version of the original checklist, which I applied to the analysis of my data, also acknowledging the role of the principles of textuality. It is divided into two sections, the first focusing on the source text (ST), and the second on the target text (TT). Translation strategies in this case are the starting

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<sup>41</sup> The linguistic features the scholar focuses on are neologisms, names, idioms, allusions, wordplay and dialects.

<sup>42</sup> Epstein calls them 'translatorial' strategies – to place emphasis on the decision-making process of the translator.

point, rather than the concluding step, of the second stage. As each contribution of text components may become foregrounded, especially in literary discourse (Merlini Barbaresi 2002), the checklist can serve as a tool for identifying the linguistic components, correlated functions and textual requirements that are prioritized in the dynamics of translation.

**Table 1.** Checklist for the comparison of food-related language in parallel texts from literature for children.

Steps in the Process	What is Involved
FOCUS ON THE ST	First, consider the context of the situation: situationality in terms of genre and related general intentionality (e.g. entertain or inform, or both) and acceptability in terms of age of target reader and type of address
Analyse the form and referential meaning of food-related language	Identify what is represented and through which forms (e.g. specialized vocabulary, culture-bound lexical items, sound patterns, illustrations, etc.)
Analyse the functions of food-related language with reference to both the co-text and cultural context: consider, for example, allusions, figurative uses for vivid description and/ or sensory appeal, playfulness for entertainment or criticism (e.g. irony), evocative explanation and overall engagement	On a more specific level, identify added signification to the referential level and understand how and why the author used it, that is, the purposes, motivated by more specific intentionality it serves in the text and further requirements that are complied with thereby (e.g. sensory appeal or playfulness as suitable choices from the perspective of acceptability for children, allusions as markers of intertextuality and explanations for informativity)
Consider the impact of food-related language on the text as a whole	Identify possible repeated items and patterns establishing cohesion and/or assess whether the functions of food-related language contribute to global coherence (e.g. for characterization) or have a more limited influence with local effects
Consider the interaction with the iconographic apparatus	When relevant, examine the role of illustrations and typographic style, e.g. whether they complement food-related language, and the extent to which they may constrain translation
FOCUS ON THE TT	Consider the general contextualization of the TT: is it similar to that of the ST (especially in terms of age of target readers and correlated acceptability)?

Consider the translation strategy or strategies used (e.g. deletion, standardization, replacement, addition, explanation, compensation, different types of representation, literal translation, adaptation and retention) and their consequences	Which forms and functions of the original food-related language have been maintained? Identify possible losses and gains
Consider the role of food-related language in the source and target cultures, especially from the perspective of children	Has culture-specificity been retained? To what extent is it acceptable from the point of view of young target readers (both in referential and functional terms)?
Look at other translations	If applicable, look at earlier or other translations (also of similar texts, especially in the case of non-fiction) to see how the case in question, with a similar contextualization, was handled
Consider the interaction with the iconographic apparatus	Has the same type of interaction between communicative modes been maintained?
Consider the requirements (stemming from the principles of textuality) that appear to have motivated the choices of strategies	What are the requirements that appear to have been prioritized in the proposed translations?

## 4. What's Cooking: Analysis of Examples

The examples discussed in this section were chosen on account of their divergent translations from the original versions and for their representativeness of a range of factors constraining the signification of food occurrences in source and target texts. The source texts they come from differ in several respects, that is, genres, target readers, topics and communicative modes involved. Also, in some cases, food constitutes an important topic or thread of the texts, whereas in others, it has a more limited role. Almost all the source texts were in English and the target ones in Italian, with the exception of *Pinocchio*. The dual address of the classics sometimes led to consider different retranslations for different audiences over time. In the analysis of examples, brief approximate back-translations or paraphrases are provided as glosses, while longer ones are given in footnotes. Table 2 lists the source and target texts<sup>43</sup> containing the examples examined.

<sup>43</sup> The target versions included unpublished translations as the outcome of discussions with students in the Master's course in translation.

**Table 2.** Source and target texts with the examples examined.

STs	Description	TTs
<i>Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino</i> (Collodi 2000, orig. 1883)	Classic fiction for children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collodi (2002), trans. Murray/Tassinari</li> <li>- Collodi (1996), trans. Lawson Lucas</li> <li>- Collodi (2003), trans. Rose</li> <li>- Collodi (2009), trans. Brock</li> <li>- Collodi (2021), trans. Hooper and Kraczyna</li> </ul>
<i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> (Carroll 2002a, orig. 1865)	Classic fiction for children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carroll (1872), trans. Pietrocòla-Rossetti</li> <li>- Carroll (2002a), trans. Serpieri</li> <li>- Carroll (2002b), trans. Graffi</li> <li>- Carroll (2005), trans. Busi</li> <li>- Carroll (2007), trans. Bossi</li> </ul>
<i>The Enormous Crocodile</i> (Dahl 2009, orig. 1978)	Fiction for pre-schoolers and junior readers, with illustrations	Dahl (2014), trans. Cravero
<i>Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures</i> (DiCamillo 2014)	Fiction for middle graders, with illustrations and comic-like graphic sequences	DiCamillo (2015), trans. Bortoluzzi
<i>Ratatouille</i> (Bird and Pinkava 2007)	Animation comedy film	Official Italian dub
<i>Not-for-Parents Rome: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know</i> (Lamprell 2011)	Travel guidebook for pre-teens, with illustrations	Lamprell (2012), trans. Macaluso
<i>The Official Harry Potter Baking Book</i> (Farrow 2021)	Recipe book for middle-grade readers, with illustrations	Farrow (2021), trans. Decio
<i>The Children's Book of Healthy Eating</i> (Stimpson 2016)	Guide for junior readers, with illustrations	Unpublished translation
<i>The World in Your Lunchbox: The Wacky History and Weird Science of Everyday Foods</i> (Eamer 2012)	Information book containing historical and scientific insights on food, with illustrations	Unpublished translation

Let us start with the classics. *Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino* (Collodi 2000), first published as a book in 1883, is not just children's literature, as proved by its many levels of signification. This is what has surely contributed to the need for several retranslations over time. The first English translation dates back to 1892, by the British translator M. A. Murray, starting a series of reinterpretations involving different degrees of closeness to, or detachment from, the original story,

especially depending on target readers (their age and socio-cultural setting in terms of space, time and level of education, Masi 2013, 2017). Food and hunger constitute an important thread of the work (Masi 2017; Luciano & Jones 2024; Tosi 2024), hinging upon culture-bound items of the Tuscan culture of the time, which are leveraged to give rise to different associations and to arouse different affective reactions. The example below (from Chapter 13) is the most emblematic description of food in the tale, discussed at length in Masi (2017) and reposed here with additional details about its consequences for signification on a more global level,

La Volpe avrebbe spelluzzicato volentieri qualche cosa anche lei: ma siccome il medico le aveva ordinato una grandissima dieta [...] si fece portare per tornagusto un cibreo di pernici, di starne, di conigli, di ranocchi, di lucertole e d'uva paradisa.

Pinocchio is at the Red Lobster's Inn with the Fox and the Cat and the passage in question focuses on the Fox's food order, a nonsensical mishmash of ingredients associated with a culture-specific dish, *cibreo*, which would probably be rather obscure even to most contemporary Italians, especially the young. The culture-specificity of the passage is bypassed by the generic replacements in Murray's version revised by Tassinari in 1951 (Collodi 2002), [The Fox would also willingly have picked a little, but as his doctor had ordered him a strict diet [...] he sent for a special dish of partridges, rabbits, frogs, lizards and other delicacies].

Unfortunately, culture-specificity is not the only aspect that has been obliterated in this and other retranslations. From a referential point of view, *Cibreo* is a traditional Florentine dish consisting of a mixture of chicken giblets and eggs as main ingredients boiled in broth. The diminutive suffix *-ino* would seem to point to a small quantity of food, in line with the preceding reference to a strict diet ordered by the Fox's doctor. However, further co-text lists a long series of food items comprised in the Fox's request, which clashes with this interpretation and thus adds to the effect of contradiction. The latter is reinforced by the abstract 'morphopragmatic feature [non-serious]' underlying the uses of diminutives (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994: 17), as an extension related to the semantic meaning '[non-important]' and '[small]'. The functions that appear to be performed convey playful entertainment but also irony about the Fox's behaviour, which contribute to global level coherence in portraying the character as bizarre, but also deceptive and mischievous, that is, important features of his personality and for the development of the plot. The selection of target texts reported below shows different replacements as compromise solutions.

Lawson Lucas (Collodi 1996), an annotated translation aiming at universalising the tale for British readers, replaces the challenging food item of the source text with a polysemous rhyming reduplicative preceded by the adjective *little* and

provides metalinguistic and cultural information by means of an endnote (here indicated by an asterisk),

[a little hotch-potch of game-birds, partridge, rabbit, frog, lizard and green grapes\* – \*The word “cibreo” means a fricassee or hotchpotch or hotpot, normally made with chicken giblets and eggs [...] Cibreo is also the name of a well-known restaurant in Florence.]

The reduplicative is rooted in Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, thus prioritizing acceptability through greater familiarity, while the added paratextual explanation especially satisfies the curiosity of adult readers. The rhyming component and the wordplay resting on the two meanings of *meat stew with vegetables* and *a confused mixture* contribute playfulness to the overall description, also adding to its contradictory quality, thereby suggesting the duplicity of the character's behaviour. This is also strengthened by the ironic clash between *little*, as part of the more analytical structure translating the '[non-serious]' feature associated with *-ino* of the original, and the various food items listed in the passage.

The following translation is taken from Rose's version (Collodi 2003), a picture book addressed to young British readers, which opts for the outcome of a different cooking method, that is [a mixed grill of partridges, rabbits, frogs, lizards and prunes in brandy]. Indeed, *grilling* may possibly be more familiar or attractive to the targeted children than boiling or stewing; the list also comprises *prunes in brandy*, once again more familiar than the variety of Italian grapes mentioned in the source text.

The segment from the translation by Brock (Collodi 2009) shows a recognized exotic dish from Hungary that appears to foreground the transcultural identity of contemporary society, especially the American one in this case, where different traditional recipes and flavours can be mixed to create new tangs (Masi 2017), that is, [a goulash of partridges, quails, rabbits, frogs, lizards and paradise grapes].

The translation by Hooper and Kraczyna (Collodi 2021), an annotated version intended for a generic English-speaking audience, replaces the original with another term referring to the cooking method (accompanied by an explanatory note),

[a modest stew\* of various kinds of partridge, rabbit, frogs, lizards, and sweet white raisins – \*In Italian, *cibreo*: a traditional Florentine culinary specialty. It did not in fact contain lizards, but it nevertheless included some ingredients that would be considered unusual today, such as chicken crests and testicles. It was said to have been a favorite dish of the Florentine-born Caterina de' Medici, who ruled France as queen consort from 1547 to 1559. Cibreo is the name of one of Florence's most famous restaurants.]

Thanks to the use of the adjective *modest*, this represents the sole attempt, along with Lawon Lucas's, to emphasize the ironic clash between the declared

small amount/not elaborate quality of the ordered food vs. the long list of ingredients it consists of.

In other words, while the annotated versions are more comprehensive in reproducing the ironic function and correlated characterization of the original, in compliance with their requirement of acceptability for a wider audience, the others fall short of the intentionality underlying the source text and prioritize playfulness mainly through the bizarre juxtaposition of more familiar or recognized exotic dishes.

Another classic worth considering is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 2002a), originally published in 1865, where food has a transformative function. In this masterpiece of nonsense literature, characters play with language in ways that confuse the protagonist and amuse the reader through an excess of meaning, and food is part of the 'game' (Kérchy 2024). The complex thread of riddles, rhymes, parodies and absurd juxtapositions in the novel presupposes a dual address often scarcely accessible to children.<sup>44</sup> As with *Pinocchio*, a multitude of target texts in different languages has attempted to variously convey the meaning potential of the original work across time and space. The first translation into Italian dates back to 1872 by Pietrocola-Rossetti (under Carroll's supervision), followed by many others reflecting the settings (space and time) where they originated from and the target audiences mainly addressed. The iconic example that follows, from the first chapter of the source text, describes the taste of the content from the bottle with the paper label 'DRINK ME', that is, 'Alice ventured to taste it, and, finding it very nice (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffee and hot buttered toast), she very soon finished it off'.

The item from the list that is translated in the most divergent ways in some of the selected target texts is *toffee*, which becomes *torrone* [nougat] in Pietrocola-Rossetti's translation and *croccante* [almond or peanut brittle] in Bossi's (Carroll 2007) – which dates back to 1945, that is, unannotated versions possibly trying to promote acceptability via familiarity and sensory appeal for the young target readers of their times.<sup>45</sup> More recent target texts dating back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, instead, opt for a closer equivalent to the original, e.g. *caramella mou* [chewy caramel] (see the translations by Serpieri, Graffi and Busi, that is, Carroll 2002a, 2002b, 2005, respectively).

<sup>44</sup> In fact, Carroll also wrote an adaptation, *The Nursery Alice* (1890), for younger children.

<sup>45</sup> Bossi's choice may have been influenced by her place of origin, that is Tuscany, where this food item is quite popular. Indeed, her translation occasionally displays examples of regional replacements.

Another interesting case, among many, is provided by the Mock Turtle's song in Chapter 10, a challenging passage involving various translation constraints such as the parodic reference to a popular song of the time (known by the Liddle sisters), titled *Star of the Evening* (by J. M. Sayles), in addition to rhyme and rhythm,

Beautiful Soup! So rich and green, / Waiting in a hot tureen! / Who for such dainties would not stoop? / Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup! / Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup! / Beau-ootiful Soo-oop! / Beau-ootiful Soo-oop! / Soo-oop of the e-e-evening, / Beautiful, beautiful Soup! / Beautiful Soup! Who cares for fish, / Game, or any other dish? / Who would not give all else for two p /ennyworth only of Beautiful Soup? / Pennyworth only of beautiful Soup? / Beau-ootiful Soo-oop! / Beau-ootiful Soo-oop! / Soo-oop of the e-e-evening, / Beautiful, beauty- FUL SOUP!

Across the different target texts surveyed, the one that appears to be the most creative (in this case and in many others) is surely Busi's richly annotated version,

[Oh, brodo di star, oh, doppio sapore, / del brodo di carne tu sei il successore! / Dalla fondina d'oro zecchino / sale un sapore di strutto equino! / Brodo, bel brodo, oh che bel brodo! / Brodo, bel brodo, oh come godo! / "Oh, brò-ooòdo, oh, brò-ooòdo! / Bel brò-ooòdo, ti lò-ooòdo! / Brò-ò-ò-do di sera! / Bel sò-ò-nno sì spera! / "Chi se ne frega di arrostiti e lessi / noi solo brodo, mica siamo fessi! / Chi non darebbe un occhio per l'odorino che sale su da bel brodo! / Brodo, bel brodo, è bello todo! / Il brodo bello del le – un! – Stààààààààààr!"<sup>46</sup>

Playfulness is enhanced through the replacement of soup with broth, which triggers the double allusive meaning of *star* referring to the already mentioned parodied song, but also to a more down-to-earth item, namely, a popular contemporary brand name of seasoning usually concentrated in stock cubes (or powdered mix) for broth. Further elements are the addition of colloquial expressions – *chi se ne frega* [who gives a damn], next to formal or technical terms – *strutto equino* [equine lard], and an idiomatic wordplay based on an altered idiom – *brodo di sera* [broth in the evening], which evokes *rosso di sera, bel tempo si spera* [Red sky in the evening, good weather is hoped for, or Red sky at night, shepherd's delight].

<sup>46</sup> [Oh, star broth, oh, double flavor, / of meat broth you are the successor! / From the golden ducat's scabbard / rises a taste of equine lard! / Broth, beautiful broth, oh what a lovely broth! / Broth, beautiful broth, oh how I enjoy! / "Oh, brò-ooòth, oh, brò-ooòth! / Beautiful brò-ooòth, I praise you! / Brò-ò-òth of the evening! / Good slè-è-èp is hoped for! / "Who cares about roasts and boiled meats? / We only want broth, we're no fools! / Who wouldn't give an eye for the good scent rising up from fine broth! / Broth, beautiful broth, it's all good! / The beautiful broth of the – one! – Stààààààààààr!] (My back-translation).



The next example is taken from the title of Chapter 11, which focuses on the nonsensical trial of the Knave of Hearts, accused of stealing the Queen of Hearts' tarts, 'Who Stole the Tarts?'. The title echoes the nursery rhyme within the chapter, which contains the accusation read by the White Rabbit as Herald in the trial. The following are some of the most surprising – and appealing – culinary reinterpretations: *tartine* [small open-faced sandwiches] (Bossi's translation), *frittelle* [fried pastries] (Graffi's) and *pizzette* [mini pizzas] (Busi's).

Moving on to *The Enormous Crocodile* by Dahl (2009), an illustrated tale for pre-schoolers and junior readers published in 1978, in the example that follows, the main character, the Crocodile referred to in the title, describes the imagined taste of his favourite food, that is, children, 'It's luscious, it's super, / It's mushious, it's duper, / It's better than rotten old fish. / You mash it, and munch it, / You chew it and crunch it! / It's lovely to hear it go squish!'. The potentially scary nature of the terrible desire is exorcized through playful sound effects such as rhyme, onomatopoeia and alliteration.

Cravero's version below (Dahl 2014) is a masterpiece of jocularity,

[È una giuggiola, una primizia / è come il paté di liquirizia. / È più delizioso dei supplì / ripieni di crema chantilly. / Più dei rognoni al maraschino, / più delle cozze con il budino. / È come il caviale sopra al gelato, / è come la trippa con il cioccolato. / È strafogante, è stragodurioso: / Altro che il solito pesce fangoso!]<sup>47</sup>

The overall effect is achieved by prioritizing rhyme over referential precision, by means of replacements with absurd juxtapositions, additions of target culture food items and creative neologisms (*strafogante* and *stragodurioso*) which exalt the extraordinarily intense good taste being described. The neologisms are based on creative word formations, resulting from *strafogarsi* [stuff yourself] joined with the adjectival suffix *-ante* [pertaining to the action indicated by the verb] and from *stra-* [i.e. from Latin *extra*, pointing to the superlative quality of something], *-goduria* [intense pleasure, bliss] and the suffix *-oso* [indicating presence or abundance of the preceding quality].

The case below comes from *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, a novel for middle-grade readers by DiCamillo (2014), which includes comic-like graphic sequences.<sup>48</sup> Ulysses is Flora's anthropomorphized pet squirrel, believed to have the

<sup>47</sup> [It's a jujube, a first fruit / it's like licorice pâté. / It's more delicious than *supplì* (rice croquettes – typical Roman dish) / stuffed with Chantilly cream. / More than kidneys with maraschino, / more than mussels with pudding. / It's like caviar on top of ice cream, / it's like tripe with chocolate. / It's over-stuffing, it's over-delicious: / Better than the usual muddy fish!] (My back-translation).

<sup>48</sup> Its comedy-drama film adaptation was released in 2021.

power to fight evil and the talent to write bizarre poems for her, like this (right at the end of the story), ‘Nothing / would be / easier without / you, / because you / are / everything, / all of it – / sprinkles, quarks, giant / doughnuts, eggs sunny-side ups – / you / are the ever-expanding / universe / to me’. The composition humorously closes the story by juxtaposing the noble feeling of love with food, a typical stylistic trait of the poet squirrel, expressing the intensity of his feelings by means of food metaphors in an unconventional poetic structure and via the combination of sweet and savoury items (not completely unpalatable from the perspective of the animal).

The translation of food references by Bortoluzzi (DiCamillo 2015), that is, *zuccherini*, *quark*, *maxiciambelle* and *torte arcobaleno*, shows both the retention of a potentially obscure item for the young target audience (*quark*) and the sweet replacement of eggs sunny side-ups with *torte arcobaleno* [rainbow cakes], which may bring about greater appeal (but less diversity of flavours within the more heterogeneous list in the source text).

The next examples come from the animated comedy-drama film *Ratatouille*, produced by Pixar for Walt Disney Pictures (Bird & Pinkava 2007), which contains several cases of food being involved in verbal and multimodal synaesthesia fostering imagination and engagement (Bruti & Masi 2019; Masi & Vignozzi 2024). The subtle changes in the Italian dub seem to serve these same goals. In the case below, Rémy, the protagonist mouse with a talent for cooking and for detecting food ingredients and flavours, is guiding his brother, Émile, to discover the flavours of walnut cheese. Émile closes his eyes and follows his instructions while tasting the food item, ‘REMY (VOICE-OVER) – Creamy, salty, sweet, an oaky nuttiness. You detect now?’. Émile’s tasting experience is actually represented multimodally, with different abstract patterns taking shape in the background, shifting in colour and accompanied by different sound effects. In fact, the patterns take shape with some difficulty, and the colours are not very bright, thus revealing a tension between Émile’s sensory experience and Rémy’s detailed and creative verbal description. The latter displays jocularly, typical of this genre, in the use of a wordplay based on the creative nominalization *nuttiness*, where the base, the adjective *nutty*, is a polysemous word whose meanings of *tasting of nuts* and of *slightly crazy* or *strange* are both relevant.

The Italian dub below replaces the original noun phrase with a shorter one (as *salty* and *sweet* are missing) and with a slightly different wordplay, that is, [EMILE – Cremoso, un aroma di noci delirante. Lo percepisci?] [Creamy, with a deliriously nutty aroma. Can you sense it?] (My back-translation). The adjective *delirante* encompasses both meanings of *delusion* and *frenzy*, actually foregrounding the intense excitement of the experience in a playful way and effectively contributing to the multimodal tension of this scene in the film.

In the case below, food found in rubbish is struck by lightning and becomes something Rémy describes by means of a series of creative adjectives and onomatopoeic words qualifying, as premodifiers, the kind of flavours in question,

REMY (very excited, to Émile, after tasting a mushroom hit by lightning) – It's got this kind of burny, melty, it's not really a smoky taste, it's a certain, it's kind of like a (makes a sound effect), it's got a (sound effect) ba-boom, zap kind of taste [...] What would you call that flavour?

This is in sharp (and humorous) contrast with Émile's reply, consisting of a less imaginative neologism which does not hinge upon other sensory domains, but just links the flavour to the cause it derives from (lightning) by means of derivational suffixation (-y), that is, 'EMILE – Lightning-y?'

In the Italian dub, Rémy's description climaxes with a synaesthetic metaphor, that is, *una scossa di sapore* [a jolt of flavour], quite consistent with what has just happened, [REMY – Ha un non so che di affumicato, di fuso, non è esattamente fumé, ha un certo (suoni onomatopeici, phumpuhm) una scossa di sapore [...] Come lo definiresti?].<sup>49</sup> Émile's reply shows an analogous morphological process to that of the source text, [EMILE – Fulminoso?].<sup>50</sup>

Both in this and in the previous examples, that is, the little degree of re-elaboration of Émile's replies suggests his low commitment or ineptitude in detecting food properties, in opposition to the enthusiastic attempt of his talented brother. The translation choices commented on above manage to preserve the multimodal relations of such factors in the film, which are important for congruent characterization and to foster acceptability through playful entertainment.

The richness in signification and multifunctionality observed so far are not exclusive to children's fiction. In what follows, some cases from non-fiction are taken into account, namely, informative and instructional texts with facts about food, that is, where it comes from, how we digest it, what we should eat to be healthy and how to cook it. Obviously, the requirements of informativity in terms of novel and accurate information are very important in these texts, but they are also a form of info- or edutainment, as playfulness and entertainment appear to be unavoidable functions dictated by the requirements of acceptability. Special attention is given to titles (of sections and subsections), as they appear to pose several challenges for translation. In some cases, they may be quite compact noun phrases which, in the passage from

<sup>49</sup> [It has a certain something, smoky, melted, it's not exactly smoky, it has a kind of – onomatopoeic sounds, phumpuhm – a jolt of flavor [...] How would you describe it?] (My back-translation).

<sup>50</sup> [*Fulmine* – Lightning, -oso – y].

English into Italian, require disentangling and redistribution of information around the head nouns. Additionally, they are often jocular and entertaining.

The example below is taken from *Not-for-Parents Rome: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know* (Lamprell 2011), a Lonely Planet travel guidebook for pre-teens, which poses several translation challenges, including that of presenting information on food practices presumably already known to the target audience. The title, in particular, shows a playful quality through the orthographic representation of the phrase *a cup of that* as if pronounced by means of assimilation of some phonemes – in fast (possibly regional) speech, with *cup/cop* also referring cataphorically to one of the two types of containers for ice cream mentioned in the subsequent paragraph,

COPPA THAT – Gelato is an Italian style of ice cream and a place that sells gelato is called a *gelateria*. No matter what flavour you prefer, and whether you order it in *coppa* (cup) or in a *cono* (cone), there are simple things to know about buying gelato that can make you an instant specialist!

The translation that follows, by Macaluso (Lamprell 2012), proposes an idiosyncratic replacement (and additional details on the topic) to keep some informative value for the target audience. The jocularity of the title, however, is not retained, and a less engaging phrase is provided to introduce the origin of the food item for the target audience,

[A SCUOLA DI GELATO – Quando i romani conquistarono la Grecia, non conobbero solo le opere d'arte e il pensiero raffinato, ma anche il gelato! A Roma questo dessert piacque così tanto che si cominciò a raccogliere la neve dalle montagne e a venderla in città sia ai cuochi che preparavano i banchetti dei ricchi, sia alle taverne lungo le strade. Il primo gelataio della storia è invece il siciliano Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli, che nel '600 serviva i suoi gelati al re di Francia e ai suoi sudditi.]<sup>51</sup>

The next case comes from *The Official Harry Potter Baking Book* (Farrow 2021), for middle-grade readers, where recipe titles, and instructions on how to make the dishes, often include the names of characters or of typical tools or objects from the popular saga by Rowling, also occasionally tied together by alliterative effects.

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<sup>51</sup> [AT ICE CREAM SCHOOL When the Romans conquered Greece, they not only became familiar with works of art and refined thought, but also with ice cream! This dessert was so popular in Rome that people started collecting snow from the mountains and selling it in the city, both to cooks who prepared banquets for the wealthy and to taverns along the roads. The first ice cream maker in history, however, was the Sicilian Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli, who in the seventeenth century served his ice cream to the King of France and his subjects.] (My back-translation).

Their translation is heavily constrained by such intertextual allusions, at the expense of alliteration. A case in point is the name of the dish of *Halloumi Howlers*, translated by Decio as *Strillettere all'Halloumi* [from *strill-are* – to howl – and *lettere* – letters], which shows that not only does the intertextual reference to the official Italian counterpart of the saga magical tools take precedence over the semantic meaning of *howler* [urlatore], but it also outranks the jocular alliterative effect of the original, inevitably lost in the target version. Admittedly, the blend word in the official Italian rendering is creative and jocular in itself, and it is also more transparent regarding the inherent function of this tool in conveying messages (for the benefit of those less familiar with the saga – although photos and additional informative boxes help to frame the recipe and its ingredients).

A few more examples of recipe titles are reported below, whose translations reveal the prioritization of intertextual references, along with some loss of playfulness at the sound level: 'Salazar Slytherin's Sourdough Snake', translated as [Pane Basilisco di Salazar Serpeverde] [Basilisk Bread of Salazar Slytherin] (my back-translation); 'Honeydukes Haul Cake', which becomes [Dolci di Mielandia] [Sweets or cakes from Honeyland] and 'Fluttery Flying Key Cookies', that is, [Biscotti Chiavi Volanti] [Flying Keys Biscuits].

The following case is part of a guide on healthy eating for junior readers, *The Children's Book of Healthy Eating* (Stimpson 2016). The guide proposes different double spreads contrasting bad and good eating habits, or nutrition problems and solutions. The following segment suggests good habits at breakfast,

Good Start to the Day – Liam goes to bed early and sets his alarm for the morning so that he has time for breakfast. He has eggs on toast and a glass of orange juice. This gives him plenty of energy to play and for his lessons.

Translating *eggs on toast* in a literal way would be hardly appealing to Italian target readers of five to seven or eight years of age, hence the need for a replacement with something more suitable for them, like *una fetta di torta e un bicchiere di latte* [a slice of cake and a glass of milk].<sup>52</sup>

The two examples that follow come from an information text, addressed once again to middle-grade readers, focusing on historical and scientific data on everyday food, *The World in Your Lunchbox: The Wacky History and Weird Science of Everyday Foods* (Eamer 2012). The first example tackles the topic of bread and features a humorous title through idiomatic wordplay. The paragraph provides

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<sup>52</sup> The translations in question (and those that follow) are some of the solutions discussed with students of the Master's course in translation.

the etymology of some English words to explain the importance of bread over time, along with the origin of the idiom,

SHOW ME the DOUGH! – Bread has really worked its way into our language. “Bread” and “dough” are both slang for money. The word “companion” comes from *compagno*, Latin from “one who shared the bread”. “Lord” and “lady” come from Anglo-Saxon words that meant “loaf guardian” and “loaf kneader”. Bread has clearly been a big deal for a long time.

Both the play on words and the metalinguistic references require adjustments for a translation into Italian, to maintain a balance between playfulness and informativity.

Here is an attempt showing the replacement of the idiomatic wordplay of the title with a different one, together with some additions of Italian idiomatic forms that resonate better (i.e. are more familiar, entertaining and informative) with the audience of the target culture,

[FUORI LA GRANA! – Il pane si è fatto prepotentemente largo nella nostra lingua: “grana” e “pagnotta” sono altre parole per dire soldi. La parola “compagno” viene dal latino *compagno* (persona con cui si divide il pane). Di chi è molto mite o ingenuo si dice che è “buono come il pane” e quando si vuol tenere testa a qualcuno “gli si rende pan per focaccia”. Il pane è da sempre una faccenda molto seria.]<sup>53</sup>

*Grana* is the plural form of Latin *granum*, grain (of wheat), also an ancient Neapolitan and Sicilian coin and used to refer to money (colloquial). *Pagnotta* is a round loaf of bread, typically of modest size, also used figuratively (and colloquially) to refer to salary/wage.

The second case from this information book, and the last in the selection, is one of several brief jokes occasionally provided under the alliterative title of *Lunch Laughs*, that is, ‘LUNCH LAUGHS – Q: How do you fix a broken tomato? A: With tomato paste, of course!’. The joke rests on wordplay based on the two meanings of *paste* as *glue* and *sauce*.

The following is a translation attempt that replaces both the original alliterative title and joke with new puns, to preserve playfulness and entertainment, [CHICCHE DI RISO – Q: Come si ripara un pomodoro rotto? A: Con del collante

<sup>53</sup> [Money has made its way into our language. Words like “grana” and *pagnotta* are other ways of saying money. The word *compagno* (companion) comes from the Latin *compagno* (a person with whom you share bread). Someone who is very gentle or naive is said to be *buono come il pane* (as good as bread), and when you stand up to someone, you *rendi pan per focaccia* (give bread for focaccia — an idiom for giving someone a taste of their own medicine). Bread has always been a very serious matter.] (My back-translation).

*concentrato!*]<sup>54</sup> The replaced title is rich in expressive potential, composed of *chicche*, meaning *treats* and also being in a relation of paronymy with *chicchi* [grains], while *riso* may mean *rice* or *laughter*. The new pun for the joke is based on the polysemy of *concentrato* as referring to the *density of glue* [concentrated glue or adhesive] – which is the reading that is actually foregrounded, and to tomato *concentrate* (a substance that is made stronger because water has been removed, typical of the culinary domain), especially hinted at by the use of the italic style. In fact, more creative substitutions are not possible due to the visual constraint of an accompanying drawing in which a boy squeezes what looks like either a tube of glue or of tomato sauce over a cracked tomato.

Overall, the survey of examples has revealed a diversified interplay of constraints, which makes it difficult to draw generalizations and emphasizes the need to contextualize the various instances of use. This also increases the likelihood that, for the time being at least, this type of translation will remain more resistant than others to AI predictive systems on statistical grounds.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

This study has highlighted the features and functioning of a broad conception of food-related language in children's literature, comprising names of dishes, their description, the linguistic description and semiotic representation of their taste, and has shown different instantiations of the expressive potential of food not only in fiction but also in some non-fiction genres. Sometimes food is the main topic, or takes full scene, and constitutes the main object of interest. Or it may have a more marginal role, yet supporting other threads of signification and effects. For example, the qualitative analysis has shown that it may contribute to characters' identity construction, to evocative descriptions supporting understanding and appealing to senses and emotions, to playful passages (in titles of sections, explanations and jokes) that attract and entertain or to all or many of the preceding functions together, and by means of different linguistic and other semiotic resources. This expressive versatility is then further transformed through interlingual recontextualization.

The corpus for the analysis was intentionally hybrid on several dimensions, to underline both expressive potential and translation consequences across genres, while the data sample focused on showed that translators went to great lengths to do justice to food-related language. Despite the idiosyncratic quality of the

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<sup>54</sup> [TREATS OF LAUGHTER – Q: How do you repair a broken tomato? A: With some *concentrated* glue!] (My back-translation).

examples and the associated difficulty of generalizing, the proposed framework enabled a better understanding of the original texts and of their translations, as it shed light on the intricate relationships among linguistic and iconographic resources, food functions and textual requirements as translation constraints. The qualitative analysis underscored the need to prioritize different aspects depending on context, especially jocularity to promote acceptability for the young target audiences involved. In fact, the different interlinguistic remodulations often led to surprising culinary reinterpretations of the original food items, that is, “extreme” translations requiring accurate preparation, courage and creativity (Nasi 2015). Non-fiction appeared to be more dependent on the informative function of its factual content, but it was not immune to playfulness, and to this transformative effect of translation, to bring the source text items closer to young target audiences’ understanding and perception. Special attention also needs to be paid to the role of possible accompanying images (or other semiotic modes), quite frequent, especially in edutainment genres.

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# Conclusions

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The chapters included in this volume have explored food-related communication for children across a wide range of its applications. The volume has indeed intentionally adopted a multifaceted approach to capture the complexity and dynamic nature of this field. To do so, the chapters in the collection have delved into various areas, including the semiotics of advertising, the complexities of translation, the rigorous use of corpus linguistics and the cultural pedagogy found in children’s literature. By bringing these contributions together, we have seen a rich and detailed picture of how language, in its broadest sense, influences and creates the world of food for young people and their families.

Each author has approached the topic of food-related communication for children from a unique disciplinary and methodological standpoint. The richness of this collection lies in fact in its multiplicity of voices and perspectives, which, when taken together, offer a comprehensive and deeply insightful exploration of the subject. For instance, Chapter 1 has provided a compelling opening to the volume by unmasking the subtle yet pervasive ways in which food advertising constructs and reinforces social hierarchies. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of indexicality and enregisterment, Di Martino has demonstrated that food brands are not merely selling sustenance; they are selling social status, parenting ideologies and class-inflected identities. Through a meticulous multi-modal analysis of “premium” and “budget” food brands, her study has revealed the stark contrasts in the semiotic strategies employed to target different segments of the market. The “aspirational class”, as Di Martino herself terms it, is targeted by advertisements that emphasize naturalness, simplicity and a foodie aesthetic, often embodied by the figure of the “yoga mom”. In contrast, budget brands often utilize a more direct and functional approach, with busy layouts and a focus on convenience and affordability. Chapter 1 is a reminder that the choices parents make in the supermarket aisle are not simply about nutrition but are also deeply entangled with broader societal narratives about class, taste and even morality.

Chapter 2 has investigated the use of the so-called “fold and swap” strategies in baby food advertisements to influence consumer perception. This approach has involved modifying a product’s established “script” or setting. Giordano has

clearly described a swap, which entails altering the context, such as depicting baby food in a garden rather than a kitchen, while fold introduces an unexpected element, such as a doctor, to suggest an alternative function for the product. The research conducted in Chapter 2 has analyzed Instagram advertisements from five prominent US baby food brands between 2020 and 2024. Giordano's findings have indicated that swaps occur more frequently than folds. The study has also identified four key domains where these strategies are employed to reframe the product's image, namely, as a celebratory item, in which advertisements embed baby food in holiday contexts (e.g. Christmas or Halloween, presenting it as a treat or gift), as a pharmaceutical product, in which the use of folds, such as doctors, medical terminology or medical equipment imagery implies that the food serves as a health treatment. As a learning tool or game, when swaps are used to place the product in school or game settings, framing it as a component of educational or recreational activities, while in baby food as a premium or exclusive product folds, including tuxedo-shaped bibs or champagne flutes, are utilized to suggest that the product is luxurious or of superior quality. The study has concluded that these strategies are widely utilized and effective in expanding consumer perception and fostering new market opportunities.

Chapter 3 by Stefania M. Maci has offered us a compelling example of how language can be used to cultivate intercultural curiosity and positive associations with food and travel. Through a sophisticated blend of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, Maci has revealed the multifaceted linguistic strategies at play in the text, from playful wordplay and alliteration to the use of sensory language and direct address. She has persuasively argued that the book functions as a form of "armchair tourism", allowing young readers to explore the world through the enticing lens of food. Maci's analysis has also highlighted the potential of children's travel texts to broaden horizons and foster a sense of global citizenship. However, she also maintains a critical perspective, acknowledging the ways in which such texts can subtly promote consumption behaviours and a particular, often romanticized, view of other cultures.

Daniela Cesiri's contribution has shifted our focus from the visual rhetoric of advertising and tourism texts to the linguistic intricacies of online communication by major food corporations. This chapter makes a significant methodological contribution to the field by showcasing the power of corpus linguistics to reveal subtle patterns in language use that might otherwise go unnoticed. By analysing the digital texts of infant and baby food brands such as Nestlé, Danone and Abbott, Cesiri uncovers a fascinating hybrid discourse that blends promotional language with the dissemination of specialized scientific knowledge. These companies, Cesiri argues, strategically position themselves as authoritative sources of

information on child nutrition, thereby building trust with parents and subtly promoting their products. Cesiri's research highlights a key challenge for parents in the digital age: how to navigate the vast and often overwhelming sea of online information about children's health and nutrition, particularly when this kind of information is produced by commercial entities with an entrusted interest in selling their products. This study underscores the urgent need for critical digital literacy skills, not only for children but also for the adults who care for them. The FoRCCE Corpus, as presented in this chapter, emerges as an invaluable resource for future research in this area, offering a rich dataset for further linguistic and critical analysis.

On a similar note, Chapter 5 has provided a crucial methodological anchor for the volume in that it offers a detailed account of the process of compiling the manual corpus of online discourse about children's nutrition, namely, the same FoRCCE Corpus at the basis of Daniela Cesiri's Chapter. Reggi thoroughly discusses the theoretical and practical challenges involved in the project, from defining the scope of the corpus and selecting appropriate sources to navigating the ethical complexities of working with online data. In this regard, Reggi not only shares the work behind the compilation of a particular corpus but also provides a roadmap for other scholars who are embarking on similar projects while making a compelling case for the continued importance of manual corpus compilation in an age of big data and automated analysis.

The volume is concluded in Chapter 6 by Silvia Masi. Her specific case study has focused on the English-to-Italian language pair when dealing with the translation of food-related language in children's literature. Food, as Masi eloquently argues in her chapter, is not merely a collection of ingredients but a powerful symbol of cultural specificity, imbued with a rich combination of connotations and associations. The translator, therefore, must be not only a linguistic expert but also a cultural mediator, navigating the delicate balance between fidelity to the source text and accessibility for the target audience. Through a series of carefully chosen examples from both fiction and non-fiction, Masi illustrates the creative and often ingenious solutions that translators employ to bridge the cultural and linguistic divide. Her work highlights the transformative power of translation, demonstrating how a skilled translator can not only make a text understandable to a new audience but also enrich it with new layers of meaning. Chapter 6 is a vital contribution to the field of translation studies, and it also serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in all forms of cross-cultural communication.

Taken together, these six chapters offer a rich and multifaceted exploration of food-related communication for children. They demonstrate the power of a

multidisciplinary approach, offering insights from sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, translation studies and digital humanities. While each chapter stands on its own as a significant contribution to its corresponding field and methodological approach, the true strength of this volume lies in the dialogue that emerges between them. They are united by a shared commitment to understanding the complex and often subtle ways in which language shapes our relationship with food, and they all, in their own way, point to the urgent need for a more critical and informed approach to the production and consumption of food-related media for children in order to better understand the complex and often questioned world of childhood itself, especially in the contemporary world full of challenges and changes posed by society and social media.

Its many achievements notwithstanding, this volume shows some limitations, mostly constituted by studies that investigate materials in English with only some contrastive analysis in Italian to broaden the perspective. In addition, while some studies offer an invaluable contribution to the state of the art, they can be framed against relatively under-researched topics, therefore offering originality and innovation on the one hand, and scarcity of data to be contrasted with on the other. For this reason, this volume as a collective endeavour makes a considerable contribution to the advancement of the state of the art in the field of food-related communication for children. It does so in a number of key ways. First and foremost, the volume champions a multidisciplinary approach. The individual chapters draw on a wide range of theoretical and methodological frameworks, from sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics to critical discourse analysis, translation studies and digital humanities. This disciplinary diversity is one of the volume's greatest strengths, as it allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of food-related communication in more general terms. The dialogue that emerges between these different perspectives is particularly fruitful, as it highlights the points of intersection and divergence between different disciplinary approaches, and it points to new and exciting avenues for future research.

The volume constitutes an example of the crucial importance of a critical and informed approach to the analysis of food-related media for children. As demonstrated by the chapters, food-related communication is not a neutral or transparent process but a highly ideological one, shaped by means of power relations and commercial interests. In this respect, as outlined in the course of the volume, one of the most pressing areas for future research is the impact of new media and digital technologies on food-related communication for children. The digital landscape is constantly evolving, and new platforms and technologies are constantly emerging. We need more research on how children are using these new



technologies to communicate about food, and we also need to better understand the ways in which food-related media are being produced and consumed in these new digital environments.

Another important area for future research is the role of food communication in educational settings. Schools are key sites for the socialization of children into food cultures, and yet we know surprisingly little about the ways in which food is communicated in these environments, such as the classroom. We need more research on the language of school lunch menus, the content of nutrition education programmes and the role of teachers and other school staff in shaping children's attitudes towards food. We also need to better understand how food-related communication in schools can be used to promote healthy eating habits and to foster a more positive and inclusive food culture.

Finally, there is a need for more longitudinal research on the long-term effects of food-related communication on children. Most of the research in this field has been cross-sectional, and as a result, we know very little about how children's exposure to food-related media at a young age affects their attitudes and behaviours later in life. Therefore, we need more longitudinal studies that track children over time, from childhood into adolescence and adulthood. Naturally, this kind of research is challenging and expensive to conduct, but it is essential if we are to gain a more thorough understanding of the long-term impact of food-related communication on our children's health and well-being.



# Notes on Contributors

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# Linguistic Insights

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