

“An experience that apparently differs a lot from mine”. Evidentials in discourse: the case of gastronomic discussions.

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1. Introduction

"How do you know?" – "What makes you think that?" One might say that it is to forestall such potentially challenging questions that speakers and writers evidentially qualify weak or strong assertive statements, providing more or less specific cues as to their sources of information and hence the type of evidence that justifies the performed speech acts. In this paper, I will use the method of a case study to illustrate the category of information source, paying attention both to the way it is coded linguistically and to its functions in discourse. The examined case is a gastronomic discussion, developed online in the comment space of a restaurant review on the Italian website www.passionegourmet.it.¹ As I will argue below, the context of reviews and of the associated online discussions is particularly interesting in an evidential perspective because of the specific evidential requirements of the review genre and because of asymmetries between discussion participants resulting from an unequal access to sources.

The category of information source has attracted the attention of linguists mainly as a grammatical phenomenon, both in languages with more or less sophisticated paradigms of obligatory evidential markers and in languages that provide the option of using polyfunctional grammatical markers to mark certain types of sources (e.g. the conditional mode in Italian, which can signal hearsay information, among other functions). On the basis of typological research about grammaticalized evidentials, Willett (1988) distinguishes three main types of information source: direct experience (with various subtypes according to perceptual modality) and two types of indirect knowledge, namely others' discourse (hearsay) and inference. Within inference, at least two subtypes can be distinguished on the basis of the role played by perceptual data: circumstantial inference, in which a minor premise of the reasoning is accessible through perception, and generic inference, in which speakers do not refer to perception at all.² The interlinguistic relevance of the mentioned basic categorizations of source types is by and large confirmed by Aikhenvald's (2004) recent typological survey. Squartini (2001) has convincingly argued that they help understand the linguistic coding of information source not only in grammaticalized evidential systems, but also in languages such as Italian, which lack obligatory grammatical marking in this functional domain and rely, instead, on *evidential*

¹ The examined discussion is part of the corpus collected within the Swiss National Foundation project n. 141350 "From perception to inference. Evidential, argumentative and textual aspects of perception predicates in Italian", Università della Svizzera italiana, 2012-2015 (direction: Johanna Miecznikowski and Andrea Rocci, cf. www.perc-inferenza.usi.ch/en). I would like to thank Martina Cameroni, Elena Musi, Mariachiara Pasinetti and Francesca Saltamacchia for having contributed to data collection.

² The terms *circumstantial* vs. *generic* have been adopted from Squartini (2008:925).

strategies (Aikhenvald 2004) of various kinds. Insights about source types coming from language typology have been applied, for example, in studies about lexical evidentials in Romance languages (e.g. Squartini 2007, Cornillie 2015, Miecznikowski in press, Musi 2015, Hassler 2015) and in discourse analytical work that widens the scope from the linguistic coding of evidentiality to pragmatic and multimodal cues (see e.g. Hanks 2012). Many authors address the question of the relationship between evidentiality and other categories such as epistemic modality or subjectivity, which arises because of the functional overlap of these three categories in language systems³ and in discourse.⁴ In the present paper, I will treat information source as a functional-conceptual category (Boye & Harder, 2009:38) of its own, theoretically distinguishing the question of source types from the speaker's evaluation of the certainty of an asserted or hypothesized proposition (epistemic modality) and from the more general category of speaker involvement (subjectivity and intersubjectivity).

Starting out from the typology of sources presented above, I intend to show in which way participants refer to information sources and how these references are related to the context of the gastronomic online discussion. To guide the analysis, I will distinguish three basic types of evidential strategies: evidential framing (2.1.), argumentation (2.2.), and pragmatic strategies depending on the propositional content of p (2.3.). I will then introduce the discourse genre under analysis (3.1., 3.2.), paying special attention to its evidential dimension (3.3.), and move on to describe and discuss the reference to direct evidence, circumstantial and non circumstantial inference as well as others' discourses in the chosen fragment of gastronomic discourse (4.). In my conclusion (5.), I will sum up the main theoretical and methodological findings and delineate some perspectives of research for linguistics and discourse analysis.

2. A typology of evidential strategies

2.1. Evidential framing

The evidential framing of a given asserted proposition p consists in the communication (by assertion or presupposition) of an experience of knowledge acquisition by the speaker resulting in his or her acknowledging p. Depending on the type of source, this experience will consist in the speaker's participation in the event denoted by p, in his or her observing event_p by the senses, in an act of reasoning from sensorial or other data resulting in p, in the speaker's hearing or reading others' discourses containing p.⁵ Various types of framing can be distinguished according to the linguistic means used.

³ For recent literature reviews on this question see Almeida (2015) and Musi (2015:82-95). As far as Italian is concerned, the issue is addressed by Rocci (2012) and by Miecznikowski et al. (2013) in the context of their analysis of the modal verb *dovere* 'must' and the modal adverb *forse* 'perhaps', respectively. The polyfunctionality of evidential markers is discussed more generally by Arrese (2015).

⁴ Recent discourse analytical work has investigated the contribution of evidentials both to the expression and to the interactive negotiation of epistemic stance (e.g. Fox 2001, Sidnell 2012, Hanks 2012, Mushin 2013, Almeida 2015, Hassler 2015).

⁵ The plurality of events implied by evidential framings is made explicit already by Jakobson (1984 [1957]), who considers evidential markers as *shifters*: "EVIDENTIAL is a tentative label for the verbal category which takes into account three events – a narrated event, a speech event, and a narrated speech event (Ens), namely the alleged source of information about the narrated event. The speaker reports an event on the

Narrative framing situates the experience of knowledge acquisition in the past and reports it by means of more or less detailed narrative and descriptive accounts. As we will see in section 4.2.1., in which examples of narrated direct experiences are discussed, this strategy specifies the source in a particularly explicit and precise fashion: it is not only categorized, but actually situated in time and space. On the other hand, the establishment of a relation between the narrated events and the assertion of p in the moment of speech is not necessarily explicit; it also rises certain problems related to perspective, due to the fact that the speaker as such and the speaker as a narrative protagonist⁶ do not necessarily share all of their knowledge, feelings and opinions. Narrative framing is clearly a discourse strategy, not a linguistic one.

Lexical-constructional framing takes place at the sentence level by means of matrix verbs (especially verbs of thinking, of saying, of appearance as well as modal verbs) and sentential operators (e.g., in Italian, *forse* 'perhaps', *magari* 'maybe', *probabilmente* 'probably', *sicuramente* 'surely' etc.) that take semantic scope over p. The experience of knowledge acquisition is situated in the past, with present consequences, or presented by the speaker as taking place in the moment of speech. It may be reported explicitly (especially when perception verbs, verbs of thinking or verbs of discourse reception are used) or presupposed lexically (in the case of sentential adverbs or certain more grammaticalized matrix verb constructions).

Grammatical framing – the type of framing most typological research focuses on (cf. section 1. above) – relies on grammatical morphemes or highly grammaticalized discourse particles, either specialized (absent in Italian) or polyfunctional (in Italian: certain tenses and moods). The speaker's experience of knowledge acquisition is not reported, but linked to p as presupposed background information about source type.

Suprasegmental framing uses prosody, facial expression and gestures or, in written texts, graphic means such as quotation marks, indentation or font variation, used especially to signal others' discourses. Suprasegmental framing is similar to grammatical framing as far as the informative prominence of p is concerned but is probably less conventionalized. Another important difference with regard to grammatical means is that suprasegmental framing offers additional iconic resources such as, for example, the imitation of voice to refer to others' discourses in spoken interaction.

2.2. Argumentation

Even if it is intuitively clear that there must be a close conceptual relation between evidentiality – especially inferential information sources – and argumentation, this relation is rarely theorized in the linguistic and discourse analytical literature. In this section, I will sketch some basic notions of argumentation theory that are useful to understand structures of reasoning at the interface between evidentiality and argumentation and then argue that argumentation, in virtue of these, can function as an strategy signaling inference as an information source.

basis of someone else's report (quotative, i.e. hearsay evidence), of a dream (revelative evidence), of a guess (presumptive evidence), or of his own previous experience (memory evidence)." (Jakobson 1984:46)

⁶ The case is a special instance of the fundamental duality between the speaker as such (*locuteur en tant que tel*) and the speaker as a mundane being (*locuteur en tant qu'être du monde*) postulated by Ducrot (1984:199).

Argumentation consists in supporting uncertain and/or controversial asserted propositions (standpoints) by other verbally stated propositions considered to be less uncertain and less controversial (arguments). The supporting function of a textually given argument depends on the accessibility – for the speaker and, crucially, for the addressee – of an agreed-upon inferential procedure in which the argument has the function of a premise and that allows to derive the standpoint as a conclusion. Partly implicit inferential procedures, or schemes, can be analyzed by postulating certain basic structures of reasoning and types of implicit premises. In the present case study, a simplified version of the Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT, cf. Rigotti & Greco 2010) will be used to describe inference schemes. The model posits a basic syllogistic structure and thus provides guidelines both for the reconstruction of implicit premises in texts. Reconstruction requires (a) the identification of a *datum*, i.e. a minor premise, often expressed in the text; (b) the categorization of the ontological relation between the datum and the conclusion (*locus*: e.g. causality, analogy or authority); the reconstruction of (c) formal (general) major premises based on the locus in question and (d) material (context-specific) major premises that jointly allow to derive the conclusion from the minor premise.

When speakers argue, they verbally display the type of enthymemic reasoning procedures described above and encourage the addressee to run through the displayed procedures: as Pinto (2001, chapter 4) has put it, argumentation is an “invitation to inference” (cf. also Rocci 2006). Now, it is plausible to assume that speakers use similar basic forms of reasoning to persuade others and to derive new information from known information themselves. The methodological implication for linguistic analysis is, as has been pointed out by Rocci (2012) and Musi (2015), that topical models such as AMT, originally developed to analyze argumentation in discourse, can help describe the meaning of conventionalized linguistic inferential markers, especially by distinguishing subtypes of inference in a systematic way. On the level of discourse functions, hypothesizing a strong conceptual relationship between inferential evidentiality and argumentation leads to the further hypothesis that, in argumentative texts, inferential markers may contribute to signal argumentative relations and structures⁷ and thus function as argumentative indicators (van Eemeren et al. 2007, Rocci 2012, Musi 2015, Miecznikowski & Musi 2015b). Inversely, textually displayed argumentation can become an evidential strategy on its own to signal an inferential source of information – even in the absence of explicit grammatical or lexical evidential markers. Argumentation is then intended to show the speaker's acquiring knowledge in the moment of speech rather than to persuade the addressee of a proposition that he or she, the speaker, knows by other means. Argumentation is likely to assume such a function when the context does not point towards other information sources for p, when deictic means foreground the speaker's subjectivity and/or when the novelty of p for the speaker is underlined.⁸

⁷ This idea is congruent with Almeida's (2015) observation, based on the analysis of a corpus of medical texts, that lexical inferential markers such as English *seem* and Spanish *parecer* can assume a "metatextual function".

⁸ Argumentative-evidential shifts in discourse leave traces in the meanings of certain argumentative discourse connectives, e.g. Italian *allora* 'then', which has an argumentative function in certain utterance-

The evidential function of argumentation differs from framing by the fact that the speaker's experience of knowledge acquisition is neither reported nor presupposed, but enacted discursively, a strategy that is available only for information sources of the inferential type.

2.3. Pragmatic strategies depending on the propositional content of p

Often, information source is not marked at all, but can be inferred pragmatically on the basis of the propositional content of p and the consideration of the wider co- and context. A common example of this strategy is the attribution of properties that in our daily experience are primarily accessible through specific senses, e.g. properties referring to temperature, texture, smell, taste, sounds, colors, light and darkness etc. When speakers predicate such properties of an object without specifying any source and displaying certainty, the default interpretation will be, in many contexts, that they have some direct perceptual evidence for their predication. When a speaker suggests to an interlocutor not to eat a certain fruit because it's sour, for example ("be careful, it's sour"), the interlocutor may reasonably infer, by default, that the speaker has tasted this kind of fruit in his life. Of course, other sources are possible and can be made explicit, for example hearsay ("be careful, it's sour, they say"), measurement of the molar concentration of hydrogen ions ("be careful, it's very sour, we measured that in the lab"), inference based on the observation of the visual effects of the fruit's juice ("be careful, that must be really sour [looking at a drop of juice rapidly changing the color of a cup of tea]") and so on. The default inference can be expected to be made only if no other source is specified and if it is not blocked by other contextual factors.

Another example is quantification. As discussed by Bazzanella (2011), approximate or, on the contrary, particularly precise quantification can give rise to various implicatures in discourse. Some of these regard information source. For example, categorizing a bag of potatoes as "quite heavy" or attributing it a weight of "8.5 kg" suggests different default information sources when evidential marking is absent, i.e. direct personal experience in the first case and measurement or others' discourses – e.g. by reading what is written on the bag – in the second case. Like in the examples discussed above, default inferences can be overridden by explicit evidential framing (cf. "That bag looks quite heavy" / "That bag is quite heavy, my friend says", which force an inferential and a hearsay reading, respectively).

3. Gastronomic discussions

3.1. Gastronomic discourse

Gastronomic discourse is a field of texts and activity types defined by a common subject matter, which is food as a cultural object, especially cookery as handicraft and art on one side and eating and drinking as an aesthetic and cultural experience on the other.⁹ It shares

initial assertive uses, whereas an inferential-evidential function dominates in utterance-final interrogative uses (Bazzanella et al. 2008).

⁹ For an overview of the field in the European context see Poulain (2002) in a sociological perspective and Quellier (2010) in a historical perspective.

some of its topics with specialized discourse about nutrition, but what gastronomic interactions focus on are the aesthetic aspects of food rather than its effects on health. Interaction types within the field of gastronomy include, among others, collaborative cooking, eating and drinking in company, domestic and institutional cooking training, and tasting events. Written discourse genres produced within the field are, for example, recipes, menus, advertisements and product descriptions, treatises and parts of conduct books dedicated to food presentation and table manners, restaurant reviews, various forms of lifestyle journalism, and travel descriptions or encyclopedic articles dedicated to gastronomy. Television has seen the rise of the cooking show and has adapted other genres, for example product comparisons based on tastings by experts. Innovations introduced in gastronomic discourse by the World Wide Web are mainly related to increased participation opportunities, which bring specialized texts and informal interaction closer together and change the relationship between authors and readers and between expert and non-expert cooks and consumers.¹⁰

3.2. Restaurant reviews and their comment spaces

Restaurant reviews (see Frumkin 2007, Hou 2012, Jurafsky et al. 2014, Souder & Bottone 2014) are a central genre of gastronomic discourse. They share basic characteristics with reviews of other cultural objects such as books or spectacles (see Zillig 1982, Stegert 1997, Köhler 2000), in particular (a) the combination of two main speech act types, i.e. assertions that provide information about the reviewed object and evaluative judgments, usually backed up by arguments and often underlined by a numeric rating; (b) the evidential requirement, for reviewers, of possessing direct evidence about the reviewed object; (c) the display of a certain amount of specialized knowledge in the field of reference (Miecznikowski 2015).

Traditionally, restaurant reviews are published by restaurant critiques and journalists in books and print media. In the era of consumer platforms, electronic word-of-mouth (cf. e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004) and facebook groups, on one hand reviewing has become a collective enterprise, in which user reviews are published alongside with experts' reviews.¹¹ Comment spaces and forums, on the other hand, make direct interactions with authors and among readers possible and thus give rise to written forms of gastronomic discussions.

The goals and topics of gastronomic discussions in comment spaces, which specifically interest us here, are influenced by the review genre both because all contributions (syntagmatically) react to a restaurant review and because, in the web context, the online genre of the user review is (paradigmatically) available as a possible model for how to

¹⁰ Genre adaptation and change in the era of internet is discussed in Giltrow & Stein (2009), to cite just one among numerous publications of the last decade dedicated to this issue.

¹¹ See Domsch (2009) and Boot (2011) on new forms of book reviewing and discussion and De Ascaniis (2012) on the exemplary case of TripAdvisor, where restaurants, hotels and travel destinations are reviewed by travelers. User reviews tend to differ from expert reviews with regard to length, formality and argumentation (De Ascaniis 2012). Expertise itself is defined in new ways without the intentional intervention of gate-keepers, e.g. by quantifying the places visited and evaluated by a user (in TripAdvisor) or by quantifying the number of reviews published by a user as well as their length in pages (on FanFiction platforms, which publish fiction written by - mostly young - non professional writers and encourage mutual reviewing).

express a written opinion. The main issue of discussions in comment spaces of reviews in general – and of restaurant reviews in particular – is to settle interactively if the basic speech acts of the review should be accepted, i.e. if the reviewer's evaluation is adequate and if the provided information is accurate, complete, relevant and well-founded. In comment spaces, we therefore find comments about the review, comments about reviewing in general and about evaluation criteria, user reviews as well as questions and answers aiming at sharing additional information about the reviewed object or about similar objects (cf. Miecznikowski 2015 and Miecznikowski & Musi 2015a).

3.3. The evidential-epistemic dimension of restaurant critique

Information about information source can be expected to be of a certain importance in discussions about reviews because the felicity conditions of legitimate reviews include specific constraints regarding the kind of knowledge a reviewer should possess.

Direct experience (condition *a* mentioned in the preceding section) is the most fundamental requirement with regard to information source. What counts as relevant direct experience depends on the kind of evaluated object: an author has to have assisted to a concert, read a book, tried out an electronic device or stayed in a hotel in order to legitimately review these various cultural objects. In the case of restaurant reviews, direct experience includes a personal visit in the restaurant and, centrally, having seen, smelled and tasted a menu. The relevance of the sensorial modality of taste is a specific characteristic of gastronomic discussions that distinguishes these from other kinds of reviewing situations. Condition *b*, in turn, i.e. the requirement of specialized knowledge about gastronomy, implies the reviewer's access to a broader range of sources including oral and written discourses as well as recurrent topoi and patterns of reasoning.

As to discussions in the comment space of reviews, the access of participants to information sources varies. Users that do not have any direct experience with the reviewed object – indeed the primary addressees of reviews – interact with the reviewer and with other users who know the object directly and use the forum to express their opinion about it. Experienced tasters interact with novices; experts of gastronomic discourse interact with participants that possess less knowledge about the field's typical genres and specialized terminology. In this situation of variously distributed knowledge, it is plausible to assume that specifying one's sources is useful for participants because it helps clarifying the pragmatic meaning of single statements and, simultaneously, the boundaries of the speaker's epistemic territory (Heritage 2012:562) and his or her epistemic authority (Sidnell 2012, Mondada 2013) or entitlement (Fox 2001) to make statements on issues related to restaurant reviewing.

4. Case study: a discussion in the comment space of a restaurant review

4.1. Main sequences

The review text and the associated discussion that will be examined in this section has been downloaded from the website www.passionegouret.it in 2012. The entire Italian text is reported in the appendix; speaker names and recurrent names of restaurants and places have been anonymized.

Before looking in more detail at information sources, I will summarize the main discussion sequences. Figure 1 shows the discussion threads that result on the basis of several factors: the contributions authors have chosen to respond to (leading to a graphical thread structure), the date and hour of postings, allocutions, first pair part and second pair part markers as well as cohesive means such as anaphor or the repetition of structures and lexical material.¹²



Figure 1: Thread structure of the discussion in the comment space of a restaurant review. Contribution labels are composed of the authors' initials and a number indicating the chronological order in which a given author has published his/her contribution.

Thread 1. LP reacts to the review questioning REVIEWER's choice to give a lower rating (16/20) to the reviewed restaurant A than to restaurant B, evaluated previously on the same website (19/20). LP argues that, judging by the pictures, restaurant A's dishes are less trivial than those offered in restaurant B and, moreover, reckons that restaurant B's success is due to a sort of fashion trend. CC1 criticizes LP's judgment and counters his two arguments, claiming that restaurant A's cuisine makes a repetitive (and thus trivial) use of certain textures, especially mousses and dressings, and that fashion trends are irrelevant in the small niche of haute cuisine. REVIEWER, on his side, explains that he has evaluated restaurant A comparing it to other (better) restaurants of the classical French tradition to which A belongs and that he has valued highly the innovativity and creativity of chef B. The thread is closed by a short depreciating dialectal expression posted by yet another user (R1).

Thread 2. M shortly reacts to the first argument in LP1 (M1: "E invece a me sembrano banali questi!!!" 'And to me, on the contrary, it's these [i.e. he dishes of restaurant A] that seem trivial!!!'). An exchange between LP and the reviewer follows. LP states to love "baroque" and "symphonic" cookery ("una cucina barocca, sinfonica", LP2) and accuses chef B's cookery to be poor and boring. REVIEWER defends chef B (Reviewer3), whereas

¹² Useful discussions of the sequential structure and cohesion of forum discussions are provided by Mondada (1999) and Maroccia (2004). In the present analysis, in one case, EB2 (cf. Example 4 cited in section 4.3.2.) the reconstructed thread structure does not correspond to the graphical thread structure as it appears on the website, which is reproduced in the Appendix. That structure shows that, technically, EB has responded directly to the review, a choice that gives more prominence to his post and seems to define a large scope of the closing statements it contains (a summary and wishes for the future), maybe intended to sum up and conclude the entire discussion up to that point. For reasons of local sequential and topical cohesion, however, it is more adequate to consider EB2 a continuation of thread 4.

LP persists, citing a dish by yet another chef, Ledoyen, which he considers excellent and very distant from chef B's cookery (LP3); REVIEWER criticizes that the two chefs should not be compared directly and finally suggests to consider the question a matter of taste (Reviewer4).

Thread 3. CC counters LP2's statement that restaurant B's cuisine is poorer than restaurant A's, reporting to have had extraordinary gustative experiences in restaurant B and hypothesizing, on the other hand, that the impression of richness in chef A's dishes derives from a (too) abundant use of fats. CG observes that LP's evaluation standards are radically different than his own and those of other participants and announces not to intend to convince LP to change his taste. CG1 is congruent with Reviewer4, written a few minutes before, and concludes the thread.

Thread 4. Threads 1-3 are written within three hours (June 8th, 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.) and all refer back to LP1. The next day, EB begins a thread by posting another direct reaction to the review (EB1). EB reports to have eaten an excellent hunting menu in restaurant A in October 2010 and recalls to have rated restaurant A 19/20. He expresses surprise about the huge difference between his experience and REVIEWER's (cf. example 2) and suggests that the difference could be due to the fact that the visits took place in two different seasons. REVIEWER explains again the comparative grounds on which he has based his evaluation and minimizes the difference in opinion underlining that 16/20 is a high score (reviewer5). AC states that the characteristics of restaurant A mentioned and shown up to that moment justify the rating 16/20 and aligns himself with the idea (expressed in EB1) that the hunting menu may not be fully representative of chef A's cuisine (AC1). EB admits to share the visual impression of repetitiveness, but maintains that what counts to judge food is above all direct tasting experience (EB2). He concludes by acknowledging REVIEWER's expertise (cf. example 8), listing REVIEWER's and his own rating together with those published by two major French gastronomic guides, and utters the wish that further visits to restaurant A may follow, such as to have a larger spectrum of opinions ("in modo da avere un ventaglio di opinioni più ampio").

Thread 5. Two weeks later, PR posts a link to a negative review of restaurant A published in the meantime, which PR categorizes as "tagliante" ('sharp', 'decisive'). GDF, the author of the cited text, reacts by a short mitigating statement that underlines the aesthetic characteristics of his review rather than the critical judgment proposed (GDF1: "Perché tagliente, direi sensuale, se piace..." 'Why call it sharp, I should say sensual, if it pleases [the audience]...').

4.2. Information sources

4.2.1. Direct experience

Which linguistic and textual means do discussion participants use to make reference to direct experience and, in particular, to taste?

A recurrent pragmatic strategy is narrative framing. Writers often choose to give a narrative account of a restaurant visit in order to set up a frame that implies their direct, personal participation and conditions the interpretation of any descriptive or evaluative

statement made within the frame.¹³ Narrative techniques are communicatively salient because they frame discourse not only cognitively, but also textually, by introducing and structuring texts. The review of restaurant A illustrates a rather elaborate variant of narrative framing following conventions that are common in touristic guides. Linguistic means such as the present tense and the first person plural or impersonal constructions are employed to present the event as an instance of an ideal visit in which the reader can imagine to be taking part. The narrative frame is set up at the beginning of the text (see example 1) and remains valid throughout the text, which presents the sub-events of the visit in a strict chronological order.

Example 1. (Review)

Siamo a PLACE A, perla del minuscolo territorio dello Jura sede di alcune delle cantine più interessanti di Francia. Oltre che territorio d'elezione per uno dei prodotti caseari più buoni : il France Comté [PICTURE] La passeggiata nel centro del paese, fortemente monopolizzato dagli esercizi che commerciano vino, è d'ordinanza [...]. Dopo tanto "faticare" il premio può essere sedersi nella sala rustica di un'ala del convento delle carmelitane che ospita il ristorante di CHEF A. [PICTURE]

We are in PLACE A, a pearl of the tiny Jura region in which some of France's most interesting cellars are located. And which also offers one of the best cheeses: the France Comté [PICTURE]. The walk in the centre of the village, strongly monopolized by wine sellers, is a must [...]. After all that "effort", the reward is to sit down in the rustic hall in one of the wings of the Carmelite convent that houses the restaurant of CHEF A. [PICTURE]

In comments, narrative framing is typically realized in a more reduced form at the text beginning. The beginning of EB1, cited as example 2, illustrates this type of framing:

Example 2. EB1

Che dire? Un'esperienza apparentemente molto diversa dalla mia. Sono stato a PLACE A alla fine di ottobre e la cena è stata eccezionale [...]. Ho trovato una cucina di classe, finezza [...] e complessità inconsuete.

What should I say? An experience that apparently differs a lot from mine. I went to PLACE A at the end of October and the supper was outstanding [...]. I encountered a cuisine of extraordinary class, refinement [...] and complexity.

EB introduces his own visit to restaurant A in two steps: a topic announcement by means of the event noun *esperienza* 'experience', which foregrounds an evidentially relevant aspect of the visit, and a narrative utterance that establishes the writer's role as a protagonist and specifies the spatial and temporal coordinates of the visit ("Sono stato a PLACE A alla fine di ottobre" 'I went to PLACE A at the end of October'). Once this frame is set, all subsequent judgments are situated within it by cohesive means and the pragmatic inference of discourse relations, implying that they are based on direct experience. The evaluative statement "la cena è stata eccezionale" ('the supper was outstanding') is linked to the narrative frame by the conjunction *e*, an associative anaphor suggested by the definite article and the continued use of the Passato prossimo, which maintains past

¹³ Apart from their role as an indicator of direct experience, narrations in which the speaker is a protagonist have further functions that we cannot explore here. Focusing on restaurant reviews by users, Jurafsky et al. (2014), for example, assume that "[...] reviewers employ narratives to portray their own social or psychological characteristics, role or stance". The authors use the computational methods of sentiment analysis to identify recurrent narrative frames, such as trauma narratives on the negative side or addiction narratives and metaphors of sexual pleasure in positive reviews.

reference while simultaneously underlining present relevance. The following evaluative statement is linked to the frame by semantic isotopies (*supper-cuisine*), but also by the first person singular Passato prossimo form of the verb *trovare*. In its telic meaning ('to find', 'to encounter'), which in the discussion under analysis occurs four times¹⁴, *trovare* denotes a discovery by an experiencing subject, presupposing a previous movement, or even intentional exploration, by the subject. The verb's presuppositions perfectly fit into the narrative frame, strongly implicating that the reviewer formed his positive judgment of restaurant A's cuisine as an effect of having enjoyed the meal.

Narrative framing functions as an evidential strategy for judgments about food and about restaurants when the judgments made in the past remain valid in the present. In example 2, present relevance is underlined by the chosen tense, but also by the generalization "una cucina" ('a cuisine'), which indicates that the speaker considers the meal he has eaten as an instance of a type of cookery that possibly has a certain stability in time.

Besides narrative framing, writers also recur to more explicit lexical and constructional means to link an evaluative statement to a direct information source. Consider example 3, in which the reviewer asserts that the rating difference between restaurant A (16 points out of 20) and Hôtel de Ville (19 points out of 20) is adequate considering the quality of what he has eaten in the two places ("come ho mangiato" 'how I have eaten'):

Example 3. Reviewer5

Tanto per fare uno degli esempi più recenti se l'Hotel de Ville a Crissier vale 19/20, e secondo me li vale tutti, la differenza con CHEF A ci sta tranquillamente¹⁵ per come ho mangiato.

Let's just make a recent example: if Hotel de Ville in Crissier is worth 19/20, and in my opinion it is worth every single point of those, the difference separating it from CHEF A is absolutely adequate considering how I have eaten.

Differently from the examples discussed earlier, the eating experience is not elaborated narratively, but reduced to a short adverbial frame. REVIEWER gives a judgment about restaurant A in the moment of speech, using the Present tense. The link between the present judgment and the framing past experience is made explicit by means of the preposition *per* ('in reason of', 'considering').

Besides the *per come*-construction, a further attested evidential frame is the use of experience verbs in combination with a source complement, mainly introduced by the preposition *da* ('from'). This construction can refer to a broad range of information sources – from direct evidence to inference and hearsay – depending on the verb, the type of percept denoted by the direct object and the type of source or stimulus denoted by the *da*-complement. Consider *notare* ('to note') + NP + *da* NP in example 4:

Example 4. EB2

Vero: dalle immagini si nota una certa irritante ripetitività di schiume e – soprattutto – punteggiature, in occasione del mio menu del tutto assenti. D'altra parte – è un mio limite – non sono in grado di giudicare un ristorante dalle foto: avrei bisogno di assaggiare i piatti per vedere se sono dotati della stessa stupenda

¹⁴ Besides Example 2, cf. also Example 4 and Example 9.

¹⁵ *Tranquillamente*, which I have translated by *absolutely*, is derived from the adjective *tranquillo* ('calm', 'quiet') when meaning 'unconcerned', 'feeling safe'. In the cited example, 'safely', 'without concerns' reinforces the confirmative, approving function of *starci* ('to be a good idea', 'to be adequate').

definizione e complessità di sapori trovata a ottobre o no (che poi quello che conta, al di là delle punteggiature, è quello).

[It's] true: the pictures show [lit. by the pictures, one notes] a certain irritating repetitiveness of mousses and – above all – sauce dots, which were completely absent in the case of my menu. On the other hand – this is a limit of mine – I am not able to judge a restaurant by pictures: I would need to taste the dishes in order to see if they are characterized by the same wonderful subtlety and complexity of flavors found in October or not (for what counts is that rather than the sauce dots).

EB uses the construction with an abstract direct object noun phrase ("a certain irritating repetitiveness of mousses and [...] sauce dots") to assert the proposition that mousses and sauce dots recur too often and to indicate that this assertion is based on the observation of the pictures published by the reviewer ("by the pictures"). The verb *notare* is compatible with direct perception; the culinary objects in question (mousses and sauce dots), the property ascribed to them (repetitiveness) and the stimulus (pictures) are perceivable directly. The combination of the underdetermined lexical evidential frame *notare* + da NP with further elements of p's content and context leads to an interpretation in terms of direct visual evidence.

On the epistemic level, as can be expected, propositions based on direct experience are presented as certain in the discussion under analysis. Certainty is signaled by the indicative mode and the absence of lexical markers of epistemic modality. The verbs *trovare* 'to find' and *notare* 'to note' suggest certainty as well, especially when they take scope over noun phrases (rather than complement clauses). Generally, *trovare* and *notare* + NP imply that the entity denoted by the NP exists independently of the experiencer's discovering it. When NPs are abstract, stative and have a predicative structure, i.e. ascribe a property to a subject (cf. "a cuisine of extraordinary class" in example 2; "a certain repetitiveness of mousses [...]" and "subtlety and complexity of flavors" in example 4), this suggests the possibility of interpreting them as propositions ('the cuisine was of extraordinary class', 'mousses are used in a repetitive way', 'flavors were subtle and complex'). However, the choice of the noun phrase format has an effect of realism with *trovare* and *notare*, underlining the real-world existence of the states in question rather than the mental nature of the corresponding propositions - a realism that implies the speaker's certainty about the propositions' truth.

4.2.2. Inference

Statements based on various types of inferences are quite frequent in the examined gastronomic discussion. I will illustrate the use of lexical frames and of argumentation to express inference and will identify, for each example, the inference schemes that are most compatible with the evidential expressions used, the statements' propositional meaning and the context.

The first type of inference I will discuss is circumstantial inference. In the examined discussion, appearance verbs, especially *sembrare* (example 5, LP1, LP2, M1) and *parere* (CC1), are commonly used as lexical frames expressing this kind of source, which is illustrated by example 5:

Example 5. LP1

Non conoscevo questo ristorante ma vedendo i piatti mi vien davvero voglia di andarci. [Sembrano superappetitosi]_A. E' chiaro che sono senz'altro più pesanti di quelli del RESTAURANT B. [Ma mi sembrano

anche infinitamente più appaganti]B. [E mi sembrano anche, tecnicamente, molto più difficili da realizzare]C.

I didn't know this restaurant, but seeing the dishes really stimulates me to go there. [They look extremely appetizing]A. Clearly, they are heavier than those of RESTAURANT B. [But they also seem to me to provide infinitely more satisfaction]B. [And they also seem to me to be, technically, much more difficult to realize]C.

LP introduces his post by clarifying that he lacks personal knowledge about, and hence experience of, restaurant A and uses the verb *vedere* to report the direct perception of restaurant A's dishes instead (for all practical purposes, the vision of pictures seems to be treated, in this context, as equivalent to the vision of the represented objects). LP then makes a series of three statements (A-C) that are all marked as uncertain and reasoning-based by the appearance verb *sembrare*. Having established visual data as a starting point of reasoning, the resulting information source is circumstantial inference.

In A and B, LP infers a good taste and further positive effects on a potential eater, most plausibly by reasoning from concomitance. According to this hypothesis, LP grounds his reasoning in multisensory experiences made in the past, i.e. the experience of concomitant properties of food perceivable by various senses. Associating concomitant properties (as a major material premise), the observation of just one such property, i.e. how the dishes look, may suggest the presence of further properties such as good taste and smell and the effect of stimulating the eater's appetite ("appetitoso", 'appetizing') as well as the effect of providing the eater some satisfaction ("appagante", 'which provides satisfaction').

In contrast, statement C consists in a hypothesis about the technical complexity of the food production process and, as such, is most probably based on reasoning from observed effects to possible causes. This scheme presupposes, as material major premises, some knowledge about causal chains that allows the speaker to imagine sequences of events leading to the observed result and to estimate, given the result and the circumstances, which events are likely to have occurred. In the present case, the adoption of this scheme implies that LP possesses a certain amount of knowledge about food preparation. It is on these grounds that he is able to infer which processes must have been necessary to create the dishes such as they appear on the plate.

Another instance of circumstantial inference is the second statement in the following example:

Example 6. AC1

Trovo molta coerenza con ciò che vedo e leggo di questo ristorante ed il voto attribuito da REVIEWER. Non fosse altro che per certe ripetitività di schiume e punteggiature :-> sintomo forse di scarsità di idee, difficili da immaginare per un 19/20.

I perceive much coherence between what I see and read about this restaurant and the rating attributed by REVIEWER. Just only considering a certain repetitiveness of mousses and sauce dots :-> a symptom, perhaps, of a lack of ideas and difficult to consider compatible with 19/20.

AC starts out from a visual datum established in previous posts (the presence of many mousses and sauce dots) and hypothesizes an underlying cause (a lack of ideas). Reasoning from the effect to the cause is signaled lexically by the term *sintomo* 'symptom' and by the possibility marker *forse* 'perhaps', which signals low certainty and is often associated with causal inferential contexts (cf. the corpus-based study presented in Miecznikowski et al. 2013).

In statements that are evidentially qualified as being based on inference, the datum or minor premise may be, of course, non perceptual in nature. In the discussion about restaurant A, lexical evidential framings that contribute to express this type of information source include the verbs *temere* ('to be afraid', CC2), *credere* ('think', 'believe', CC1, AC1), *potere* ('can', CC2), *concludere* ('to conclude', example 8) and the adverbial expressions *magari* ('maybe', example 7), *con ogni probabilità* ('most probably', example 8), *sicuramente* ('surely', CC1), *inevitabilmente* ('inevitably', CC1), *difficilmente* ('hardly', 'probably not', example 11). In most cases, lexical frames are accompanied by arguments that further underline the inferential nature of the source and provide more specific information as to the inference schemes employed.

Example 7 is an instance of causal reasoning. REVIEWER starts by explicitly stating a minor premise, i.e. that CHEF B experiments a lot, from which he then infers that probably not all creations that result from that experimentation are fully successful. The inferred proposition is evidentially qualified by *magari*, which indicates epistemic possibility, non circumstantial reasoning¹⁶ and, in the context of the cited contribution, concession, which is doubly marked by *magari* and by the initial discourse marker *certo*:

Example 7. Reviewer2

Certo, CHEF B è un vulcano in attività, e come tale magari non tutti gli innumerevoli piatti che la sua fantasia gli permette di sfornare sono centrati.

Sure, CHEF B is an active volcano, and as such maybe not all of the countless dishes that his imagination allows him to create hit the mark.

Two contrasting metaphors are used: the volcano eruption metaphor, which suggests that CHEF B invents recipes in a powerful but uncontrolled manner, and the metaphor of *centering*, a verb that in Italian can mean either 'position in/orient to the center' or, within a shooting script, 'hit the mark'. The second meaning seems to be mainly relevant here. In its metaphorical sense, it implies the achievement of an excellent result thanks to skillful, controlled action. In the context of example 7, it may contribute to activate an implicit material major premise about handicraft in general and culinary creations in particular, i.e. that good quality usually results from skillful, controlled action. The chosen metaphors suggest reasoning from the absence of a cause (a careful and controlled style of work) to the absence of an effect known to depend on that cause (excellent quality of all resulting products).

The last example illustrates a kind of reasoning in which logical implications play a role alongside with causal relations. The core of EB's reasoning is that he infers a greatly varying quality of Restaurant A's meals on the basis of the observation that two reliable reviewers, himself and REVIEWER, have given the restaurant strongly diverging ratings:

Example 8. EB2

Poi, naturalmente, mi fido del palato di REVIEWER, prendo atto che ha trovato la cucina di CHEF A molto distante dalla mia valutazione e quindi non posso che concludere che, con ogni probabilità, il livello del

¹⁶ As has been argued elsewhere, *magari* 'maybe' and *forse* 'perhaps', which both express epistemic possibility, differ as to their evidential properties: *forse* prefers reasonings based on specific observable data, whereas *magari* prefers contexts in which such data are lacking.

locale varia più della media a seconda dei menu degustazione e delle stagioni. Mi auguro che ci siano altre visite, in modo da avere un ventaglio di opinioni più ampio.

Of course, I trust REVIEWER's palate, I take notice that he has found CHEF A's cuisine very distant from my evaluation and thus I cannot but conclude that, most probably, this restaurant's level is more variable than average, depending on degustation menus and seasons. I hope there will be other visits, such as to have a larger panoply of opinions.

EB's own reliability is taken for granted and REVIEWER's reliability is underlined by presenting him as a competent taster ("mi fido del palato di REVIEWER" 'I trust REVIEWER's palate') and by recalling, through the Passato prossimo form of *trovare* (cf. 4.2.1.), that REVIEWER's judgment is based on direct experience. EB indeed presents the two ratings not as subjective evaluations, but as true propositions, in order to then conclude, reasoning from logical implications, that if two contradictory evaluative predicates have been ascribed to a meal in restaurant A on two different occasions and both predications are true, the quality of restaurant A's meals cannot be constant over time. On these grounds, EB derives further conclusions regarding the quantity of variation (greater than average) and its cause (menu type and season). In this instance of argumentative framing, a typically argumentative vocabulary (*quindi* 'therefore', *concludere* 'to conclude') is combined with an expression of probability to mark the statement in question as inferred. The repeated use of the first person singular and the quasi-narrative telling of a sequence of reasoning steps foregrounds the speaker's own thinking process and the heuristic, knowledge generating function of argumentation, with evidential effects. Crucially, on the evidential level, EB's way of introducing the statement in question excludes other information sources that are *a priori* compatible with the context of gastronomic discussions, especially the direct personal experience of variability (which would presuppose repeated visits by EB in restaurant A) and hearsay/reported speech.

The numerous attested instances of circumstantial and non circumstantial inference vary greatly as to the degree of certainty expressed, for the lexical markers employed cover the whole epistemic gradient from possibility (e.g. *sembrare* 'to seem', *magari* 'maybe') to necessity (e.g. "non posso che concludere" 'I cannot but conclude', *inevitabilmente* 'inevitably').

4.2.3. Reported speech and opinions

Reviewers integrate others' discourses for a number of purposes: to contextualize the description of the reviewed object, for example by adding historical or geographical information; to dialogue with the creators of the reviewed object, for example by citing their presentation of the object; to represent parts of the reviewed object when the latter contains discourses (books, song albums, exhibitions etc.); to dialogue with third parties (other witnesses and reviewers, experts, the man on the street etc.). In discussions about reviews, *a priori* the same discourse types and functions are relevant. In addition, participants may refer to each other's discourse, especially to the posts forming the on-going discussion, but also to oral communications or texts published elsewhere.

Some, but not all, references to others' discourses have an evidential function, which can, but need not, be made explicit by strategies that range from vague evidential markers (e.g.

the conditional mode or adverbs) to full-fledged forms of reported discourse.¹⁷ In the gastronomic discussion under analysis, others' discourses play a considerably less important role as information sources than direct experience or inference. The neatest example is the following, where the verb of saying *riassumere* ('to sum up') is used to introduce a series of nominal statements about the attribution of ratings by different reviewers and guides:

Example 9. EB2 (continuation of example 8)

Per il momento, riassumendo: Michelin 2 stelle, Gault Millau 4 cappelli (su un massimo di 5), REVIEWER (maggio) 16/20, EB (ottobre) 19/20.

For the moment, summing up: Michelin 2 stars, Gault Millau 4 hats (out of a maximum of 5), REVIEWER (May) 16/20, EB (October) 19/20.

The verb presupposes preceding discourses and therefore functions as a lexical evidential frame indicating that the information about who gave which ratings stems from intersubjectively accessible discourses. Which discourses are intended is not stated explicitly; but since the information is presented as certain (excluding rumors and the like) and since EB and REVIEWER have participated in the current discussion and *Michelin* and *Gault Millau* are publicly available written guides, the reader can easily start from the content of the reported statements to infer the sources' identity pragmatically (cf. section 2.3.).

In contrast, in a number of other cases, participants topicalize a discourse, but do not exploit that discourse as a source for their own text, either because they refrain from asserting or even only reporting any proposition contained in that discourse (see example 10) or because the cited discourse is not presented as the speaker's primary information source, but rather as an additional, hearer-oriented, argument from authority (see example 11).

Example 10. PR1

Il punto di vista "tagliante" del GDF

GDF's "sharp" point of view

[LINK TO A REVIEW WRITTEN BY GDF]

Example 11. REVIEWER2

La nostra è una passione troppo di nicchia per passare attraverso i grandi numeri e, come già detto da CC, se fermi l'uomo della strada difficilmente collegherà il nome di chef B a quello di un grande chef.

Our passion is too clearly in a niche to rely on big numbers and, as CC has already said, if you ask the man in the street, he will hardly associate chef B's name with that of a great cook.

Finally, some statements contain lexical evidential markers, such as *apparentemente* (example 2) or the verb of discourse reception *prendere atto* ('to take notice' in example 8), that signal indirect evidence and are compatible with hearsay or reported speech as an information source. Yet, at a closer look it turns out that the discourse referred to (in the two examples, the review to which the discussants respond) cannot possibly contain the

¹⁷ Cf. Calaresu (2004) for a detailed description of the forms of reported discourse in Italian, including a discussion of their relationship with two grammatical evidential strategies, i.e. the reportive uses of the Italian Conditional mood and the Indicative Imperfect tense (pp. 193-202).

asserted proposition. Indeed, the propositions in the scope of the above-mentioned markers, ("[that is] an experience that differs a lot from mine", example 2, and "he has found chef A's cuisine very distant from my evaluation", example 8) do not correspond to any statement made by REVIEWER, but result from EB's having compared REVIEWER's account and rating with his own. Therefore, the indirect evidence signaled by the cited markers is not hearsay or reported speech, but inference. REVIEWER's discourse is not the primary information source, but rather contains the minor premise of a reasoning process.

4.3. Discussion

The case of a gastronomic discussion is well suited to illustrate the communicative relevance of the category of information source for language users. Information about types of information sources is readily available in discourse: the linguistic and pragmatic analysis presented in the preceding sections reveals that, at least in the context of the written discussion examined, complete evidential underdetermination is rare. While grammatical marking is almost totally absent, an interplay of narrative and lexical framing, argumentation and pragmatic inferences makes sure that, more often than not, it is clear which of the three basic source types – direct experience, inference or reception of others' discourses – makes the speaker competent to assert a given proposition. Not only that: lexical features, the proposition's content as well as context sometimes allow to determine sources even more precisely. The speaker's direct experiences may be located in space and/or time, inferences may be specified as to type of datum and/or inference scheme, others' discourses may be attributed to authors and located spatio-temporally. The information about sources available in the discussion makes it possible to identify some tendencies, in the studied case, that characterize gastronomic discourse and/or reviewing discussions more generally.

First of all, the reference to direct sources and to circumstantial inference (i.e. inferences based on a perceptual datum) shows a hierarchy of sensorial modalities that is typical for gastronomic discourse. Eating – a multisensory experience involving taste, smell, touch and sight –, but also taste alone, are referred to as direct evidence to back up propositions the speaker presents as certain. The importance of direct tasting is, moreover, underlined in a metacommunicative comment by EB in thread 4 (example 8 above). Sight, which in many contexts of human life is an important information source, is referred to more often to present a datum from which to draw uncertain conclusions than as a direct source guaranteeing certainty. Visual perception is also presented as a limited, insufficient source by EB in thread 4 (example 4). Hearing plays no role at all: participants do not refer either to hearing or to sounds.

A second tendency is the very limited role played by hearsay information and reported discourse. The review text that participants comment on presents historical information about the region and the restaurant as well as biographical information about CHEF A, which can be pragmatically inferred to be based on readings made by REVIEWER. On the contrary, during the discussion participants neither explicitly refer to others' discourses as sources for their own assertions (except in one case, example 9) nor assert information that should be assigned to this kind of source on pragmatic grounds; the analysis shows that, rather, elements of others' discourses are referred to as data from which to derive further information by reasoning. The reticence to entirely rely on others' discourses is

probably due mainly to the reviewing context. Readers and commenters of reviews are generally interested in personal experiences and opinions and not (primarily) in exchanging rumors or learning from books and websites.

Finally, the evidential perspective adopted to analyze the chosen discussion shows the considerable importance of inference as an information source. Participants use the highly interactive situation of the comment space to engage in an inquiry about food and high gastronomy in which new knowledge is derived, more or less tentatively, and dialogically tested starting out from the input provided by the review. Making hypotheses and using argumentation not only to persuade (a rhetorical dimension that has not been discussed in this study), but also as a tool of knowledge construction seems to be a socially acceptable and relevant way of participating in the discussion.

One interesting aspect of this mode of interaction is that it allows participants to display gastronomic knowledge and hence claim epistemic authority as *connaisseurs* even if they do not know the specific restaurant currently evaluated. The analysis of the examples presented in section 4.2.2. has shown, in particular, that the inferences signaled by participants presuppose certain material major premises, depending on the inference scheme activated (which can be analytically reconstructed paying attention to the semantic relation between the conclusion and textually or contextually available information about the datum). Many of these material premises arguably belong to the field of gastronomic knowledge at some level of expertise: repeated experience of eating refined food (necessary to reason from concomitances, cf. example 5, A and B); causal knowledge about cookery (necessary to reason from the effect to the cause in example 5, C, example 6 and example 8 or from the cause to the effect in example 7); knowledge about how constant the quality of meals is usually in restaurants (necessary to state a difference to average in example 8); knowledge about restaurant evaluation procedures and about expert authority that makes it possible to judge the well-foundedness and, depending on the latter, the truth of statements made in the gastronomic field (necessary to derive conclusions about a restaurant from the comparison of judgments, cf. example 8).

With regard to field-specific methodological procedures, by the way, some metacommunicative comments made by REVIEWER and EB, who are both active expert reviewers, confirm the importance of repeated experience and comparison in restaurant critique. In thread 4, EB suggests, *ex negativo*, that ideally a judgment should be cross-checked, i.e. based on repeated visits by the same person

Example 12. EB1

Non ho la controprova, perché è stata la mia prima esperienza lì.
I haven't cross-checked, since it's my first experience there.

and/or by different persons (examples 8, 9). REVIEWER, on his side, repeatedly mentions the fact that his judgments are based on the comparison of restaurants that are similar with respect to their level of excellence and to the traditions they belong to (threads 1 and 2, but also Reviewer5 in thread 4). The methodological design of restaurant critique delineated in these various contributions thus ideally requires repeated and distributed direct experience as well as cultural background knowledge that allows reviewers and

critical readers to categorize restaurants and to establish relevant paradigms of comparison.

5. Conclusion and perspectives

The in-depth analysis of references to information sources in a specific fragment of discourse confirms the idea, suggested by typological research about grammaticalized evidential systems, that information source should be treated as a functional-conceptual category in its own right, distinct, in particular, from epistemic modality. The observed preferences for certain types of sources (taste over vision, inference over hearsay, comparison of direct experiences as a particularly valuable mode of knowing) imply that participants consider certain sources more reliable than others, with effects on their evaluation of the certainty of statements. But these preferences appear to depend, at least in part, on the specific activity type participants are engaged in and can be described and understood only if the evidential and the epistemic dimension of statements are distinguished analytically. The category of information source is also communicatively relevant beyond the question of certainty. The studied case suggests that information about sources functions not only as a contextualization cue for certain discourse genres, activities and fields, but also as a powerful means, for individual speakers, to legitimate their participation in the on-going activity and to position themselves when making specific contributions, for example as connoisseurs or as reviewers.

From the point of view of text linguistics, genre studies and conversation analysis, the description of the evidential dimension of discourse should therefore be part of the discourse-analytical toolkit. The descriptive task is made difficult, however, by the great variety of means speakers use to signal their sources. In this study, a typology of evidential strategies has been proposed – distinguishing evidential framing, argumentation and pragmatic strategies that depend on propositional content – which might be useful to discourse analysts more generally, beyond the specific case of gastronomic discussions. More research is needed to understand evidential marking in discourse better. On the linguistic side, the growing interest in lexical strategies in addition to grammatical ones is promising, since it allows to gain a more comprehensive view of evidential framing. In contrast, textual and multimodal evidential strategies are less studied and, as a consequence, there are only few data on the specific effects of grammatical and lexical framing as an alternative semiotic choice to textual and multimodal strategies. Discourse analytical research might allow to address problems such as the risks and advantages of evidential vagueness between abstract (and therefore broad) grammatical categories, polyfunctional (and therefore potentially ambiguous) lexical markers and implicit (and therefore possibly unnoticed) pragmatic strategies. Finally, the dialogue between argumentation theory and linguistics that has been initiated thanks to recent work about argumentative indicators could be pursued in order to get a better grasp of the role of argumentation in evidential marking.

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Appendix

Restaurant review, June 8, 2011

[PICTURE]

[CHEF A, PLACE, REVIEWER]

[PICTURE]

Recensione ristorante.

Siamo a PLACE A, perla del minuscolo territorio dello Jura sede di alcune delle cantine più interessanti di Francia. Oltre che territorio d'elezione per uno dei prodotti caseari più buoni : il France Comté [PICTURE] La passeggiata nel centro del paese, fortemente monopolizzato dagli esercizi che commerciano vino, è d'ordinanza come pure l'acquisto di qualche bottiglia da WINEMAKER A, una visita alla deliziosa frazione di WINEMAKER B e, segnatamente, ad uno dei vignaioli più importanti come WINEMAKER C. Dopo tanto "faticare" il premio può essere sedersi nella sala rustica di un'ala del convento delle carmelitane che ospita il ristorante di CHEF A. [PICTURE]

Figlio d'arte, il padre era un famoso esperto di vini nonché ristoratore stellato, ha fatto l'apprendistato da gente come Alain Chapel a Mionnay, Lenotre a Parigi, da Bernard Coussau a Magesq e dai sommi Troisgros a Roanne. Sottolineo questo particolare perché mi sembra importante notare come molti grandi chef, non considerando sufficiente l'imprinting familiare, abbiano ricercato l'acquisizione, attraverso gli insegnamenti di grandi maestri, di basi professionali ancora più ampie e, di conseguenza, solide e durature.

Non a caso questo signore detiene da quindici anni ininterrottamente due stelle.

Così, accomodati in un ambiente dove fa bella mostra di sé un grosso camino, oltre a quadri, drappi e più moderne tele assaggiamo, in doveroso omaggio al territorio un cremant di Michel Gahier, cui seguirà come scelta il magnifico savagnin dell'Arbois Pupillin 96 di Overnoy, forse un po' troppo ricco di personalità e di ossidazione per accompagnare il pasto, ma divinamente appagante. [PICTURE]

La scelta questa volta cadrà sulle solleticanti opportunità che offre la carta.

Arriva una prima serie di amuse tra cui ricordiamo le polpette di foie e tartufo, ed il sablé di mais con funghi [PICTURE] ed un secondo e più interessante treno degli stessi con una crema di topinambur ed olio di nocciole torrefatte e squisita salsiccia di Morteau, un buon puré al limone confit con sedano e frutti di mare ed una mousse di formaggio di pecora con cipollotto, carote, olio al cumino e gamberi di fiume [PICTURE] Buone e golose le spugnole farcite di foie su tortino di patate, salsa di funghi e liquirizia, quenelle di olive, salsiccia di Morteau e spugnole stesse, crema di crescione a dare un po' di acidità minerale. [PICTURE] Ottimo il coregone dalla perfetta cottura con olio di levistico, polvere di erbe, limone e funghi, maionese e crema di crescione. [PICTURE] Impeccabili le coscette di rana con crema di prezzemolo, crema all'aglio, panissa di ceci, erbe e funghi, salsa alle nocciole torrefatte [PICTURE] Opulento, a soddisfare gli istinti primari, il puré di patate charlotte con tartufo, lardo di Arnad e raviolo di maiale [PICTURE] Eccellente e da manuale la poularde de bresse alla salsa di vin Jaune, coscia farcita di spugnole ed ala con foie e tartufo. Un piatto di golosità perfetta, alla Georges Blanc, per rendere l'idea, dove ogni elemento, il taglio, la cottura, la farcitura, la divina salsa e finanche il tortino speziato con diversi tipi di riso concorre per la riuscita del piatto [PICTURE] Squisito il coniglio con frattaglie coperte di crema all'aglio e foie, rognoncini fritti, sella farcita di trombette della morte, asparagi bianchi e splendida riduzione di vin de Paille, il tutto sulla falsariga del precedente piatto: gran tecnica filologicamente applicata alla materia prima [PICTURE] Difficile esimersi dall'assaggiare una variazione di Comté a 12, 18 e 24 mesi con un altrettanto degno Livarot [PICTURE] casomai le calorie non fossero ancora abbastanza.

Come predessert un discretamente defatigante gelato di ananas con nocciole ed emulsione al cocco [PICTURE] che precede una più anonima variazione di fragole guariguettes con gelatina delle stesse alla liquirizia e gelato di tagette, un fiore edulo piuttosto amaro [PICTURE] e le spugnole con tuberi di cerfoglio, in cannolo al ginepro, come biscotto e in forma di gelato [PICTURE] Buoni i petit fours tra cui ricordo la mela al vin jaune ed il bon bon di cioccolato alle pere. [PICTURE]

il pregio: una solida cucina, legata al territorio, di un grande artigiano.

il difetto: PLACE A non è esattamente dietro l'angolo.

[RESTAURANT'S ADDRESS AND WEBSITE]

Visitato nel mese di Maggio 2011

Discussion in the review's comment space

LP1, 8 giugno 2011 alle 14:16

Non conoscevo questo ristorante ma vedendo i piatti mi vien davvero voglia di andarci. Sembrano superappetitosi. E' chiaro che sono senz'altro più pesanti di quelli del RESTAURANT B. Ma mi sembrano anche infinitamente più appaganti. E mi sembrano anche, tecnicamente, molto più difficili da realizzare. Quindi vorrei sapere sia dal recensore sia dal signor AC, a cui chiedo scusa per i toni invettivi del mio precedente intervento (toni che comunque erano assolutamente generici e chiaramente non rivolti a lui; i beoti a cui mi riferivo non sono i recensori che motivano con chiarezza una scelta, ma i pecoroni che li seguono indiscriminatamente, per darsi un tono e per sentirsi all'avanguardia; mi piacerebbe sapere quanti sono coloro che frequentano CHEF B perchè, come il signor AC, amano quel genere di piatti e quanti sono invece coloro che ci vanno perchè è di moda andarci), perchè tanta disparità di punteggio tra questo ristorante, che mi sembra di altissima qualità, ed il RESTAURANT B, i cui piatti, preferenze gustative a parte, mi sembrano molto più banali di quelli qui fotografati.

CC1, 8 giugno 2011 alle 14:34

probabilmente è proprio il "mi sembrano" il nocciolo della questione. Ad ogni modo una cucina che per ammodernarsi ricorre quasi sistematicamente a schiume e schiumette, ripetendo ossessivamente gli stessi impiatti (ed inevitabilmente lo stesso processo creativo) a me come cliente pare infinitamente meno interessante di quella non solo del RESTAURANT B, ma anche di ogni ristorante "classicone" che abbia coerenza con la propria mission. Le preferenze gustative non c'entrano nulla. Si tratta di quanto un piatto sia ben concepito e tecnicamente realizzato. Non ha poi senso parlare di moda per CHEF B. Basta fare un giro per strada e chiedere alle prime 100 persone che passano chi è CHEF B. Credo che i pochi che hanno una mezza istruzione le risponderanno di averlo studiato al liceo. A Milano le risponderebbero che è il preside di un liceo e in Brianza che è uno a cui han dedicato un paese. I pochi che lo conoscono sicuramente non sono così beoti da seguire banalmente una moda. Magari ci vanno perchè incuriositi, poi usciranno avendolo capito o no.

REVIEWER2, 8 giugno 2011 alle 15:13

E' difficile paragonare due ristoranti così diversi e fare ragionamenti che, in qualche modo, li colleghino.

Quello di CHEF A è un signor ristorante che incarna la quint'essenza di un certo modo di fare ristorazione molto classico e francese.

L'appagamento è demandato, oltre che all'utilizzo di materie prime tipiche della ristorazione d'oltralpe, all'utilizzo di grassi che hanno il compito di arrotondare ulteriormente la golosità. Gli esiti riguardo a finezza, persistenza, eleganza sono diversi rispetto ad una Pic, un Cerutti, un Rochat, tanto per fare qualche nome, da qui il numeretto.

CHEF B è un tipo di cucina completamente diversa: acidità, e ancor di più tannicità amaro vegetale, dosate col bilancino in modo tale da sfornare piatti di finezza ed eleganza esemplari oltretutto con materie prime molto spesso "povere".

Certo, CHEF B è un vulcano in attività, e come tale magari non tutti gli innumerevoli piatti che la sua fantasia gli permette di sfornare sono centrati.

Ma la sua sensibilità ed il talento che lo caratterizzano, oltre che l'originalità assoluta delle materie prime che utilizza nella sua cucina per cercare, quasi ossessivamente, nuovi percorsi gustativi, lo rende ai miei occhi uno degli appartenenti alla cerchia dei migliori chef italiani.

Come tale meritevole di ogni interesse per chi abbia la passione dell'alta cucina il che non ha nulla a che fare col darsi un tono e seguire indiscriminatamente questo o quel tam tam gastronomico.

La nostra è una passione troppo di nicchia per passare attraverso i grandi numeri e, come già detto da CC, se fermi l'uomo della strada difficilmente collegherà il nome di CHEF B a quello di un grande chef.

Poi ci sono gusti e sensibilità differenti che ti fanno preferire uno chef ad un altro, ma questo è tutto un altro paio di maniche....

R1, 8 giugno 2011 alle 22:35
acdu maròun

M1, 8 giugno 2011 alle 14:20
E invece a me sembrano banali questi !!!

LP2, 8 giugno 2011 alle 16:08
Se per banale intende scontati, già visti, già assaggiati, ha ragione.
Quando io definisco banali certi piatti di CHEF B, mi riferisco invece alla povertà di ingredienti, alla loro vuota disadorna e desolante semplicità, alla loro mancanza di ricchezza gustativa.
A me piace una cucina barocca, sinfonica. La cucina di CHEF B mi sembra, mi perdoni l'espressione, una cucina stitica, mortificante, priva di entusiasmo, di voli pindarici, come una quieta e noiosa musica da camera eseguita, spesso malamente, in un garage.

REVIEWER3, 8 giugno 2011 alle 16:25
Definirla stitica, mortificante ma, soprattutto, priva di entusiasmo e noiosa mi sembra una negazione dell'evidenza.

LP3, 8 giugno 2011 alle 16:50
Per dare un'idea di quello che per me è un piatto di grande, grandissima cucina, cito gli Spaghetti au jambon blanc, truffe et parmesann di Ledoyen. Per me questo piatto sublime sta agli Spaghetti al cipresso con le vongole di CHEF B come Megan Fox sta a Platinette.

REVIEWER4, 8 giugno 2011 alle 16:59
Megan Fox e Platinette sono due persone di sesso diverso. Stimolano sensazioni differenti, titillando gusti diversi. Ledoyen e CHEF B altrettanto (per quanto riguarda i gusti e le sensazioni sollecitate).
Giusto?

CC2, 8 giugno 2011 alle 16:28
non riesco a capire come possa mancare CHEF B di ricchezza gustativa. Posso al limite ammettere che alcuni (rari) accostamenti possano risultare urtanti. Io al RESTAURANT B ho aperto papille che eran sempre rimaste chiuse. Se per barocco intendi ridondante allora capisco ciò che intendi ma temo che ciò sia strettamente legati alla quantità di grassi utilizzati. Ad ogni modo non conosco violinista che si sognerebbe di suonare il proprio strumento nell'umidità di un garage. .

CG1, 8 giugno 2011 alle 17:04
Signor LP, mi scusi ma noi non vogliamo farle cambiare i suoi gusti. Io trovo il tipo di cucina di suo gradimento stufante, grassezza, ridondanza, burro non ne posso più, ma non insisto per convincerla a cambiarli. Perché descrive quella che piace a me con termini non consoni. Abbiamo gusti diversi, punto. Io trovo i piatti di CHEF B ed ancor più di Lopriore entusiasmanti, fantastici ed ancora di più, proprio per le caratteristiche che non piacciono a lei.
Saluti

EB1, 9 giugno 2011 alle 09:59
Che dire? Un'esperienza apparentemente molto diversa dalla mia. Sono stato a PLACE A alla fine di ottobre e la cena è stata eccezionale, da applausi a scena aperta: di gran lunga la migliore di un 2010 in cui pure qualche altro chef di punta l'avevo visitato (CHEF B, Bottura e Marcon, tanto per fare tre nomi piazzati da

PG a quota 19, ma anche, tra gli altri, Passard, Gagnaire, Barbot, Anton, Lallement, Alajmo, Crippa, Lopriore e Cannavacciuolo). Ho trovato una cucina di classe, finezza (anche finezza: su questo non sono per nulla d'accordo con REVIEWER) e complessità inconsuete. Una cucina legata ovviamente alla tradizione francese, ma interpretata con grande carattere e del tutto attuale, anche per la sua assoluta leggerezza. È anche vero che la stagione migliore della cucina di CHEF A è quella autunnale e che con ogni probabilità lo strepitoso menu di caccia che ho assaggiato è il suo punto più alto. Non ho la controprova, perché è stata la mia prima esperienza lì. Però tra il 16 di REVIEWER e il mio 19 la distanza è stranamente enorme, cosa che mi capita di rado leggendo le vostre valutazioni.

REVIEWER5, 9 giugno 2011 alle 11:46

EB non ti nascondo che uno dei motivi per cui ci sono andato fino a PLACE A è stata la tua valutazione di cui, come sai, ero a conoscenza.

Fermo restando che il 16, in questo caso molto abbondante, è comunque un giudizio lusinghiero e non raggiungibile senza la presenza anche di finezza.

Poi, come per te, è stato il paragone con altri analoghi ristoranti che ne ha determinato la cifra.

Tanto per fare uno degli esempi più recenti se l'Hotel de Ville a Crissier vale 19/20, e secondo me li vale tutti, la differenza con CHEF A ci sta tranquillamente per come ho mangiato.

Magari ci farò di nuovo un "salto" in autunno.

Un abbraccio

AC1, 9 giugno 2011 alle 12:01

Trovo molta coerenza con ciò che vedo e leggo di questo ristorante ed il voto attribuito da REVIEWER. Non fosse altro che per certe ripetitività di schiume e punteggiature :-)) sintomo forse di scarsità di idee, difficili da immaginare per un 19/20.

Poi credo, ma anche tu EB l'hai ammesso, che il menù di caccia di questo locale stagi, oltre però ad essere anche poco significativo per una valutazione completa del luogo.

EB2, 9 giugno 2011 alle 12:56

Vero: dalle immagini si nota una certa irritante ripetitività di schiume e – soprattutto – punteggiature, in occasione del mio menu del tutto assenti. D'altra parte – è un mio limite – non sono in grado di giudicare un ristorante dalle foto: avrei bisogno di assaggiare i piatti per vedere se sono dotati della stessa stupenda definizione e complessità di sapori trovata a ottobre o no (che poi quello che conta, al di là delle punteggiature, è quello).

Poi, naturalmente, mi fido del palato di REVIEWER, prendo atto che ha trovato la cucina di CHEF A molto distante dalla mia valutazione e quindi non posso che concludere che, con ogni probabilità, il livello del locale varia più della media a seconda dei menu degustazione e delle stagioni. Mi auguro che ci siano altre visite, in modo da avere un ventaglio di opinioni più ampio. Per il momento, riassumendo: Michelin 2 stelle, Gault Millau 4 cappelli (su un massimo di 5), REVIEWER (maggio) 16/20, EB (ottobre) 19/20.

PR1, 23 giugno 2011 alle 17:57

Il punto di vista "tagliante" del GDF

[LINK]

GDF1, 23 giugno 2011 alle 18:34

Perché tagliante, direi sensuale, se piace...