

Representing Venice's Local Culture to International Tourists

The Use of the 'Languaging' Technique in Websites in English

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Abstract Venice (Italy) is a popular destination for tourists of any kind; therefore, the goal of the material promoting the city is to present the city itself and its local culture. The present study conducts a qualitative analysis of websites that promote Venice to tourists using English as the preferred language of communication. The paper focuses on the so-called technique of 'languaging' (in studies on the language of tourism, defined as a term in a local language or dialect which is provided along with a translation or paraphrase in English). The analysis reveals that the authors of websites frequently use terms in the Venetian dialect but the translations or explanations provided fail, to a certain extent, to convey the most interesting cultural connotations contained in the terms themselves. The authors of the websites, thus, do not help fill the cultural gap between Venice and the tourists who, in turn, miss the opportunity to establish a real connection with the local culture.

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1 Introduction

Nearly 10 million people visit Venice (Italy) every year, with nationalities from all around the world (Miraglia 2015, 12). For this reason, the tourism promotion of the city employs many languages but, above all, it uses English both as the language of native speakers and as a *lingua franca*, regardless of the visitors' mother tongue.

One of the most difficult aspects in tourism promotion is not the actual language in which the communication between tourism operators and prospective visitors happens; it is, rather, the techniques used to success-

fully convey the cultural heritage that makes the destination unique and worth visiting. The effective promotion of the local culture is, indeed, one of the most interesting elements that leads tourists to decide whether a specific package or service provider is worth choosing among myriads of competitors. This is particularly true if we consider promotion through websites, which are so many and provide a plethora of possibilities about the booking of travel, services, tours and accommodation.

This article starts from these preliminary reflections to investigate the ways in which websites promoting Venice manage to effectively convey the most typical aspects of the Venetian culture. The use of the technique of “languaging” (Dann 1996, i.e. the use of foreign words in a text) will be investigated in websites in English aimed at customers from specific Anglophone countries as well as customers who use English merely as a *lingua franca*.¹

2 Tourism in Venice

As already mentioned, it has been calculated that nearly 10 million tourists visited Venice in 2014; of these, more than 1.5 million are Italian tourists (15% of the total number) and more than 8.4 million are from outside Italy, constituting 85% of the total number of tourists visiting Venice. Visitors from outside the country, thus speakers of different languages, clearly outnumber Italian tourists who might be more likely to possess an at least minimum knowledge of the local (Venetian) dialect and culture.

Miraglia (2015) illustrates the figures from the Annual Survey conducted by the City of Venice’s Tourist Board; in describing the typologies of tourists visiting the city, it also specifies the first nationalities of foreign visitors, who come from the USA, France, the UK, Germany, China, Japan, Australia, Spain, Brazil, South Korea, Canada and Russia (in fig. 1, with percentages).

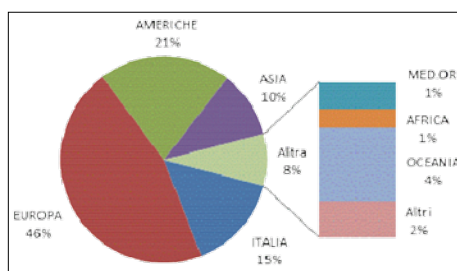


Figure 1. Tourists in Venice in 2014 (Miraglia 2015, 31)

¹ The perspective used in the present study has purposely not considered the websites’ transmission of the local culture from a multimodal perspective as the main aim here was, for the time being, to investigate ‘languaging’ as a solely verbal technique.

It appears evident, then, that English plays an essential role in the language of tourism promotion, considering also that tourists who are native speakers of English are outnumbered by those who use English merely to access information when travelling outside their own country. In this respect, if managed with full awareness, the use of the languaging technique might be particularly effective in reducing the cultural distance between visitors and the local population, thus bringing more clients to the company that commissioned the website; however, if the authors of the websites fail in the promotion, for instance with a mismanaged use of local terms or inaccurate descriptions, this might have the opposite effect of representing the local culture as something too distant, uninviting, discouraging the prospective visitors from booking the experience promoted and, thus, losing clients.

3 A Definition of Languaging

Dann defines languaging as “the impressive use of foreign words, but also a manipulation of the vernacular, a special choice of vocabulary, and not just for its own sake” (1996, 184). The use of these foreign words might be chosen by authors of tourism texts to induce feelings of inferiority in the reader, transforming the writer into a trustful authority. This happens when the reader is supposed to have little knowledge of the concepts conveyed by the ‘foreign’ terms.

Languaging is a technique that Jaworski et al. also call “language crossing”, whose function is presented as that of “creating a linguascape of the travel destination” (2003, 17). The foreign words used in this kind of tourism language usually pertain to the field of eno-gastronomy, or they are used to represent very specific natural, architectural or cultural elements of the host community and refer to less-known aspects of the destination and its culture. Languaging can also include a specific selection of the vocabulary to meet the writer’s intentions of promoting the destination. In addition, alliteration and onomatopoeia might be used to enhance the use of humour to make the promotional message more effective. Another device is the use of expressions allegedly familiar to the tourists but inserted in an unusual context, making the message more exotic and, thus, more inviting.

The way words in Italian or in the Venetian dialect are embedded in the promotional text follows also specific typographical patterns that have also become typical of the languaging technique: foreign words might be reported in their original form and a definition, a paraphrase and/or a literal translation in the language of the text (in our case, English) is provided in brackets immediately before or after the actual term. Other devices to emphasise these terms are the use of typographical symbols such as single or double quotation marks (e.g., ‘...’ and “...”), double angled quotation marks (e.g., «...»), bold type, italics.

This technique is useful and particularly productive in the language of tourism promotion because it reduces the sense of strangeness (“strangerhood” in Dann’s 1996 terms) that a foreign tourist might feel towards the host culture; it also anticipates what the tourist will hear and find when s/he will visit the actual place. In fact, the concept of ‘strangerhood’ conveys the sense of distance that a destination might have from the tourists’ usual Centre (*sic* in Dann 1996), i.e. what is most familiar in their everyday life and culture; it is this distance that the use of languaging seeks to cross, at the same time putting the authors of tourism texts in the role of ‘experts’ that help the ‘non-expert’, potential tourists fill the cultural gap.

Considering the ways in which the authors of the texts in the websites approach tourists through the languaging technique, we might hypothesize that promotion focuses on the elements typical of the ‘authenticity perspective’ (e.g., see Dann 1996; MacCannell 1977-89; Schudson 1979). Scholars aim at a tourism that should be less environmentally disruptive, useful to host communities and that should contribute to a greater understanding between visitors and local people. In this perspective, according to the kind of contact that visitors seek to establish with the host community, the former can be assigned to four categories, as schematically represented in figure 2 (by the present author).

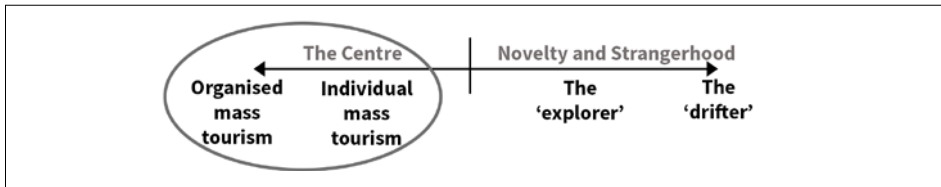


Figure 2. The circle individuates the category of tourists targeted by the websites

Organised and Individual mass tourism include those tourists who want to experience travel destinations with all the safety and comforts provided by tourism operators. They are in search of novelty but in a “protected and normalised environment” (Judd 1999, 37), establishing contacts with the local populations that are authentic but mediated by professional figures who ensure that nothing is left to chance. The categories of the ‘explorer’ and the ‘drifter’ are described as more adventurous, preferring to organise the travel experience without intermediaries and to come into direct contact with the truest and most genuine aspects of local populations.

Following this categorization, the tourists targeted by the websites are more likely to belong to the Organized Mass Tourism and to the Individual Mass Tourism categories (circled, in fig. 2), i.e. those who wish to remain

as close as possible to their own Centre, to what is most familiar to them, in opposition to those who seek novelty and adventure, positioning themselves on the other side of the continuum shown in figure 2. In this regard, the languaging technique is particularly productive as it makes the unfamiliar host culture familiar to the tourists especially upon their arrival, having already experienced from a distance, through the websites, what they will find and hear at the destination.

3.1 Languaging in the Promotion of Italian Destinations: Some State of the Art

The technique of languaging has attracted the linguists' and sociolinguists' attention in that it provides interesting insights into how distinct cultures 'collide' in the language of tourism promotion, and how authors of tourism promotional texts wilfully play with that collision to attract the readers' attention, obtaining booking for the promoted destination or experience. As regards linguistic studies and the investigation of languaging to promote, or represent, Italian destinations, the literature is not so vast, as it has encountered a relatively recent interest thanks to the digital medias that enhance a wider and more global sharing of promotional texts, also from a distance.

In this regard, we might mention Cappelli's (2013) study on the use of languaging in guidebooks, expatriates' travel blogs and travel articles/travelogues. The qualitative analysis conducted in the paper confirms that the use of words in the language of the host community has the main function of reducing the linguistic and cultural distance between tourists and the destination. Cappelli (2013) also mentions some background studies that investigate the use of languaging to promote Italian destinations, namely: Cortese, Hymes (2001), in which languaging is presented in its function of "positioning" (Cappelli 2013, 353) the individual within a specific social culture; it is also represented as a kind of "language rooted in memory" (Cortese, Hymes 2001, 199) that links the individual to the local culture. Finally, in their analysis of guidebooks, Fodde and Denti (2005) come to the conclusion that languaging serves to anticipate the real experience that tourists will live upon their arrival.

In the present article, the term languaging refers to the technique of using foreign words in the English texts used in the websites. Thus, the foreign words taken into consideration are not only those in standard Italian but also, and most importantly, in the local Venetian dialect, along with the corresponding translation or paraphrase that the authors of the texts provide.

4 Corpus and Methodology

The main research question leading this study is ascertaining whether the websites in English here investigated use the traditional patterns typical of the languaging technique or they experiment new ones, and whether they successfully perform the function that is typical of languaging, i.e. reducing the cultural distance between host and visitor culture, making the former attractive to the latter. Instances of languaging will be investigated in two kinds of websites; one group of websites explicitly addresses visitors from English-speaking countries, namely they are:

- <http://travel.usnews.com/>, addressing tourists from the USA (henceforth, USA website);
- <http://www.bbc.com/travel> (henceforth, UK website), explicitly referring to prospective tourists from the UK as their target public, even though it might be argued that the world-renowned BBC company is consulted as reliable source of information by people from all over the world using English as a *lingua franca*;
- <http://www.flightcentre.com.au> (Australia website), for Australians;
- <http://vacations.aircanada.com/> (Canada website), for visitors travelling from Canada.

The other group of websites is aimed at meeting a wider, generally international demand from customers using English as a vehicular language; the websites collected to this purpose are:

- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com> (henceforth, Lonely Planet);
- <http://www.timeout.com/venice/> (henceforth, TimeOut Venice);
- <http://www.in-venice.it/> (InVenice), a website based in Italy but providing information in English in a dedicated version.

The websites included in the corpus are organised into individual sections and sub-sections sections, accessible from the homepage, that present the several aspects of the travelling experience to/in Venice. The texts in the websites were collected in a corpus and, then, a manual search was conducted to detect all the possible instances of languaging.

The words or expressions, in Italian and in Venetian, thus retrieved were analysed, qualitatively, with an important differentiation; toponyms (here intended as words referring to monuments, place names, buildings, and so forth) were considered only if they are used in Italian or in Venetian even though a corresponding term in English is commonly attested in English (e.g. *piazza* instead of 'square').

5 A Classification of Italian and Venetian Words in the Corpus

Unsurprisingly, words in Italian or in Venetian are used less frequently than the corresponding terms in English; however, they have a strategic role in the description of places, buildings and cultural aspects of the city. As already mentioned, two types of Italian/Venetian words were distinguished: toponyms and general words that refer to specific names of buildings and places (e.g., *Piazza San Marco*, *Piazzale Roma*, etc.) but also words in Italian of more general use (e.g., *palazzi*, *gelato*, etc.).

These cases are not used in the same way in the several websites or in the same website, because they alternate between the original term in Italian and its version in English. For instance, in the USA website, *Palazzo Ducale* first appears indicated as “Doge’s Palace” with its name in round brackets. Then, in the following sub-sections, it is indicated either as *Palazzo Ducale* or as Doge’s Palace. The alternation, however, appears to be used randomly, not for stylistic reasons. The same happens for *Piazza San Marco*, alternatively indicated as *Piazza San Marco*, St Mark’s Square or *San Marco Square*, not only in the same website (and this happens in all the websites composing the corpus) but also within the same paragraph. A closer look at the contexts and/or sections in which the different versions of the terms appear does not indicate any particular pattern, strategy or preference by the authors, nor it is typical of one specific website more than the others.

Other typical, but renowned, elements of Venice and of the Italian lifestyle are used without any paraphrase or translation, as it is the case of *gondola*, *palazzo*, *gelato*; the plurals of these words are used randomly: they might appear as *gondolas* or *gondole*, *palazzos* or *palazzi*, *gelatos* or *gelati* in the section or paragraph without any preference for either form, perhaps *gondolas* being the most popular. As for *gelato/gelati*, this is the term used in every website to indicate ice-creams, probably preferred because it indicates the traditional Italian ice-cream made with natural and seasonal ingredients, opposed to the processed ice-creams sold in supermarkets or in fast-food chains.

As regards ‘proper’ instances of languaging, table 1 illustrates the ways in which each website describes to prospective tourists terms that they will find upon their arrival in Venice, and that aim at filling a gap in their knowledge of the local culture and language/dialect. The schematic representation in table 1 is useful in that it shows a differentiation in the way the websites mediate the ‘strangerhood’ element inherent to the terms themselves.

Table 1. Instances of paraphrases/translations of local terms in the corpus

Vaporetto	ferry/ferries, public waterbus, water bus/buses, water shuttle, waterbus, <i>vaporetto</i> , steamboat
Doge	leader, <i>Doge</i> , duke
Sestiere/i	district, neighbourhood(s), division, Venice area(s), <i>sestiere/i</i>
Acqua Alta	high water, high tide
La Serenissima	the most serene, la <i>Serenissima</i> , the most serene Republic of Venice, the <i>Serenissima</i> Republic
Cicheti	Tapas, Venetian tapas, bar snacks, local version of tapas, small tapas, small plates, snacks, finger food, small portions of food, Venetian snacks
Calle/i	street, backstreets, sidestreets, narrow medieval laneways, lanes, alleyways, the alleys of the city
Bacari	hole-in-the-wall pubs, wine bars, tiny neighbourhood bars, wine bar bars, Venetian traditional haunt, a middle ground between a tavern and a pub
Osterie	small local restaurant, taverns, trattorias, pub-restaurants, <i>osterie</i>

The explanations or the translations that are used in the corpus fall within the function of languaging that Jaworski et al. call “naming and translating (e.g. providing labels for local concepts, artefacts or dishes, translating local place names)” (2003, 9). The techniques accompanying this function are those shown in table 1, namely “apart using ‘strange’ words, the same local concepts are also labelled with two, more easily recognizable terms [...] and these acts of naming also render the exotic more familiar” (16).

6 Linguaging and Local Food

Terms for typical local food and eno-gastronomic traditions are used more frequently than the ‘toponyms’ in table 1. In this case, the “naming and translating” (Jaworski et al. 2003, 9) function of the languaging technique employs more creative expressions that should make the local items more familiar to the foreign visitor, since it is not just a means of transportation or some historical landmark that is being described but the rituals of a century-old tradition.

The terms in Italian or in the local dialect are usually reported with the actual term in italics and its translation or description in English, or vice versa, not always strictly respecting the original spelling or exact meaning, as it is illustrated in the following examples:

1. “tap water, *acqua di rubinetto*; flat water, *acqua naturale*; or sparkling water, *acqua frizzante* or *acqua con gas* ... Cuttlefish (*sepia*), clams (*vongole*), and sea brass (*branzino*).” (Travel US News Venice);
2. “crudi (Venetian-style sushi) ... folpetti (baby octopus) salad ... *seppie* (cuttlefish), *bottarga* (cured tuna roe), *folpeti consi* (baby octopus in vinaigrette), *sardelle in saor* (fried sardines marinated in vinegar and

- onions), *polpette* (Venetian meatballs) and *baccalà mantecato*, a local favourite consisting of codfish beaten into a creamy paste with olive oil, often served on a square of grilled polenta.” (BBC Travel);
3. “moscardini (baby octopus), moeche (soft-shell crabs), and inky sepie (squid) ... Locally caught seafood is tagged ‘Nostrano’, as are seasonal vegetables like Sant’Erasmus castraure (baby artichokes) and radicchio trevisano (bitter red chicory).” (Lonely Planet Venice);
 4. “Going with the flow of *la cucina veneta* requires a certain spirit of open-minded experimentation. Not everybody has eaten *granseola* (spider crab) before, or *garusoli* (sea snails) or *canoce* (mantis shrimps), but Venice is definitely the place to try these marine curios.” (TimeOut Venice);
 5. “**fritole**, or rather frittelle (similar to pancakes)... **moeche** (crabs just after molting)... eel (*anguilla* in Italian, *bisato* in Venetian), shellfishes (*canestrei* in Venetian), shrimps (*canoce*), clams (*caparossoi*), octopus (*folpo*) and mussels (*peoci*).” (InVenice).

In example 1, the spelling for cuttlefish, *sepia*, is adapted to the English term referring to the colour (originally extracted from the animal) rather than to the Cephalopod itself, whose name in general language is ‘squid’ (see example 3). In the other examples the literal translation is provided along with some other information on the kind of food or dish that can help tourists understand the nature of the recipe, especially in those cases (as in example 4) where the speciality uses kinds of food that are different from the usual culinary habits of the prospective visitor.

In other cases, as in example 5, approximation to the presumed culture of the visitor is provided: the comparison of the *fritole* to pancakes is a great approximation since the former are deep-fried spherical sweets covered in sugar, quite different from pancakes. Another example is the Venetian term *folpo* (correct in its variant *folpeto*, as in example 2), which is also used in the sense of ‘foolish, stupid person’ (S. Bassi, personal conversation). This culture-bound connotation is not even mentioned in the website, which explicitly presents itself as written from the perspective of a resident. A similar kind of approximation is contained in the same example 2 where *crudi* are defined as “Venetian-style sushi”, whereas they are just a selection of raw fish served with a variety of sauces, lemon and kinds of salt, without any use of rice, as in the original Japanese recipe. In these examples, the culture-specific element is lost in favour of an approximation that explains just the basic food or ingredient; the original meaning and connotation could have been preserved with a very concise explanation or paraphrase, as it is provided – with greater success – in some other instances of local food in examples 2 (“*sardelle in saor* (fried sardines marinated in vinegar and onions)”) and 3 (“moeche (soft-shell crabs)”), and in example 4, analysed above.

7 Linguaging to Explain Local Culture and Traditions

In the websites, the authors use the technique of languaging also to describe and explain complex elements of the local culture and traditions connected to festivals, celebrations and events, but also of the Venetian everyday social life. As already shown in the preceding section, the cultural importance or the socialising dimension of the element described is lost; its ancient rituals are, thus, transmitted to the tourists with approximate explanations and superficial descriptions.

This is the case of the cocktail called *spritz*, very popular in the North-Eastern Italian regions, but now becoming increasingly popular also in the rest of the country and abroad. Around the cocktail, served with appetizers of various kinds and complexity, the younger and older generations have created a socialising ritual that is used not only with family and friends but also with new acquaintances to favour group integration and bonding. In the corpus, as illustrated in examples 6 to 8, the mildly alcoholic drink is defined merely as:

6. “spritz (the local aperitivo of wine, soda and Campari)” (BBC Travel);
7. “an aperitivo of white wine, Campari and a shot of seltzer or sparkling water; a sweeter version is made with low-alcohol Aperol” (TimeOut Venice Venice);
8. “a Venetian aperitif that has been exported all around the world, which is made with prosecco, soda and *Aperol, Select, or Bitter*” (InVenice).

Hints are given only to the nature and function of the drink (*aperitivo/aperitif*) and the recipe is given without any reference to the socio-cultural importance that the ritual around it has in the local culture, not even when this kind of information is explained in sections labelled “Drink like a Venetian”, as in the case of the TimeOut Venice website.

It is worth mentioning that some websites are particularly concerned about the manners of the tourists and in the transmission of the rules for ‘correct, polite behaviour’ towards the local population, performing the function that Jaworski et al. name “phatic communion – exchanges of ‘mere sociabilities’ and apparently ‘purposeless expressions’ [...] a type of interaction that tourists might typically be expected to engage with hosts” (2003, 12). In this case, the authors of the texts are anticipating the tourist’s experience by instructing them what to say and when, mostly using Italian, not the local dialect. The USA website, for instance, insists on explaining how first impressions count to Italians, and to Venetians in particular; thus, they instruct tourists on how to make a good impression, defined as

bella figura [...] Dressing well will sometimes even be rewarded by better and more prompt service. *Bella figura* does not stop with physical

presentation as it extends into a person's manners and conduct. Avoid being obnoxiously loud or ostentatious, as this is greatly looked down on as *brutta figura*. Learning some Italian and attempting to use it will win you points with Italians, who are generally patient and happy to help you learn more. In any kind of store or restaurant, it's appropriate to greet and say goodbye to employees – even if you do not buy anything – with a *salve* and *arrivederci*, respectively. *Ciao* is less formal but equally appreciated. Wherever you go, remember your manners and don't forget your pleases, *per favore*, and thank yous, *grazie*.

This concern is found only in the USA website and only to a certain extent expressed also in the InVenice website, which makes a list of 'don'ts' more related to the respect of civil regulations, such as how to behave and dress in churches, respect the buildings and the city in general, not to feed pigeons, not to swim in the canals, how to dress properly around the city despite it being on the water ("but it is not a seaside resort", InVenice website), what to do with a backpack when on a crowded *vaporetto*, and so forth, but this is all expressed in English without any use of specific terms in Italian, like in the USA website.

8 General Considerations on the Use of Language in the Individual Websites

The analysis conducted so far has considered individual instances of languaging found in the corpus in general. The present section differentiates the instances of languaging used in the individual websites and provides some general considerations on the approach to the local language and culture showed as regards the nationality, specified or presumed, of the perspective tourists.

The function of the languaging technique in the corpus is to make foreign tourists accustomed to the 'terminology' and culture they will find as well as to underline the strong local identity still kept in Venice, despite depopulation and the city's role of mass tourism destination. In addition, it was also stressed in the previous sections that the use of languaging is limited to specific semantic fields. In fact, except for the USA website, that adds also expressions in the function of "phatic communion" (Jaworski et al. 2003, 12), the terms in Italian or in Venetian pertain to the semantic categories of toponyms, streets or alleys, landmarks, popular traditions referring to the local culture and, especially, to its eno-gastronomic heritage.

If we have to make a distinction in the relative frequency of usage of the languaging technique in the several websites consulted, we can certainly affirm that, among the websites addressing specific nationalities, the USA and the UK ones make a greater use of languaging. As for the websites

addressing visitors with an unspecified nationality, the Lonely Planet and the InVenice websites are the ones that use languaging with a greater frequency than the others.

8.1 The USA Website

In the USA website, the instances of languaging are explicitly signalled and separated from the text in English with italics for words in Italian or in Venetian and the translation or the paraphrase in English reported in round brackets (e.g., “Water taxis bob along, drifting underneath the *Ponte degli Scalzi* (Bridge of the Barefoot)”), or separated by commas, as in the passage on «*bella figura*» («and don't forget your pleases, *per favore*, and thank yous, *grazie*»). In some, although rare, cases they are also highlighted from the rest of the text through the use of double curved quotation marks, especially when the words are employed to explain local words of practical usage during the stay, as in the following quotation from the USA website:

Residents generally speak Italian with a Venetian dialect, which can be unrecognizable – even to native Italian speakers. *Ca*, a shortened form of the word “*casa*”, is used to describe many private residences and palaces. A street or *calle* in Venice, (pronounced ka-lay), is different from the “*via*” or “*strada*” streets elsewhere in Italy.

This example contains an interesting reference to the correct pronunciation of the term *calle*, an indication which is unique to the rest of the corpus as this is the only case in which it appears. Italics as a typographical convention is particularly productive, and the USA website employs it specifically to indicate names related to eno-gastronomic traditions, as the following extract clearly illustrates:

Venice Dining

With such close ties to the water, it should come as no surprise that fish is the main component of Venetian cuisine. Cuttlefish (*sepia*), clams (*vongole*), and sea bass (*branzino*) are popular ingredients, which can be found in many of the area's most well-known dishes, including *frutti di mare*. *Tra-mezzini* is another Venetian specialty: These triangular sandwiches, with a range of fillings from cheese to meats, can be found at cafes throughout the city. Wash it all down with *prosecco*, a sparkling (and local) white wine.

For the best bang for your buck, try to avoid the San Marco area or any establishment that solicits tourists off the street. Instead, try one of the smaller establishments – such as traveler-recommended Ristorante La Caravella – tucked away on one of the many hidden side streets.

You could also dine at a *bacaro*, a smaller wine bar with lower prices, authentic cuisine and more character.

In this passage, all the terms in Italian or in Venetian are indicated in italics, except for the name of the restaurant. The explanation of non-English terms is given in plain English either in brackets or before the local name. In other cases, local terms are just inserted in the description. If, visually speaking, the resulting effect might seem confusing in its lack of a homogeneous writing style, in the conveyance of the promotional message this patchy style is effective since it gives the text the 'aroma' of exoticism typical of the "naming and translating" function (cf. Jaworski et al. 2003).

8.2 The UK Website

In the case of the UK website, words in Italian and in Venetian are followed by an explanatory paraphrase together with the textual strategies already seen in the USA website, namely: italics, round brackets containing the translation, double curved quotation marks and explanation between commas. Another similarity is the use of local words to indicate architectural or topographic elements and for eno-gastronomic traditions.

Venice is one of those places that everyone has seen before they visit. The green canals and famous bridges; the warmly coloured *palazzo* (grand residences) and narrow alleyways; the breathtaking openness of Piazza San Marco, the arched prow of a gondola and the gentle wake behind a *vaporetto* (waterbus) – all have been immortalised in mediums as classic as Canaletto's paintings and as mainstream as Facebook photos. And for every traveller who has been disappointed in a destination upon arrival, there is a happy visitor in Venice, where the city looks exactly as it is supposed to. Venice is both a well-preserved monument and a living, breathing, sinking city, full of contemporary art, traditional crafts and high culture.

In this extract, two words are highlighted in italics, the first one *palazzo* is followed by a definition in English, even though it can be presumed that the word itself might be very familiar to prospective tourists coming from the UK, a country where the architectural Italian tradition is historically well rooted. However, the paraphrase serves also the educational purpose of indicating the meaning of the Italian term, probably to the benefit of tourists with a lower-level education, or to the youngsters. The second term (*vaporetto*) indicates a typical local means of transportation and is rendered with the closest term in English, defining its nature of public

transport using waterways instead of streets. The second extract below illustrates the use of textual strategies to highlight instances of languaging pertaining the field of food and eno-gastronomic traditions.

Visitors have long been enthralled by Venice's floating palaces and fabulous art. But its seafood-rich lagoon and garden islands also provide a taste of Venetian life – from cicheti (tapas) and fish dishes to rich, creamy gelati.

Best for seafood

Alongside the Rialto fish market, deli-diner Pronto Pesce specialises in crudi (Venetian-style sushi) and seafood salads. Grab a stool and a glass of wine with folpetti (baby octopus) salad, or enjoy yours dockside along the Grand Canal. Saturday lunchtimes are all about the much-lauded fish risotto (Rialto Pescheria, San Polo 319; closed Sun & Mon; fish salads from £7).

Neighbourhood restaurant Ristorante Ai Do Farai in Dorsoduro was once one of the oldest wine bars in Venice; now a small restaurant, regulars pack into the wood-panelled room hung with football scarves. Try the tris di saor sarde, scampi e sogliole (sardines, prawns and sole in a tangy marinade) or the tasty pasta with clams, mussels and prawns (00 39 041 277 03 69; Calle del Cappeller, Dorsoduro 3278; closed Sun; mains from £15).

In the original text in the website, the names of the two restaurants ('Pronto Pesce' and 'Ai do Farai') are highlighted through a hyperlink, leading to the restaurants' websites, while names of traditional dishes and food are not signalled with italics but just followed by a paraphrase or a translation in brackets.

8.3 Australia

The Australian website contains a very limited use of languaging. The occasional reference to monuments and landmarks is provided using Italian or local words, which are either not highlighted at all or highlighted with bold type, as in the example below:

The Arsenale, Chiesa di San Giorgio Maggiore and I Frari are other Venetian monuments you shouldn't miss out on. For a touch of art, the city's **Gallerie dell'Accademia** traces the development of Venetian art from the 14th to the 18th century and showcases the work of some true Italian greats. Lastly, a **gondola ride** on one of the city's beautiful waterways is all but a rite of passage for any visitor to Venice.

A specific section, "Like a local", contains instances of languaging referring to food and local traditions.

If you want to save some money at lunch, do as the locals do and eat standing up. Most eateries are at lunchtime stocked with *cicchetti*, which is the Venetian form of tapas. Popular dishes include *tramezzini* (triangular sandwiches), *polpette* (minced fish or meatballs) and a whole range of *antipasto*. Simply select a few items by pointing at what you want and you've got yourself a meal. Just remember though that if you decide to sit at a table and be waited on the price will be more expensive than if you order and consume your food at the bar.

In this extract, the Italian terms are not singled out from the rest of the text but are followed by a paraphrase in English, except for the word *antipasto*, probably because it is now a familiar word to the average Australian tourist. In addition, this passage contains the approximation of some socio-cultural implications that was already noticed in the other websites. The typical 'tradition' of eating a quick lunch standing up is certainly due to the reduced size of public places and shops in Venice, a peculiar aspect of the city that is not pointed out by the website, in this as in any other section, thus reducing the impact that the information could have on the future visitors and their 'cultural training' before travelling to Venice.

An important omission regards the sentence "simply select a few items by pointing at what you want and you've got yourself a meal". If the USA website abounds in advice on how to sound polite to the locals, in this quotation the instructions might lead to some cultural misunderstanding between the Australian visitors and Venetians since there is no indication on how to order even a quick snack as *cicheti* without using a polite language but merely by pointing at the desired food, which might be considered as a rude practice by the locals.

8.4 Canada

In the website addressing Canadian tourists, the use of languaging is reduced to a minimum, as in the Australian case. Local words are used to indicate very famous aspects, buildings or landmarks but with minimal paraphrases, as it is shown in the following extract, in which names of landmarks are reported partially in Italian, partially in English but without any clear textual distinction for the former.

Along the small inner canals, you'll arrive to *Fondamente Nuove*, a long series of ancient foundations that represents the northern boundary of the city of Venice, where you will be able to view the northern side of

the Lagoon, San Michele's island, Murano and Burano on the landscape.

The extract shows also that names in Italian for typical elements of the city are given in italics with a paraphrase in English but without many other details: "gaze at the thoroughfare of passing gondolas, *vaporetto* (water buses) and water taxis - all jostling for space on the water".

8.5 Lonely Planet

The Lonely Planet website, along with the InVenice website, addresses tourists with an unspecified nationality; they both make a consistent use of languaging. The elements that are indicated using Italian or Venetian words pertain to the usual semantic fields of the city landmarks and buildings, eno-gastronomic traditions and cultural rituals in general. The sections of the website are presented as mini-guides written by (almost) residential authors that present themselves as authoritative persons, experts in describing Venice and its culture to the future visitors. Also in these cases, however, the authors do not refer to the inmost cultural significance of the elements described, thus failing to convey exactly the real nature of local traditions. On the other hand, the translations given to elements of the city landscape are quite correct and precise, as in the case of the following extract:

Yet Venice isn't a one-stage venue. The dazzling pageantry continues at I Frari, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Scuola Grande di San Rocco and, of course, Teatro La Fenice. And if you think your walk-on part at these attractions is exhilarating, wait until you step backstage - which is never more than a *sotoportego* (passageway) away. In narrow *calli* (streets) off the thoroughfares to San Marco, you'll glimpse the behind-the-scenes creativity that keeps the whole production afloat: artisans at work in their studios, cooks whipping up four-star *cicheti* (Venetian tapas) on single-burner hotplates, musicians lugging 18th-century cellos to chamber-music practice. Here the volume is turned down, and you can hear the muffled sounds of intermission - neighbours kissing hello and Veronese spaniels trotting over footbridges.

This passage shows suggestive images of everyday life in Venice, providing correct translations of the local terms *sotoportego* (in this case also spelled correctly) and *calli*, but it fails to convey the more local aspect of *cicheti*, generally defined (as in many other cases in the websites) as 'tapas'. These are defined as "small Spanish savoury dishes, typically served with drinks at a bar" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*), which might apparently have the same function as the Venetian preparations but the

latter have an older tradition and a socialising function for people of all ages (not necessarily implicit in the Spanish term) that the 'residential' author misses to explain.

Another passage contains the same alternation between exact rendering of a local word and imprecise explanation of a local phenomenon:

You may have heard that Venice is an engineering marvel, with marble cathedrals built atop ancient posts driven deep into the *barene* (mud banks) – but the truth is that this city is built on sheer nerve. Reasonable people might blanch at water approaching their doorsteps and flee at the first sign of *acqua alta* (high tide). But reason can't compare to Venetian resolve.

In this case, the first element in italics (*barene*) is translated and explained correctly, while the second one only partially covers the phenomenon of *acqua alta*, which is more accurately indicated in the other websites. The translation, obviously, does not prevent tourists from understanding the phenomenon but it does not fully convey its real nature, thus keeping the explanation at a very superficial level, where it needed greater details especially as regards how to deal with high water during the flooding period.

As for languaging used to refer to eno-gastronomic elements and traditions, the Lonely Planet follows the same path trodden by the other websites, providing the Venetian words in italics, followed by a translation or paraphrase in English, but without going beyond the description of the ingredients or a literal translation.

Those visitors may never get to see Venice in its precious downtime, when gondoliers warm up their vocal chords with scorching espresso on their way to words, and mosaic artisans converge at the bar for tesseræ shoptalk over a *spritz* (*prosecco-based* drink).

Neither rain nor high tides can dampen high spirits at Venice's twice daily happy hours, when even the most orthodox fashionistas will gamely pull on *stivali di gomma* (rubber boots) over their stylish artisan-made shoes, and slosh out to the bar to get first dibs on *cicheti* (traditional bar snacks). How come 'happy hour' lasts five hours a day, and why not so close at the first high tide signal? 'There's only one Venice', explains one host as he pours another glass of fizzy Veneto *prosecco* well past the mark for *un ombra* (half-glass) [*sic*]. 'We might as well enjoy it.'

In this passage, the description given by the author seems to be one of a fictional Venice rather than a real one, omitting that rubber boots are now made of every colour and print and that not all Venetians wear artisan-made shoes; the impression given by the author is, therefore, of a tale meeting the now outdated stereotypes on Venice rather than the account

of a residential author. The reference to *spritz* and to *un'ombra* (in the original text, also very inaccurately written without the apostrophe) is given only to their composition rather than to links with the history of the city (as in the case of the *ombra* of wine), keeping again the description at a very superficial level.

8.6 TimeOut Venice

The TimeOut Venice website makes a slightly less consistent use of languaging, if compared to the other two websites, LonelyPlanet and In-Venice. In the case of TimeOut Venice languaging is used once more for monuments and typical experiences, as in the sentence “most Venetians agree that some of the city’s best gelato is served in Boutique del Gelato, a tiny outlet on busy salizzata San Lio”. However, in cases such as this the Italian or Venetian words are not highlighted from the rest of the text.

Languaging is also used, as in all the other websites, to indicate landmarks, as in the following passage:

But it’s St Mark’s basilica (Basilica di San Marco), often seen as the living testimony of Venice’s links with Byzantium; Doge’s Palace, once Venice’s political and judicial hub; and Torre dell’Orologio, a clock tower built between 1496 and 1506, that are, not just the square’s, but some of the city’s main attractions.

The usual technique of using italics to highlight the local term is here substituted by hyperlinks to the websites of the institutions mentioned. Only in one case, “Basilica di San Marco”, the translation in English is provided in round brackets. “Doge’s Palace” is not translated but a description of its function is given, while “Torre dell’Orologio” is indirectly translated after the comma and only some hints to its history are given, even though these elements occur in the paragraph for the first time in the text.

Finally, the usual semantic field of food and drink are expressed through languaging along with some advice on how to behave like a local:

4. Drink like a Venetian – and go on a secret wine tour

To the usual Italian breakfast, light snacks, pastries and alcoholic beverages routine, Venice contributes its own specialities: the *ombra* and the *spritz*. The former is a tiny glass of wine – bianco or rosso – which is knocked back in no time and is often the whole point of a *giro di ombre* – an *ombra*-crawl around selected *bacari* (the accent is on the first ‘a’). A *spritz* is an aperitivo of white wine, Campari and a shot of seltzer or sparkling water; a sweeter version is made with low-alcohol Aperol. Also flowing freely into Venetian glasses are prosecco, the bubbly white

made in the hills of the Veneto region, and spento, a bubble-free version of the same wine.

And for true Venetian oenophile immersion, discover the wine cellars that only the locals know about – together with a healthy dose of *chicchetti* (Venice's version of tapas) – on a covert wine tour of Venice with worldwide city-tour specialists Urban Adventures.

In this extract, more information than in other websites are provided on some background facts on specific traditions or pronunciation advice on the local terms that was found only in the USA website.

8.7 InVenice

In the case of InVenice, it is worth mentioning that this is a website in Italian with a dedicated version in English. The use of Italian and Venetian words in the latter version pertains to the same semantic fields as in all the other websites, giving greater details in the paraphrases or explanation of the terms, with some exception in the successful conveyance of the real meaning of the terms (see, e.g., example 5, § 6). In the InVenice website, languaging is again limited to monuments, topographic elements and food-related terminology. However, it describes more numerous and different traditions, as in the following passage, in which the experience of a *gondola* ride is described in far greater detail than in the other websites:

Today there are two main reasons for taking a gondola: there is the “**gondola da parada**”, a sort of ferry boat that Venetians use mainly to cross the Grand Canal, and the gondola “**da nolo**”, for hire, that offers the classic gondola tour.

In this website, words in Italian or in Venetian are highlighted using bold type and in double quotation marks but it also employs italics and bold type to indicate specific terms, with a particular history, as in the case of the following extract (bulleted list as in the original):

- The ***baicoli*** are typical biscuits which were once sold in a tin box but they can now easily be found in cardboard boxes. They are dry biscuits, cut into very thin layers, which were once eaten during long journeys by ship. They are cooked with a few simple ingredients such as flour, yeast, sugar, butter and eggs. They're fantastic when dipped in creamy eggnog, hot chocolate, coffee or a sweet wine.
- Next in line are the ***bussolai buranelli*** which are either circular or “S” shaped. They are a specialty from Burano and are made with eggs

and butter. Perfect for completing a meal, especially when served with a sweet wine.

- **Zaleti** too are Venetian biscuits that are cooked with polenta flour and raisins. The name comes from the flour's yellowish color. They are served with sweet wine usually at the end of a meal in the historical center taverns.
- A Venice Carnival is not complete without the **fritole**, or rather *fritelle* (similar to pancakes²), a dessert whose origins date back to the Renaissance and in 1700 it became the national cake of the Venetian State! You can find them made the Venetian way, which is simple and made only with raisins, or they come filled with cream or zabaglione.
- [...] The **baci in gondola** which are strongly tied to tradition, and tremendously romantic, are made with two soft white pastry layers held together by dark chocolate.
- And if you're in the mood for overdoing it you should try the gigantic colored **spumiglias** which dominate the bakery windows. It's like eating a cloud of sugar!

In this list, reported as it appears in the original website, italics and bold type are used only for the names of the sweets indicated in their original Venetian spelling, without any form of Italianization. In the last bullet point, however, an Anglicization is present with the final 's' used for the plural, instead of the plural in Italian '*spumiglie*'.

9 Conclusions

The present article investigated how websites in English use the languaging technique to transmit the meaning and connotations of the local culture of the city of Venice. As it was already ascertained by Fodde and Denti (2005) for guidebooks, the websites here analysed showed that the use of languaging is used by the authors of the texts to anticipate what visitors will actually experience once arrived at the destination. One of the variables taken into consideration to account for variation in the use of languaging technique was the presumed nationality of the perspective tourists, since four websites purposely address specific nationalities from Anglophone countries while three address a general, international public

² See example 5, § 6.

who uses English purely as a *lingua franca*. In this regard, the qualitative analysis showed that all websites use Italian and Venetian words to refer to names of buildings and landmarks, elements of the city landscape, terms for food and drink, local festivals and traditions with a strong cultural connotation. The distance from Venice (i.e., the nationality) of the prospective visitors does not influence the use of languaging with the only exceptions of the InVenice and the USA websites. They both pay particular attention to instruct tourists on the use of 'good manners' probably in the attempt at preventing contrasts between tourists and the host culture.

The preferred techniques to explain terms and expressions in Italian or in Venetian are literal translations and/or paraphrases. Reporting local words, providing a description and an explanatory paraphrase help authors reach the familiar element that could, in turn, help tourists reduce the distance between their own national culture and the most unusual aspects of the host destination. In this regard, the websites occasionally fail to describe, in an effective way, the cultural significance of the traditions described. By doing this, they also fail to convey important details on the host culture that could facilitate the contacts with the local population. Thus, the websites seem to miss the main goal of the languaging technique, which Dann (19996) indicates as the reduction of the cultural distance between visitors and host community.

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