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# Introduction

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The aim of this monographic volume of *Token* entitled "Popularizing, Disseminating and Rewriting for Young Audiences" is to discuss the popularization of different genres and texts for an audience of children. Following the definition put forward by Calsamiglia and van Dijk, popularization encompasses "a vast class of various types of communicative events or genres that involve the transformation of specialized knowledge into 'everyday' or 'lay' knowledge, as well as a recontextualization of scientific discourse" (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 370) whose wide applications are immediately striking. Popularization can be observed whenever knowledge needs to reach a broad audience, with little or limited previous awareness of a particular topic, or, in the case of children, with still incomplete cognitive and linguistic development. Even though, as the contributions to this volume show, strategies for popularization for children almost completely coincide with those at work in texts for adult lay readers, they are used for slightly different reasons: whereas adults might not be sufficiently acquainted with a specific discipline, children have not yet fully developed their cognitive and linguistic skills (Myers 2003). Consequently, what is accessible for adult lay readers might be complex for children, and, therefore, it might necessitate some ad hoc popularizing strategies. This complexity may concern the level of ideas and concepts as well as that of linguistic expression.

Educational materials for children in the English-speaking world are largely characterized by learning strategies that build upon edutainment, whose goal is "to inform and entertain their overt audience – children" (Djonov 2008: 217). Edutainment genres for children have appeared in Italy much later, first as translations from English, then trying to gradually follow

in the footsteps of that tradition. However, they have not yet reached the same variety and comprehensive market coverage.

Popularization for children has yet to be extensively investigated in terms of genres or domains: the studies that adopt a contrastive approach that compares English and Italian texts are even fewer. The domains that have received scholarly attention include science (Myers 1989, 2003; Bruti – Manca 2019; Cesiri 2020; Diani – Sezzi 2020), newspaper articles (Diani 2015), history books (Sezzi 2017), EU institutions (Silletti 2017), legal knowledge (Engberg – Luttermann 2014; Sorrentino 2014; Diani 2018; Peruzzo 2021), health knowledge (Diani 2020), tourist promotion (Cappelli 2016; Cappelli – Masi 2019), non-fiction picture books (Masi 2021; Wozniak 2021), cultural heritage (Synodi 2014; Sezzi 2019), and literature (Bianchi 2018). In this volume, we cover fields such as art in the form of museum communication (contributions by Sezzi and Fina), environmental issues and ecology (Manca – Spinzi, and Bruti), legal issues such as copyright, children's rights, and communication addressed at children in the US House of Representatives website (respectively tackled by Peruzzo, Vignozzi, and Cacchiani), COVID 19 and the effects of the pandemic (Denti – Diani, and Nikitina), science and technology (Masi), *The Da Vinci Code* in its rewriting for young adults (Bianchi – Manca), diversity (Turnbull), and English grammar metalanguage (Cappelli). Two contributions in particular focus on specific genres, Bianchi and Manca's on literature and Masi's on TED Talks as a valuable didactic resource for knowledge dissemination.

This volume begins with the popularization of ecology and environmental sustainability, tackled in the contributions by Manca and Spinzi, and Bruti. The qualitative study by Elena **Manca** and Cinzia **Spinzi** aims to identify the popularizing features of multimodal educational videos on climate change addressed to young people aged 7-13. Apart from contributing to the ongoing debate on popularizing texts and genres for children, the research also digs into cross-cultural features of knowledge dissemination in British and Italian videos, thus suggesting relevant aspects to be considered in cross-cultural and translation studies. The comparable corpus comprises three British and three Italian educational videos for young learners aged 7-13 whose aim is to instruct them on climate change and its consequences, and hence on what can still be done to take care of our planet. The analysis evidences that, apart from the same length, which takes into account the limited attention span of the addressees, and a shared tendency to use attribution to be able to rely on the expertise of the scientific community, British and Italian videos rely on different popularizing

strategies. In the English data, the learners' engagement is maximized through inclusive pronouns and a conversational style. Conversely, the Italian dataset is characterized by a much lower level of inclusiveness due to the presence of specialized terms, impersonal constructions, and a less interactional style of communication. Visually speaking, the English data set combines cartoon-like representations with real-life pictures communicating the urgency of taking action and not downplaying the seriousness of a natural disaster. In contrast, the Italian dataset minimizes the risk by using a lighter image that does not match the verbal information. The implications of Manca and Spinzi's findings for the translation of environmental popularized multimodal videos are manifold: the first and most relevant is that, when mediating from Italian into English, a more informal style should be adopted; the second is that less technical and specialized terms should be used to favour involvement. This latter feature can also be achieved thanks to inclusive personal pronouns and direct questions. Finally, given the low-context characterization of communication in English, transparency and explicitness should be preferred to vagueness and implicitness.

Silvia **Bruti**'s contribution focuses on the influence of culture on the language used in informative texts written for an audience of young readers. To this end, a contrastive analysis of six American and Italian ecology books was carried out. Both the American and the Italian books are addressed to three different age groups, namely pre-school children, middle-grade readers, and teenagers. The methodological framework adopted in this study draws from discourse analysis, cross-cultural studies, and multimodal analysis (cf., inter alia, Manca 2012; Diani 2018; Cappelli – Masi 2019; Bruti – Manca 2020; Kress – van Leeuwen 2001). It focuses, in particular, on the preferred verbal and non-verbal recontextualization strategies identified by previous studies in the popularization domain (Calsamiglia – Van Dijk 2004; Garzone 2006; Gotti 2013). This contrastive analysis shows that the two sets of books exploit graphic resources in different ways. The American books include text partitions, expanding boxes, and do-it-yourself sections, while in the Italian books, multimodal and typographic resources are less exploited. Furthermore, in the Italian texts, language is more formal, and complex syntactic and lexical patterns are present. In the American counterparts, expressive language and colloquialisms are predominant. In conclusion, the analysis shows that cultural tendencies play a key role in how contents are visually and verbally organized. Furthermore, the notion of "edutainment" seems to be differently perceived by the two cultures. This is particularly

visible in the way the two sets of books balance experiential and detailed knowledge in their instructive aim.

The popularization of legal content is dealt with in the works of Peruzzo, Vignozzi, and Cacchiani. Katia **Peruzzo** analyzes two English and two Italian child-friendly (CF) versions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Two of the CF versions were produced by UNICEF (in English and Italian), one by the international NGOs Plan International (in English), and one by Save the Children (in Italian). The two versions by UNICEF are a two-page poster, with the Italian version being an adaptation of the English text obtained via translation. Plan International's English text (PI) is a double-page poster, and Save the Children's text is a one-page poster. The first three texts are multimodal and verbal elements are accompanied by illustrations, while the fourth text considered for analysis has no visual elements except for a red frame at the top, the NGO's logo at the bottom, and the alternation of red and black fonts. The methodology adopted by Peruzzo is discourse analysis with a focus on "generalizable discursive strategies" identified by Salvi and Bowker (2015: 13), i.e., recontextualization, re-conceptualization, and trans-mediation. The original text (i.e., the CRC) is a prescriptive legal instrument for an adult readership. For this reason, its adaptation for children requires several discursive strategies and semiotic modes that may make the text informative and accessible to children. One of the main aspects implied by this adaptation process is the reduction in text length which entails a reduction in detail and a form of simplification. Another relevant aspect identified in the comparison of the original text and adapted versions is the shift of focus from the subjects that must ensure the implementation of children's rights to the subjects whose rights are to be implemented, thus giving children a linguistically more central position. A change in modality can also be observed, as deontic modality is discarded and replaced by non-modal verbs. As for popularizing strategies, only a small number of instances of denomination, exemplification, and paraphrasing were retrieved.

Gianmarco **Vignozzi**'s article analyzes the official website of the US House of Representatives, *Kids in the House*, created to explain to youngsters of different age groups how the House works and what its principal duties are. This website contains four different versions, targeting children at different stages in the US educational system, i.e., young learners (3 to 6 years), grade schoolers (6 to 11 years), middle schoolers (11 to 14 years), and high schoolers (14 to 18 years). The analysis focuses, in particular, on the verbal content of the four versions of *Kids in the House* and on the popularizing strategies (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004) used to make the content accessible

to youngsters. Data are processed using tools of corpus-assisted discourse analysis, namely *WordSmith Tools* (Scott 2016) and *SketchEngine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014). A statistical analysis of the lexical variation and lexical density of the four versions of the website illustrates the presence of a rather restricted vocabulary whose range progressively increases from *Young Learners* to *High School*. The four versions of *Kids in the House* were also compared through the *Keywords* tool to identify significant words for each subcomponent. Results show that the four versions are characterized by different levels of readers' involvement, inclusion, and engagement. Furthermore, the version for teenagers presents elements pointing to a more complex and elaborate style and syntax. Marked differences in how popularizing strategies are used in the four versions were also identified. Descriptions and definitions often accompanied by educational activities are more frequent in *Young Learners*, while, in the version for grade schoolers, strategies such as denominations, reformulations, and analogies in the form of similes and metaphors can be found. Reformulations and denominations play a fundamental role in the versions for middle and high schoolers, together with a wide range of educational activities and external supplementary worksheets.

Silvia **Cacchiani** proposes a qualitative investigation into the ways exclusive knowledge about copyright is presented to children in *Key Stage 3* (11-14 years old) on the Bitesize and Newsround pages of the British Children's BBC online platform. The article compares the objective exposition in the "Copyright" article of OUP's *A Dictionary of Law*, primarily addressing late youth and adults, with the Bitesize sister directories on copyright and intellectual property, and a Newsround story about EU copyright law. The materials included in the dataset are analyzed against a rich theoretical background in terms of their proximity to the typical features of a semantic-encyclopaedic dictionary article, their readability as a measure of text usability, the interactional dialogic strategies used to create engagement with the reader, as well as the interaction of verbal and non-verbal components in creating conceptual accessibility. Cacchiani's analysis shows that the online materials for children discussed differ in some important respects, although addressing the same audience. Thus, the Bitesize pages favour brevity, precision, and conciseness, resort to specialist terminology and preserve the structure of the expository text. They are also characterized by a marked preference for the standard *definiendum – definiens* structure, rather than resorting to the strategies described in Calsamiglia and van Dijk (2004). On the other hand, Newsround adopts interactive strategies through the exploitation of verbal and visual stimuli (e.g., clever language play within memes) to

engage with users, arouse their curiosity, and promote identification with the represented participants and actions.

Denti and Diani, Nikitina, and Masi tackle medical and scientific matters. Olga **Denti** and Giuliana **Diani** direct their attention to the dissemination of medical information to children and teenagers. To this aim, they analyzed three websites and three booklets in English explaining COVID-19 to the young, with a view to the popularization strategies employed and the role played by verbal-visual interaction in the popularization process. Their primary analytical frameworks are Calsamiglia and van Dijk's classification of explanation strategies, and the grammar of visual design proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen, accompanied by methodological reference to other authors such as Barthes's notion of *anchorage*. Denti and Diani observed the employment of similar popularization strategies across the various materials, including Denomination and Definition to explain technical terms, the use of similes and metaphors, *wh-* and *how-* question/answer patterns, the imperative mood (do's and don'ts) and pronouns *you* and inclusive *we* to stimulate reader's engagement with the texts. However, differences were observed regarding style, the texts for younger readers being more colloquial and conversational, and those for teenagers adopting a style closer to that of textbooks. At the level of visual-verbal interplay, all texts use images and text in a complementary way and amply resort to the use of visual metaphors. The images, however, are adapted to the age group: fictional characters for younger children; teenage characters for youngsters. Furthermore, the websites take advantage of their electronic nature and include dialogic videos.

Jekaterina **Nikitina**'s contribution also deals with the presently relevant topic of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it is explained to children. The study relies on two corpora assembled for the purpose: one contains advice to parents, and the other texts destined for children. The main corpora used for the study contain texts in English. However, there are some smaller sub-components featuring texts in Italian and Russian, which give rise to interesting comparisons across lingua-cultures. One of the study's claims is that definitions used in texts for children often depend on the pre-existing knowledge children have and exploit it by means of similes. Another surprising feature emerging from the analysis is that if popularization for parents resorts to a vast array of different strategies, texts for children mainly rely on personification, to the point that it becomes a backbone in this specific genre. Thus, coronavirus is presented as a living being and consequently attributed schemata that are typical of human

beings, such as having a family, having feelings, and even being given bad marks. Conversely, in the stories for caregivers, personification is more selectively employed and especially applies to the "good players", i.e., the antibodies, cells, and the immune system.

Silvia **Masi** investigates TED talks, a type of event specifically born for the purposes of popularization, with a special view to those involving children as either speakers or part of the intended audience. The author's aims are twofold: to establish whether TED of/for children differ in any way from other TED talks and to observe whether they share similar strategies with other informative literature for children. Masi created two corpora, each including 16 talks on Science and Technology: one corpus includes talks for or by children from four playlists compiled by the TED Team of editors; the other corpus comprises talks not specifically involving children. All the talks underwent manual qualitative analysis, with a special focus on engagement markers, verbal strategies of recontextualization, and visuals. Her analyses confirmed the existence of differences between TED talks for kids and for a generalized audience and similarities with other types of informative literature for children. In particular, the talks for children were found to be more engaging, with strong anchoring in pre-teens and teens' worlds of experience. The analysis also showed the presence of kid-oriented popularization, such as exemplification, reformulation, and analogy.

The volume continues with three papers on largely understudied topics in popularization linguistic studies, i.e., rewriting literature for young adults (Bianchi – Manca), diversity (Turnbull), and English grammar metalanguage (Cappelli). Francesca **Bianchi** and Elena **Manca** deal with intralingual literary adaptations as a peculiar case of popularization. More specifically, they apply corpus linguistics methods to analyze a young adult rewriting of Dan Brown's famous novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, by the author himself. Bianchi and Manca address the question of what counts as "more appropriate" for an audience of young adult readers, borrowing Brown's own words. After dealing with the theoretical and applied implications of writing for different audiences, by taking into account suggestions from children's literature, developmental psychology, language acquisition, and reading comprehension, as well as previous linguistic studies on popularization, the authors illustrate the differences between the two versions of the novel. They carry out a detailed analysis at the level of keywords, key POS tags, and key semantic categories of the two texts by resorting to the software package Wmatrix (Rayson 2009), a tool that performs part-of-speech (POS) and semantic tagging, and also relies on a comparison with the BNC Sampler Written Imaginative, used as

a reference corpus. The most interesting findings at a general level include a clear attempt at simplifying the language in the text and a replacement of American with British expressions. The 'traditional' adaptation strategies that have been identified as crucial are Purification, Language adaptation, Abridgment, and Localization. Purification stems from the need to remove unsuitable or disturbing references to sexual matters, as Brown himself explicitly announced. Language adaptation consists in replacing Latinate with Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, proper names with generic ones, specialized terms with more common ones, and substituting metaphorical expressions with more concrete ones. Abridgement takes the form of deletion of original passages that are not functional to push the plot forward. Localization, as mentioned previously, consists in replacing the American with the British variety, a choice for which a conclusive explanation cannot be provided. However, the analysis (in line with results in Bianchi 2018) also emphasizes changes that are not included in the above categories and would suggest the need for a revision of the classification of adaptation strategies geared to an audience of young adult readers. In addition, some of the choices made by the adaptor do not seem to take the profile of young adult readers into account, both in terms of tastes and preferences and cognitive skills, in the latter case assessing them as rather less skilled and competent than adult readers.

    Judith **Turnbull**'s article tackles the culturally and socially relevant question of the ways in which information about diversity is presented to young people: an essential contribution to the education of any responsible present and future citizen. If popularization for children, in general, involves the adaptation of communication to their still-developing linguistic and cognitive abilities, the popularization of the abstract concept of diversity must necessarily take into account age-specific behavioural and social development as well. It is, in fact, not strictly an example of "specialized terminology" per se, but its meaning can be difficult to fully grasp for children, like that of other words (e.g., "racism"), hence the large number of resources available online to introduce these important concepts. The article analyzes a corpus of 28 YouTube videos through an eclectic, qualitative approach to identify and discuss the strategies used both in their cognitive and communicative dimensions. The complete list of the materials is provided in an Appendix. Verbal and non-verbal aspects are considered, as the author focuses on both linguistic and multimodal mechanisms, strategies, and devices adopted to transfer knowledge. The most common verbal strategies described are definition and the use of analogy and metaphor. Interestingly, exemplification is also very frequently

exploited in the videos addressed to younger children, and hypothetical situations are also used to create a dramatic effect and prompt an empathetic response in the children. The analysis of communicative strategies reveals the frequent use of questions addressed to the viewers, the use of positive words in association with differences, and the use of rhymes and repetitions as attention-grabbing strategies. Interestingly, although the language is informal and contributes to creating a friendly atmosphere for the young audience, humour is not exploited in the popularization of information about diversity, which underlines the inherently serious nature of the question.

Gloria **Cappelli**'s contribution explores the role of explicit teaching of grammatical metalanguage (including spelling and punctuation) in a selection of teaching materials after grammar was reintroduced in British schools as part of the New National Curriculum for English at the end of the 1980s. The New Literacy Strategy, which was to follow a decade later, reinforced this shift with a stable role allocated to grammar in the British education system. The chapter aims to ascertain whether grammatical terminology, at least those terms that are necessary to discuss linguistic matters, can be equated with specialized terminology, and hence whether the same popularizing strategies that are used when transferring specialized knowledge to children are employed in this genre as well. The dataset for this study includes a selection of materials (e.g., reference materials, teaching materials, and narrative teaching materials) published by popular publishing houses in the UK and USA and destined for an audience ranging from 1 to 6. As Cappelli rightly underlines, different age groups entail different skills and cognitive profiles: the ability to maintain concentration and control one's behaviour, attention span, interests, and relational skills. As a consequence, books and materials are shaped based on these characteristics. The analysis shows that grammar teaching can be considered "a peculiar case of knowledge transfer", as children have already mastered the language (i.e., the specialized content). Yet, they may need to learn how to name the various building blocks. Consequently, there is no recontextualization, but reformulation strategies are often resorted to so as to make grammatical metalanguage accessible to young learners. These include verbal and visual resources, in a variable mixed proportion, depending on the age of the addressees. However, the emerging approach adopted is always functional: grammar is seen as a tool to use the language more appropriately and successfully. Bimodal input (i.e., access to information via different modes) is often exploited to make comprehension more straightforward, although differently in relation to age groups and genres. Thus, text and images

frequently complement each other, for example, when images succeed in representing abstract concepts and anchoring them to the learners' experience and background knowledge.

The last two works in this volume cover popularization of art for children, explored in Fina's and Sezzi's contributions. Maria Elisa **Fina** proposes a multimodal investigation of twenty audio-delivered pictorial descriptions in English specifically intended for children, accessible on the official website of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), a museum that prioritizes social inclusion. Fina put together a corpus of descriptions that were later annotated for several features, such as 'type of speaker', 'speech', 'music', 'sounds', and 'prosody', and analyzed by applying a multimodal framework. As the author remarks, pictorial descriptions emerge as a complex informative text genre, orally presented but based on a previously composed written script. In addition, since the final product is delivered aurally, it exploits all the semiotic forms of "soundscape". The rich and detailed analysis of excerpts from the MoMA corpus evidences that popularization strategies are designed to stimulate children's observation skills and further develop their critical thinking by making the art experience a discovery. In particular, questions and invitations addressed to children stimulate them to search the painting visually, "but also to interact and play games with the artwork to experience first-hand particular visual features or emotional effects". Alongside these involving techniques, more explicitly didactic strategies such as denominations and definitions are aimed at explaining the meaning of scarcely accessible concepts or terms. At the same time, analogy and anchoring are used to make art part of the child's world. Finally, an equally relevant role is played by the soundscape, since the speaker's voice, speech, music, sounds, and prosody merge to suggest what might not be immediately accessible and retrievable by conveying emotions and ideas intuitively and by aurally 'guiding' the exploration of the artwork.

Finally, Annalisa **Sezzi** tackles the identification of the popularization strategies used in websites specifically addressed at children, *Tate Kids*, *MetKids*, and *Destination Modern Art: an Intergalactic Journey to MoMA and P.S.1.*, which stand out as quite innovative in the panorama of popularization of art for children. These websites, Sezzi contends, are not only a privileged locus for knowledge dissemination but also a powerful instrument to involve children by stimulating their curiosity and cultivating their interest in art. They go beyond 'craftivity' and promotion by making works of art and artists more accessible to young people. Sezzi intersects quantitative

and qualitative analyses to uncover the main strategies used in her self-compiled corpus, the *MuseKids* corpus, containing sections from *Tate Kids* and *MetKids* collected in 2019 as part of a project devoted to museum online communication for children and early teenagers. The third object of analysis, the website *Destination Modern Art: an Intergalactic Journey to MoMA and P.S.1*, is described separately and only qualitatively on account of its different structure and its limited verbal text. The analysis of the annotated *MuseKids* Corpus reveals that nearly all types of popularizing strategies are used (e.g., denominations, definitions, exemplifications, analogy). What emerges instead as quite peculiar is the use of reformulation to get children to pronounce the names of artists correctly and effortlessly, a feature shared by *Destination Modern Art* too. Another feature deserving attention is the lack of generalizations, which depends on the unique artistic experience each work of art represents for its viewers. Conversely, this sense of uniqueness is enhanced by the use of direct citations of artists' words to illustrate their works, which gives viewers a key to better understanding them.

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