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Articles (general section) - English language and linguistics

Positioning the Self in Blog Posts

A Corpus-based Investigation of Food Blogs in English

Daniela Cesiri

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Keywords: food discourse, food blogs, positioning theory, self-positioning, pronouns

Abstract

Positioning Theory (PT) first emerged in the 1980s in psychology studies to investigate how people occupy and negotiate their place—both physical and social—while interacting with other people. Research in this area has also considered the linguistic and discursive practices that position interlocutors in any form of communication and interaction, affecting in turn the reciprocal perception of ‘the other.’ This mutual positioning eventually shapes—and is shaped—by discourse in any kind of communicative context. Positioning, then, becomes crucial in digital communication, in which boundaries and perceptions of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ are in a way distorted by the absence of a physical space that is replaced by a virtual environment. Considering these premises, this study investigates self-positioning strategies in a corpus of food blogs in English. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which the food bloggers employ pronouns to position themselves in the blog posts in order to establish a rapport with their audience, thus creating a peculiar communicative space. Corpus-based methods of investigation are used to explore the corpus, while PT is used to contextualize and interpret corpus data. Results show that the food bloggers in the corpus use pronouns as indexicals that refer to the bloggers’ specific position in the communicative environment to remark their ‘otherness’ with respect to their audience as well as towards specific socio-cultural contexts. In particular, the food bloggers systematically distance themselves both from the community of users following the food blog and from external elements such as brands, institutions, and other cultures’ culinary traditions.

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Daniela Cesiri

Positioning the Self in Blog Posts

A Corpus-based Investigation of Food Blogs in English

Abstract

Positioning Theory (PT) first emerged in the 1980s in psychology studies to investigate how people occupy and negotiate their place—both physical and social—while interacting with other people. Research in this area has also considered the linguistic and discursive practices that position interlocutors in any form of communication and interaction, affecting in turn the reciprocal perception of ‘the other.’ This mutual positioning eventually shapes—and is shaped—by discourse in any kind of communicative context. Positioning, then, becomes crucial in digital communication, in which boundaries and perceptions of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ are in a way distorted by the absence of a physical space that is replaced by a virtual environment. Considering these premises, this study investigates self-positioning strategies in a corpus of food blogs in English. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which the food bloggers employ pronouns to position themselves in the blog posts in order to establish a rapport with their audience, thus creating a peculiar communicative space. Corpus-based methods of investigation are used to explore the corpus, while PT is used to contextualize and interpret corpus data. Results show that the food bloggers in the corpus use pronouns as indexicals that refer to the bloggers’ specific position in the communicative environment to remark their ‘otherness’ with respect to their audience as well as towards specific socio-cultural contexts. In particular, the food bloggers systematically distance themselves both from the community of users following the food blog and from external elements such as brands, institutions, and other cultures’ culinary traditions.

Keywords: *food discourse, food blogs, positioning theory, self-positioning, pronouns*

1. Introduction

Positioning Theory (henceforth, PT) first emerged in the 1980s in psychology studies to investigate how people establish and manage their place within a physical and social space in which they interact with other people (Slocum and Van Langenhove 2003). Research in this area has later included the linguistic and discursive practices that position writers and speakers in any form of communication and interaction (Tirado and Gálvez 2007). According to PT, in

fact, the way in which we construct our position in a certain physical and social space determines our ‘self’ as writer or speaker; it also influences how readers and listeners react and, eventually, (re)position themselves. Vice versa, the way in which our interlocutors position themselves affects our own perception of ‘the other’ (Beeching, Ghezzi and Molinelli 2018). This mutual positioning shapes the actual communication and the lexico-grammar of discourse in any kind of communicative context. Positioning thus becomes even more crucial in digital communication, in which boundaries and perceptions of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ are ‘distorted’ by the absence of a physical space that is replaced by a virtual environment (Jones, Chik and Hafner 2015).

The present study investigates strategies of self-positioning in blog posts contained in a corpus of 36 food blogs in English. The blog posts—namely, blog entries containing an introductory text and the recipe—are examined using, first, corpus-based methods of investigation, and then PT to investigate the ways in which the food bloggers position themselves with respect to their audience in the virtual/digital social environment constituted by the food blog.

The main research question on how food bloggers position themselves in a specific social environment is indeed addressed by considering food blogs as virtual communities, in which the food blogger is the leader of the digital, virtual space while users are the members of that community. The corresponding roles of leader and members are constantly reinforced through the regular participation to the ‘life’ of the food blog which happens in the Comments Section in which food blogger and users interact asynchronously (see Cesiri 2020).

The study focuses in particular on the ways in which self-positioning strategies—investigated through the food bloggers’ use of pronouns—are employed to establish a rapport with the audience, thus creating a peculiar communicative space in a genre, the culinary recipe, that is rarely used with interactive purposes and is generally believed to have achieved static structure and features (e.g., Norrick 2011; Görlach 2004; Cotter 1997).

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical background that is used to analyze corpus data; Section 3 describes the corpus, its composition, and methods of investigation; Section 4 contains the quantitative analysis, namely, the stylistic analysis of the corpus along with the distribution of pronouns. Section 5 and Section 6 present the qualitative discussion of the results from corpus search, using PT to account for patterns in pronoun use. Finally, Section 7 provides some conclusive remarks and suggestions for future research on the topic.

2. Positioning Theory (PT)

PT has been defined as “the study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting” (Harré and Van Langenhove 1999, 1). Therefore, ‘positioning’ refers to how people occupy and negotiate their place—both physical and social—while interacting with other people. In this framework, society is seen as a dimension moving across a time-space grid, in which the speech acts that shape communication are “composed of [...] all forms of discursive practices” (Harré and Van Langenhove 1999, 15).

Another tenet in PT is its focus on communal action, whereby individuals are seen as selves whose contribution to the action is explained in terms of the “organization of knowledge into those complex bodies, and on reflexivity, whereby knowledge about self-in-the-world is organized into dimensions of self/other distinctions which determine how self is understood” (Jones 1997, 459). PT was indeed purposefully “developed as an analytic lens and explanatory theory to show how learning, and development of identity, evolves through discourse” (Green et al. 2020, 119).

Analyzing positioning in a communicative situation entails paying attention to “iterativity” (Giaxoglou and Georgakopoulou 2021, 9), namely, investigating patterns in the recurrent use of specific language and/or narrative choices (Giaxoglou and Georgakopoulou 2021), which Wortham (2000) and Georgakopoulou (2013) call ‘positioning cues.’ More specifically, according to Giaxoglou and Georgakopoulou (2021, 9),

the reiteration of cues in social interactions and their association with recognizable social positions explains how such forms accumulate social meanings and become indexes. In this respect, positioning cues are also types of entextualization markers, i.e., linguistic cues that point to the local context but also to invoked contexts, past and future, that can reveal processes of narrative and identity sedimentation. (Giaxoglou 2019)

Wortham (2000), moreover, identifies five main types of cues. The one that directly concerns the present study is the so-called ‘reference cue,’ which is realized through specific choices in terms of personal pronouns. If one considers that discursive acts are the manifest symbols of underlying positioning actions, pronouns are the cues that more explicitly denote the way in which speakers position themselves with respect to the surrounding physical and social world. This idea encompasses the concept of self-positioning, which “is concerned not only about the positions people wish to present to the outside world, but also about those that they take towards themselves” (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010, 178). Therefore, a speaker can position

him/herself and can establish, reveal, and confirm his/her identity through a series of linguistic devices such as, precisely, pronouns. According to Bramley (2001, v), in fact,

pronouns play a key role in the construction of ‘self’ and ‘other.’ They are not merely a way of expressing person, number and gender as is suggested by traditional grammarians, nor do they only do referential and deictic work. Rather, they must be thought of in the context of interaction and in terms of the ‘identity work’ that they accomplish. (Timmis 2015, 111-112)

Pronouns, then, not only reflect the speaker’s attitude with respect to reality and other interlocutors, but they also indicate how the speaker presents and positions his/her own self as contrasted to the self of other speakers. For instance, Harré and Gillet (1994) maintain that the analysis of speakers’ use of pronouns could reveal how people “create their moral individuality in relation to those they are addressing” (Martins Felix 2023, 3).

This specific view of self-positioning strategies through the use of pronouns could be applied to any instance of communicative event, either in face-to-face situations or online. Therefore, the present study investigates the use of pronouns as discursive devices used by a group of food bloggers to position themselves with respect to their interlocutors, the blog users. Particular attention is paid to the investigation of how pronouns are employed in the corpus to build a dialogic narration between the self of the blogger and the self of the users.

3. Data and method of selection: the Food Blog Corpus (FBC)

The food blogs that are included in the corpus were chosen on the basis of both their ‘popularity’ on the Web and the food bloggers’ posting activity. The food blogs were selected by consulting Vuelio, a media database, which monitors analytics and produces rankings based on “social sharing, topic-related content and post frequency” (Hodges 2015, 1). The rankings consulted range between the first complete ranking of 2015 until the latest one, updated in 2021.

Food Blogs	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019-2021
1. The Curry Guy (TCG) https://greatcurryrecipes.net/	✓	✓			✓
2. Lavender & Lovage (LL) https://www.lavenderandlovage.com/	✓	✓			✓
3. The Pink Whisk (TPW) http://www.thepinkwhisk.co.uk	✓				
4. Tinned Tomatoes (TT) https://www.tinnedtomatoes.com/	✓	✓			
5. Dom in the Kitchen (DK, former Belleau Kitchen) https://www.dominthekitchen.com/	✓	✓			

6.	The Petite Cook (TPC) https://www.thepetitecook.com/	✓		
7.	Eats Amazing (EA) https://www.eatsamazing.co.uk/	✓		✓
8.	Easy Cheesy Vegetarian (formerly Amuse Your Bouche) (ECV) https://www.easycheesyvegetarian.com/	✓	✓	✓
9.	A Life of Geekery (ALOG) http://www.alifeofgeekery.co.uk/	✓		
10.	Ms Marmite Lover (MML) https://msmarmitelover.com/	✓		
11.	Deliciously Ella (DE) https://deliciouslyella.com/		✓	✓
12.	A Girl Called Jack (AGCJ) https://cookingonabootstrap.com/		✓	
13.	The Crazy Kitchen (TCK) https://www.thecrazykitchen.co.uk/		✓	
14.	Baking Queen74 (BQ74) https://bakingqueen74.co.uk/			✓
15.	The Baking Explorer (TBE) http://thebakingexplorer.com/			✓
16.	The Little Blog of Vegan (TLBOV) http://www.thelittleblogofvegan.com/			✓
17.	The Little Loaf (TLL) http://www.thelittleloaf.com/			✓
18.	Baking a Mess (BAM) https://www.bakingamess.co.uk/			✓
19.	Phil's Home Kitchen (formerly Baking Fanatic) (BF) https://bakingfanatic.wordpress.com/			✓
20.	Kerry Cooks (KC) https://kerrycooks.com/			✓
21.	Baking Forever (BF) https://www.bakingforever.co.uk/			✓
22.	Baking with Granny (BWG) https://bakingwithgranny.co.uk/			✓
23.	Elizabeth's Kitchen Diary (EKD) https://www.elizabethskitchendiary.co.uk/			✓
24.	Hungry Healthy Happy (HHH) https://www.hungryhealthyhappy.com/			✓
25.	A Mummy Too (AMT) https://www.amummytoo.co.uk/			✓
26.	My Fussy Eater (MFE) https://www.myfussyeater.com/			✓
27.	Pinch of Nom (PON) http://pinchofnom.com/			✓
28.	Fab Food 4 All (FF4A) https://www.fabfood4all.co.uk/			✓
29.	Veggie Desserts (VG) https://veggiedesserts.co.uk/			✓
30.	Recipes from a Pantry (RFP) https://recipesfromapantry.com/			✓
31.	Jane's Patisserie (JP) https://www.janespatisserie.com/			✓

32.	Becky Excell (BE) https://glutenfreecuppatea.co.uk/	✓
33.	Kitchen Sanctuary (KS) https://www.kitchensanctuary.com/	✓
34.	Fuss Free Flavours (FFF) https://fussfreeflavours.com/	✓
35.	Sandhya's Kitchen (SK) https://sandhyahariparan.co.uk/	✓
36.	Don't Go Bacon My Heart (DGBMH) https://www.dontgobaconmyheart.co.uk/	✓

Tab. 1: Chronological distribution of food blogs in the corpus

As Table 1 illustrates, some food blogs were consecutively present in the rankings in more than one year, others appear in the ranking only once. The resulting total number of food blogs considered for this study is thus 36. The bloggers were selected only in terms of their Vuelio ranking, hence regardless of their gender or age group. Since Vuelio is a UK-based database, it offers rankings based on British data. Therefore, all the food blogs are UK-based and the food bloggers are all native to Britain with three notable exceptions: TCG, who was born in California but has lived in the UK since 1993, TPC who is Italian but has lived in London since the early 2000s and runs a blog of Italian recipes written in English for an exclusively Anglophone audience, and finally, SK, who is of Indian origin but in her blog she describes herself as a “food photographer based in Sussex” and—similarly to TPC—she writes her blog of Indian recipes for an exclusively Anglophone audience.

The corpus is composed of the blog posts which are in turn composed of an introductory text and a recipe. The food bloggers use the introductory parts to provide several kinds of information, which might include the nutritional value of the dish or of some specific ingredient. The food bloggers might narrate the peculiar history and origin of the recipe, or they might use the section to recall some personal memory or event directly connected to the preparation or consumption of the dish. Then, the recipe is presented with the traditional structure of title, list of ingredients, and steps in the preparation. After the recipe, some additional notes might be included, providing information on food storage, variation of ingredients or of serving modalities. These three components (introduction, recipe, notes) were considered as part of the blog posts and were included in the corpus.

Ten blog posts were selected for each food blog. To avoid a biased selection based on a subjective, albeit involuntary, preference for the recipes to be investigated, the first blog posts were selected from each section used by the food bloggers to categorize their posts (e.g., ‘Main Course,’ ‘Appetizers,’ ‘Desserts,’ etc.). The result is a corpus of 360 blog posts. When the post appeared in more than one category, the second post appearing in the section was selected. The corpus

thus collected was named ‘Food Blog Corpus’ and will henceforth be referred to with the abbreviation FBC.

4. Distribution of pronouns in the FBC

4.1 Corpus quantitative analysis

The software for corpus analysis *WordSmith Tool 8* (Scott 2020) was used to extract quantitative data and concordances from the FBC. The statistic composition of the corpus is illustrated in Table 2.

	FBC (2019-2023)
Tokens	438,700
Types	10,812
Type/Token Ratio	2.55
STTR	62.40
Avg. word length (letters)/sentences	2.30/23,993
Average sentence length	17.66

Tab. 2: Quantitative data from the FBC

Table 2 shows that in the FBC the Standardized Type-Token Ratio (STTR)—which generally measures lexical richness (Fitzpatrick 2007)—indicates that the corpus under investigation is lexically dense. This, in turn, indicates that the FBC shows repetitive language that could be attributed to its domain-specific nature and to the recipe genre it contains, which points to a repetitive structure and lexicon both in traditional and digital media (Garzone 2017). Mean word length value also reveals some preference for short words and short sentences, indicating that sentences in the FBC are less complex than what would be expected in a blog post, which contains narrations of elaborate contents. For instance, according to guidelines by the British Government for the publication of digital contents on the ideal sentence length in digital texts, the expected length would indeed be 25 words.¹ Quoting Diemer and Frobenius (2013, 57), we might argue that “usually the combination of high TTR, high word and high sentence length

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/content-and-publishing-guidance-for-government>. Last visited 29/05/2024.

indicates specialized or possibly even restricted content and elaborate style.” It is clear, then, that the FBC might be described as relatively lexically poor, with a lack of textual complexity typical of procedural/instructional texts as culinary recipes are generally considered, even though they have also been considered a composite genre that encompasses characteristics of instructional and narrative genres (Graziano and Mocini 2015). The preference for short sentences and short words might be explained by the nature of the genre itself: recipes entail a direct, procedural style to ensure the rapid execution of the steps in the preparation of the food (Marchitello and Tribble 2017; Peikola, Skaffari and Tanskanen 2009). The food bloggers might have extended this preference to the introductory text that becomes integral part of the ‘digital recipe’ genre, namely a sub-genre of recipes published in digital food-oriented genres such as food blogs (Cesiri 2020).

4.2 Pronouns in the FBC

As regards the distribution of pronouns, the corpus search was conducted using the Concordancing Tool in *WordSmith Tools*. This allowed the extraction of pronouns for the purpose of both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The search was conducted on the pronouns indicated in the list below, while the distribution of the pronouns in the FBC is illustrated in Figure 1:

- subject pronouns: I, you (sing./plur.), he/she/it, we, they,
- object pronouns: me, you (sing./plur.), him/her/it, us, them,
- possessive pronouns in adjectival use: my, your (sing./plur.), his/her/its, our, their,
- possessive pronouns: mine, yours (sing./plur.), his/hers, ours, theirs,
- reflexive pronouns: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.

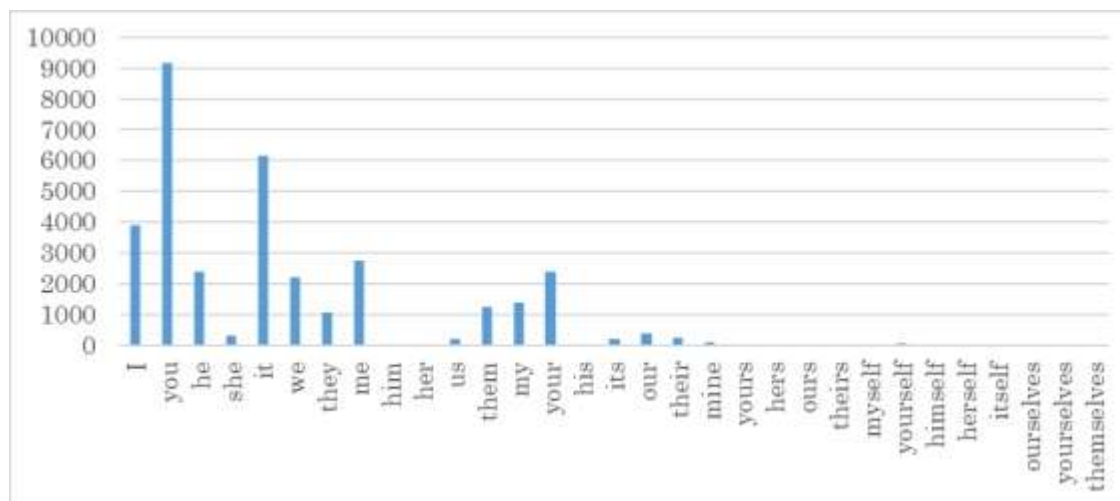


Fig. 1: Distribution of pronouns in the FBC

Figure 1 shows the prevalence of pronouns oriented towards the first-person singular, namely the food bloggers' self, and the second-person singular and plural addressing the audience reading the post. We can also observe the consistent use of third-person pronouns, which can be explained by reference to objects, tools, food ('it/its') that are naturally at the core of the narration both in the introductory text and in the recipe itself. As regards pronouns in the 'he/she' category, these could refer to persons mentioned in the introductory text of the blog posts. Food bloggers often refer to personal events that surround the recipe, and which are used to provide a more personal background but also a specific 'target' for the recipe itself, for instance in case of children or family members/friends with some food intolerance or allergies (see Cesiri 2020; 2017; 2016). The preference of food bloggers for specific pronouns can also be visualized in Figure 2, which summarizes data from the most frequently used pronouns in Figure 1.

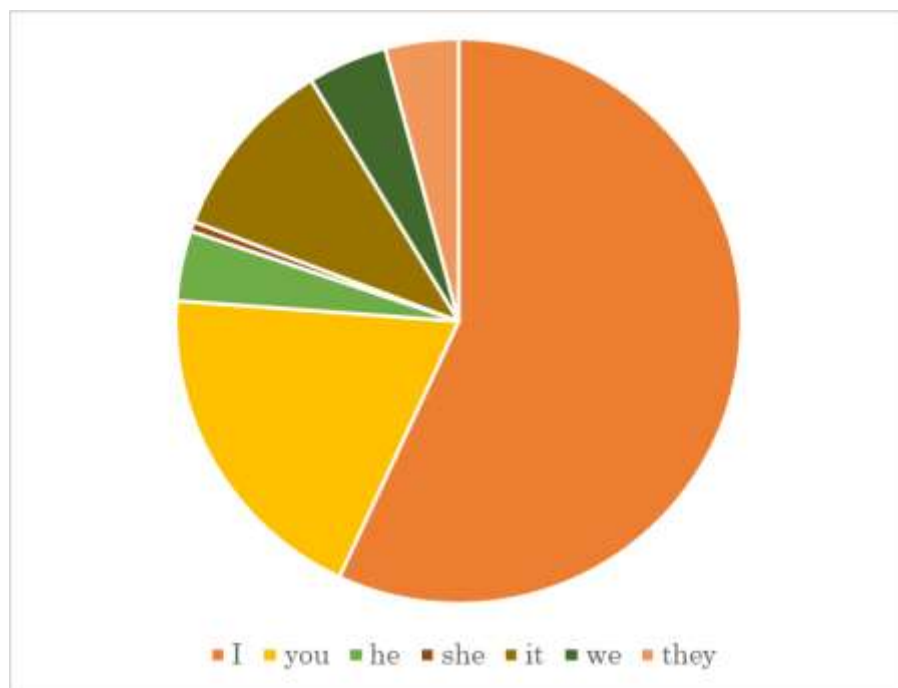


Fig. 2: Distribution of pronouns in the FBC divided *per* person of reference

Figure 2 illustrates the clear predominance of the first-person pronouns, while the second-person pronouns rank second followed by third-person pronouns referring to inanimate subjects/objects. The remaining pronouns are distributed with a much smaller occurrence. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that food bloggers tend to write self-oriented blog posts, while less prominence is given to audience-oriented narration positioned as ‘other’ with respect to the ‘self’ of the food blogger. This pattern is to a certain extent confirmed by results from previous studies (Cesiri 2020, 2017, 2016), which demonstrated how food bloggers construct their blog as a space for reciprocal interaction, in which the blogger and the audience have equal roles. Food bloggers only apparently present themselves as friendly food lovers who seek to share their recipes with other food lovers. However, corpus-based and discourse analysis of the blog posts and comments revealed indeed how the food bloggers actually act as leaders and authoritative experts of their virtual community, constantly remarking their distance from their public by showcasing a certain degree of expertise in cooking techniques and knowledge about food and nutrition.

5. Self-positioning in the FBC

Quantitative data presented in the previous Section are confirmed and contextualized by the qualitative analysis. This focuses on the most recurrent pronouns, namely, first-person and second-person pronouns, which clearly show how the food bloggers position their ‘self’ with respect to their audience’s ‘other.’

As already noticed in the quantitative analysis the food bloggers use pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’ to create a certain separation between their expert ‘self’ and the readers’ non-expert ‘selves,’ thus reiterating the role already established in the food blogs (Cesiri 2020, 2017, 2016). The role is that of the expert leader of the virtual community in which the users are the non-expert members instructed by the said leader. The extent of this distance is particularly visible in Examples 1 to 3 taken from different food bloggers and blog posts, and reported in the order they appear in the concordance list generated by *WordSmith Tools* (bold type added for emphasis).

- (1) **I** have made many cheesecakes with supermarket own brand cream cheeses too, and they have worked great. If **you** can though, **I** think it is worth spending a little more for Philadelphia [TBE²].
- (2) It’s fairly mild, but it’s completely in **your** control. **I** use hot curry powder, but **you** can use mild if **you’re** at all weary [DGBMYH].
- (3) When **you** hear the name Kashmir, what images spring to **your** mind? In **my** mind, **I** always picture the same place in the snow with a cup of hot beverage in hand, admiring the beauty [BF].

In Example 1, the food blogger creates a division between her ‘self’ and her public as regards the expense to be made for quality ingredients. This is lessened in the phrase “if you can though.” However, by stressing the fact that she prefers the more expensive ingredient, she creates a distance between her choices and those who can only afford, or would prefer, a cheaper option. A similar division is created in Example 2 when the food blogger states his preference for a spicy hot ingredient. While he leaves the choice to his public, at the same time he reinforces the separation from his public by repeating his own preference. In Example 3, rather than creating a separation, the food blogger indirectly tries to influence the public’s perception and emotions associated to a place (“Kashmir”) by making the connection between the place, the fabric there produced, and a wintery setting. The public might get other perceptions from the word but, with the food blogger’s vivid description, they are influenced in recreating the same imagery in their own minds.

As regards the use of the third-person plural pronoun, in the FBC it is used to refer to either ingredients or to institutions or supermarket brands:

² See Table 1 for the acronyms that refer to the food blogs.

- (4) Gently fold the ingredients together. Mix **them** well to combine with the help of a spatula [BF].
- (5) Loads of supermarkets like Asda, Sainsburys and Tesco do **their** own gf biscuits too [BE].
- (6) Some Scottish companies like Castleton Farm do make **their** very own strawberry glazing jelly [BWG].
- (7) The NHS has some fantastic resources on **their** website on what to feed babies and young children [AMT].

Instances such as those in Example 4 are expected to be found in the FBC, considering the topic and its contents. However, the use of the third-person plural pronoun for supermarkets and institutions (Examples 5 to 7) communicates something more than the mere reference to plural concepts, namely, some distance that separates the ‘us’ of the food blog community and the ‘them’ of the companies/institutions.

Finally, another interesting use of the third-person pronouns is illustrated in Examples 8 to 10.

- (8) Unless you live in Bangladesh that is, because it’s **their** national fruit [BF].
- (9) **Their** traditional meal in Ethiopia, injera, consumed on a communal plate (known as 2-3 people eating on the same plate with the same injera), symbolizes their closeness and friendship [BE].
- (10) Yes, it is true that Chicken tikka masala is now a British national dish because Chicken Tikka was devised for the British to suit **their** flavors by Indians during the rule of the British Empire (between 1858-1947) [SK].

In these three Examples, the pronoun is employed to narrate traditions and customs of other cultures, or the past actions of the British in India. The Examples clearly illustrate the distance created between the ‘selves’ of the food bloggers and their public, and the ‘they’ of other populations or the past of the nation.

6. Discussion

As already mentioned in Section 2, the role of pronouns in PT is to express “the senses of self as unique, independent individuals [and] are likely to vary from culture to culture” (Harré and Moghaddam 2015, 132). In the case of the English-speaking culture, we might apply Harré and

Dedaić (2012) general statement, whereby “the distinction between ‘I,’ ‘we’ and ‘you’ as indexicals, and all third-person pronouns as serving an anaphoric function, is of crucial importance” (Harré and Dedaić 2012, 60). Indexicality in the use of first-person, second-person, and third-person pronouns in the FBC is particularly evident from both the quantitative and the qualitative analyses conducted in the present study.

More specifically, the use of the first-person pronoun by the food bloggers in the corpus focuses the attention on the ‘self’ of the food blogger, thus fulfilling the function established in PT, whereby “the first-person singular indexes the speech act it introduces with some relevant attribute of the speaker” (Harré and Dedaić 2012, 60).

The other pronouns in the FBC are instead used for “intrapersonal positioning” (Harré and Dedaić 2012, 60), namely, as devices employed by the food bloggers to remark their ‘otherness’ as opposed to the selves of the audience, or entities external to their community, such as brands, companies, institutions.

Moreover, this function is particularly efficient in creating a distance between the community, of which the food bloggers are leaders, and other cultures or events in the British past. One case in point is Example 10, in which the food blogger remarks how a typical recipe of the Indian tradition was modified by the British colonizers. By using pronoun ‘their’ she creates a distance between the Indian taste and the British one, thus also introducing an element of criticism towards the British that influenced the traditional customs of the cultures in the countries they colonized in their imperial past just to accommodate their own personal taste.

7. Conclusions

The present study has investigated a corpus of food blogs with the aim of illustrating the self-positioning strategies—by means of pronoun use—that the food bloggers employ in order to build a certain rapport with their audience. The analysis has revealed that the strategies adopted by the food bloggers in the FBC create a specific environment in which the ‘self’ of the food blogger as leader of the group is separated from the ‘other self’ of the audience that follows the blog as well as from the ‘self’ of other entities that are further distanced from the food blog community. This environment was shaped through the use of specific pronouns, which are used—to this purpose—in several indexical functions, thus influencing the perception that readers of the blog have with respect to the role of the food blogger (leader), the users/audience (‘subordinate’ members) and other participants to the communicative space, such as institutions, brands or other cultures, which are presented as outsiders, external elements

whose distance from the ‘inner circle’ of the community (constituted by the leader and its members) needs to be constantly reinforced.

This paper has presented some interesting results, but much has still to be investigated about the communicative strategies used by food bloggers to keep their audience engaged to the food blog. Moreover, similar analyses to the one conducted in the present study could be extended to the other media used by the food bloggers, such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook in order to compare self-positioning strategies in the blog posts with self-positioning strategies in social media. It might also be interesting to contrast ‘static’ genres (e.g., text-based texts such as blog posts vs. Instagram, and Facebook posts) with ‘dynamic’ genres (e.g., video recipes on YouTube, stories in Instagram, and videos shared on Facebook).

Finally, the investigation could be extended to other food blogs in English but based in other English-speaking countries, as well as to food blogs in other languages. Research in this case should also consider factors such as the intended target audience, the food bloggers’ personal and professional background, taking into account variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and social class, as well as variables influencing the food bloggers’ ways of positioning themselves with respect to their public. Naturally, in the case of food blogs based in other countries than the United Kingdom and using other languages, the geographical origin could also be another factor to be considered since the national culture usually influences the way in which food is prepared, presented, and narrated.

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