

Variations of polyphony in blogs

The case of the Slow Art Day blog

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This paper looks at dialogicity in the Slow Art Day blog and focuses on the way the representation of participants encodes the complexity of the communicative action through a polyphony of textual voices. By focusing on posts from the pandemic years (2020 and 2021), and contrasting them with the previous period, we carry out a collocation analysis and a study of semantic preferences (Sinclair 2004) to explore how writers present themselves and how they interact with the reader and other textual voices in a context of cultural intermediation. By looking at forms of address and of self-mention, we trace how this blog enacts different forms of dialogic action with its readers and stakeholders in the extended situational context.

Keywords: dialogicity, polyphony, corpus linguistics, appraisal, blogs, museums

1. Introduction: Blogs and dialogicity

Since their first appearance, blogs have undergone various changes over the first two decades of the 21st century. The expansion of the Internet first and of digital media later has rapidly rendered blogs more of a “multifaceted tool” than a “specific type of internet platform” (Baron 2008, 109). Blogs can serve different purposes: they can be used to share, disseminate **an** and recontextualize knowledge according to their readers’ needs (Luzón 2012); they can be studied as a space for both self-promotion and creation of group identity (Davies and Merchant 2007; Myers 2010; Luzón 2012; Zou and Hyland 2019). As a useful tool for self-promotion, blogs become “virtual arenas where content (including news) is produced **5**red, and crucially commented on evaluatively” (Bondi and Seidenari 2012, 18). Their peculiar combination of self-expression and knowledge sharing has made them ideal places for identity and relationship management.

While classifications and types of blogs have been of interest among researchers (Herring et al. 2005), as well as their style and target variation (Puschmann 2013, 88), the consistent elements in their construction are limited to the presence of (more or less) regular posts (the textual entries of each blog) beginning with a title and often closing with tags or keywords, name of the author, time of publication, the URL (Winer 2001). Another common characteristic is the presence of reverse chronological order in which posts appear from the most recent to the oldest, as well as for being frequently updated, and having links to other websites (Schmidt 2007; Baron 2008). The presence of comments after the post is an element of great variation: many institutional blogs, for example, do not allow readers to post their comments, although they may receive comments and respond to them privately.

The “inherently evaluative nature” of blogs (Bondi and Seidenari 2012, 25) has led bloggers to use a high number of subjectivity markers (i.e., personal pronouns and adjectives, cf. also Bondi and Diani 2015), something which has been widely explored in more specific academic or scientific blogs (Bondi 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2022; Zou and Hyland 2019, 2020; Hyland and Zou 2020). Bloggers are shown to make intensive use of expressions of subjective stance, namely hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention, which show the “writer’s intrusion in the text” (Zou and Hyland 2019, 717). At the same time, bloggers use the resources of engagement: forms of reader-mention, which attract readers by using second-person pronouns (i.e., the use of *you*); directives, which give instructions to readers through the use of the imperative or obligation modals; and questions, which invite readers to a “direct collusion” with the author, by appealing to readers’ shared knowledge (2019, 717–718).

In the context of an increasingly wider range of social media environments, there has also been intense debate on the uncertain status of blogs as only one of the elements constituting a complex digital media ecology (Weitcamp et al. 2021) that includes both traditional and new media (Etter et al. 2019). Organizations may thus redefine the function of blogs according to their specific needs: blogs can be used to draw public attention to organizational actions and to comment on them, while social media allow users to exchange information and opinions (Etter et al. 2019). Social media give the audience a space for interaction, while public views of organizational identity (and interaction with the audience) can be constructed through blogs. In the field of museum communication, for example, it has been shown that museums do not adequately capitalize on the dialogic dimension of comments and continue to use blogs to disseminate institutional information or to situate themselves towards their audiences in unidirectional modes of communication (Lazzeretti 2021).

The changing role of the different elements of organizational communication may also be influenced by external events. The COVID-19 pandemics, for example, has brought many cultural institutions to the closure of their physical sites and to an increase of online activity on their websites or through social media. Researchers have investigated the type and amount of content published by museums, as well as the level of online engagement generated and the range of resources offered across different countries (e.g. Agostino et al. 2020; Samaroudi et al. 2020). The pandemic has certainly highlighted the importance of digital approaches to culture. It still remains to be seen, however, if it has also had any influence on the management of blogging activity in the sector.

Furthermore, while there is a growing literature on museum communication (Lazzeretti 2016; Drotner et al. 2019), little has been said about how cultural organizations communicate when promoting specific activities that are not directly their own, i.e. acting as intermediators. In particular: How do cultural intermediators communicate? How does their blogging activity interpret the traditional subjectivity of personal blogs or the self-promotability of organizational blogs?

Keeping in mind the role of blogs in presenting organizational actions and positioning organizations towards the audience, the present study explores the issue through a case study in the field of cultural promotion, focusing in particular on the promotion of a cultural event. We look at the language of blog posts produced by an organization of volunteers working to promote the initiative of the Slow Art Day, a global event involving over 1,500 museums and galleries in experiencing art.

The aim of the study is to explore polyphony in the Slow Art Day blog, showing how authors present themselves, engage with the reader and present other textual voices. The analysis centres on how the years of the pandemic have intensified this activity through the representation of a polyphony of textual voices in the Slow Art Day blog.

We look in particular at issues of dialogicity that may characterize a formally monologic text. Starting from Weigand's (2009, 2010) view of language as dialogue and dialogue as an "action game", Bondi (2018a) analyses blogs following a model of dialogicity based on three perspectives: oriented to the participants, the ongoing communicative action, and the evaluative dialogue developed between writer and reader (Bondi 2018a, 143). An orientation to participants means focusing on markers of self-reference, on the representation of the reader in the text and on other textual voices that may be involved. An orientation to discursive action comprises the visual and verbal organization of text sections as well as meta-discursive features. The evaluative perspective looks at evaluative elements in discourse and at the way they open or restrict the space for negotiation of meaning on the part of the reader lens.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 provides some background information on the Slow Art Day and its blog. After a description of materials and methods adopted for the study (Section 3), results are presented by discussing first the keywords that characterize the period of the pandemic and then the textual representation of the dialogue between the author of the blog post, its potential readers and the participants in museum activities (Section 4). Concluding remarks will close the paper (Section 5).

2. Background: Slow Art Day

In 1989 Carlo Petrini initiated the Slow Food Movement in opposition to the opening of the first McDonald's in Italy. His aim was to start a movement that was "good, clean and fair" and to begin a sort of retro-chain movement where people would still prefer to spend time at table with their family and friends rather than rushing to the first fast food chain during their fifteen-minute lunch break. Now, Petrini did not know at the time that he would have influenced the start of other movements in different fields, but with the similar value attributed to time. One of the movements that originated from Petrini is, in fact, the Slow Art Day, ideated in 2010 by the US e-commerce entrepreneur Phil Terry. Terry came up with the idea for the movement when he visited the Action/Abstraction exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York in 2008 and after having spent a full hour with Hans Hofmann's painting *Fantasia* (1943).

At the end of the hour, I was energised. These micro-experiences can be transformative and go much, much deeper than a quick look. (Terry in McGivern, 2019)

Slow Art Day is intended for both visitors and museums and has "one a simple mission: help more people discover for themselves the joy of looking at and loving art."¹ Slow Art Day aims at being "counter-cultural to the smartphone and its growing dominance in culture, but also to blockbuster exhibits and the focus on absolute numbers" (McGivern 2019) and is against the consumeristic approach to culture, where visitors spend circa 28.7 seconds in front of a work of art. During the Slow Art Day, museums agree to organize exhibitions where visitors have to focus on five different art pieces for ten minutes each (Gould 2018). At the end of the exhibition, there is a convivial discussion around food and drinks where people share their feelings and impressions. The event takes part once a year, usually in April, and since it started, more than 200 museums around the world have taken part in the initiative.

1. From Slow Art Day About Us page: <https://www.slowartday.com/about/>.

With the support of various volunteers, Terry set up the Slow Art Day (from now onto referred to as SAD) blog to write about the activities that museums organized for the event in detail. As a matter of fact, after the annual events, museums send a schematic report to the SAD team sharing some information about their event, after which, bloggers reformulate and rewrite the information as a post, adding further details that they might find on their official website and/ or social media account.

3. Materials and methods

In order to carry out our study we created a corpus containing all the posts belonging to the SAD blog. Posts were collected from 2012 to 2021 for a total of 287 texts, which were saved in txt file and Unicode Transformation format (UTF-8) so to be read with *WordSmith Tool* 8.0. Table 1 below shows the number of posts and tokens for each year from 2012 to 2021, providing a general idea of how they are distributed across time.

Table 1. Number of tokens and posts for each year of the SAD blog

Year	No. of posts	No. of tokens
2012	41	10823
2013	34	2561
2014	29	4959
2015	4	1110
2016	17	3109
2017	18	4201
2018	16	2337
2019	42	7199
2020	27	15361
2021	37	16710

As we can see in Table 1, over this timespan, most posts were published in 2012, 2019 and 2021, while from 2015 to 2018 they seem to become more sporadic. The high number of posts in 2012 and 2013 is likely to be due to the newness of the blog that needed to be constantly updated. The decrease in the number of posts between 2014 and 2018 could have been caused by either a lack of volunteers taking part in the project, or because of the small number of museums hosting a SAD

event. The steady increase in the number of posts in 2020 is likely to be linked to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which led many museums and cultural institutions to engage with the public virtually, meaning that both museum curators and SAD volunteers were more engaged in online activities.

To highlight significant changes and aspects of the 2020–2021 posts, we carried out a corpus-informed study (Baker 2006; Baker et al. 2008) using *WordSmith Tools* 8.0. We first carried out a preliminary overview of the keywords of our 20–21 sub-corpus, as calculated using texts from 2012–2019 as its reference corpus to identify diachronic differences (if any) related to content or presentation of participants involved in the posts.

As our main aim is to analyze the SAD blog “action game” (Weigand 2009) from a participant-oriented perspective (Bondi 2018a) we mainly focused on pronouns, paying special attention to their semantic and pragmatic features. Through the concordancer in the *WordSmith* package, we carried out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the co-text of first- and second-person pronouns, as well as other references to participants and interlocutors. This meant looking in particular at collocations and semantic preference, i.e. *pre* tendency to co-occur with elements characterized by specific semantic features (Sinclair 2004), so as to identify the key elements of the representation of the participants, and the elements that characterize their textual identity.

When studying writer identity in self-mentions, we adopted a simplified model, adapted from Tang and John (1999) and Vladimirova (2007). We classified the identities established by pronouns according to whether they referred to the blogger as Writer/Interpreter, to the Biographical self of the author, or to an Indefinite self. The first category actually comprises different forms of exclusive *we* representing the blogger as a Writer, whether referring to the regular activity of writing or to the ongoing interaction and the blogger as Interpreter, sharing “an opinion, view or attitude” (Tang and John 1999, 28–29) and claiming authority over the main ideas and knowledge claims proposed.

Wherever relevant, we also paid some attention to phraseological structures adopted to engage potential interlocutors, such as questions and imperative forms. Elements of evaluation were also taken into account with a particular focus on Martin and White’s (2005) Attitude subcategory from their appraisal framework. More specifically some adjectives were classified according to affect, which evaluates elements of un/happiness (e.g., negative and positive happiness), dis/satisfaction (i.e., *ennui*, *interest*, *displeasure* – *pleasure*), in/security (*dis/quiet* and *dis/trust*) and dis/inclination (e.g., *keen*, *long for*, *wish to* versus *wary*, *disinclined* or *unwanted*).


4. Results

In this section, we will explore the representation and the visibility of polyphony in SAD posts of 2020 and 2021. We start with a general overview of words that distinguish the pandemic years from the previous production in statistical terms, in particular those that are significantly more frequent in the 2020–2021 corpus. Then we proceed to focus on the three types of voices involved in the posts: the blogger, the audience, and other participants, such as museum visitors or curators.

4.1 Keyword List

Table 2 below shows the first 15 most relevant words of the 2020–2021 SAD posts when compared to the posts from 2012 to 2019.

Table 2. 2020–2021 SAD blog keyword list

Frequency	Keyness	Effect	Keyword
768	+335.54	0.0468	<i>art</i>
668	+290.12	0.0408	<i>slow</i>
595	+257.08	0.0364	<i>In</i> 
426	+180.99	0.0262	<i>day</i>
388	+163.96	0.0239	<i>On</i>
359	+151	0.0221	<i>for</i>
315	+131.37	0.0195	<i>with</i>
294	+122.02	0.0182	<i>By</i>
287	+118.91	0.0177	<i>At</i>
276	+114.03	0.0171	<i>we</i>
255	+104.71	0.0158	<i>their</i>
242	+98.95	0.015	<i>museum</i>
223	+90.55	0.0138	<i>you</i>
201	+80.85	0.0125	<i>looking</i>
196	+78.65	0.0121	<i>that</i>

Looking at the keyword list, content words such as *slow*, *art*, *day*, *museum*, and *looking* are among the most common. These items occur frequently not only because they obviously fall in the *Slow Art Day* and *slow looking* clusters, which refer to the event, but also because they appear separately in museum and gallery

names (e.g. the *Art Gallery of South Australia*), in the title of events (*Art in Dialogue*) and in blog posts (e.g., *Slow Art & Mindfulness with the Art Gallery of Ontario*), in the description of the type of event (e.g., *art meditation*), of the artists and/or participants (e.g., *art therapist, art enthusiast*), and types of art (e.g., *contemporary/conventional/Damascus art*). Furthermore, *Slow Art Day* appears in repeated fixed forms and phrases that the bloggers use to guide the reader through the text. For example, all posts begin by introducing the museum/gallery/association, the type of event that they have organized and the number of times that they have taken part in it:

- (1) For their sixth Slow Art Day, the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, GA, hosted an in-person slow looking and drawing session. (SAD_2021)

On the other hand, when ending the post, bloggers always conclude by sharing their personal thoughts and impressions about the event, which usually opens with “At Slow Art Day HQ, we...”:

- (2) At Slow Art Day HQ, we love that Sint-Pauluskerk opens its doors for Slow Art Day with a theme that fits the church calendar. (SAD_2021)

The keyword list shows that prepositions (*in, on, for, by*) also play an important role. These refer to the place where the event takes place (e.g., *in Asheville*), to the platform adopted to advertise the event (e.g., *on Facebook, on Instagram*), to the description of the event (e.g., *in-depth Zoom session, in-person event, based on..., focus on..., reflect on...*), or to details belonging to artworks (i.e., *in the background; on canvas*). However, such prepositions are also meta-discursively used to guide the reader not only through the text (i.e., *in the below brochure you can see...*) and its interactive affordances (i.e., *click on...*), but also through the significant steps of the SAD events (i.e., [...] *this was followed by a group discussion; the session was led by...*). Moreover, the preposition *by* is also used to provide details on participants as visible actors of SAD (e.g., *the event was well received by participants...; The two-part session was attended by 23 participants, who gave positive feedback to...*).

Reported speech emerges through the frequent use of *that*, which, as well as being used as a relative clause providing further detail on artworks (e.g., *MASS MoCA also produced a guided meditation that focused on the painting...*), is also frequently used as a conjunction. That is to say that it works as a conjunction for reported speech verbs of the *vox populi*, giving space to a polyphony of different actors taking part in the representation of the SAD event. With a closer look at conjunctions, we see different actors being reported such as museum curators (e.g., *Jodi reports that these experiences are valuable for a wide range of audiences...*) and art directors who also define themselves as the participants’ voice

(e.g., *Maria Kokorotskou, MOMus Acting Director, also said that all participants asked the Museum to host in-person slow looking events after the pandemic*). That is also used to engage directly with the audience creating more movement in the text (i.e., *Note that their Slow Art Day was not their first slow looking series*). Voice is also given to artists (3) and to participants (4) whose thoughts are also quoted in first person:

- (3) After a while, I realized that my father was not the only one making his own color TV. Many other people in the Kurdish area had devised their own unique filters.” HIWA K. QUOTE TAKEN FROM THE ARTIST’S WEBSITE.
(SAD_2021)
- (4) After the session I can say that it was not only relaxing and energizing but it gave me a lot of insights about myself.” ANA TIJSEN – SLOW ART DAY PARTICIPANT
(SAD_2021)

On this note, it is worth mentioning that participants’ quotes are reported in most posts from 2020 and 2021. These are usually extremely evaluative and underline the visitors’ sense of cheerfulness while embracing something new and different.

In particular, quotes seem to gather visitors’ feelings of awe related to the innovative and creative events of SAD. This is confirmed by the use of positive adjectives such as *surprised*, *inspired*, *gratified*, *delighted*, and *electrified*. These indicate the feeling of excitement that SAD visitors experience have in the face of new activities.

The presence of polyphony is also confirmed by the use of personal adjectives and pronouns (*we*, *their*, *you*) which will be explored in more detail in the next section.

4.2 Introducing themselves to visitors: The use of *we*

Examining the collocations of the personal pronoun *we*, with a total of 267 hits, it emerges that it is mostly used in an exclusive function (210 hits), where the bloggers refer to themselves with different identities and roles of “writers” or “interpreters”, while in the remaining cases, *we* is either used as a reported voice in participants and/or curators quotes, or with an inclusive function. The latter is mainly used in what Vladimirou (2007) defines an “indefinite” and universal way, as authors refer to themselves as human beings sharing the same condition as the rest of the world (Example (5)).

- (5) ... as *we* and the world struggle through yet another wave of the coronavirus.
(SAD_2021)

In about 77% of cases of “exclusive *we*” (164 hits), the pronoun appears as the “opinion holder” (Tang and John 1999), as authors share their opinion and positive appreciation towards the event (6)–(7). This is also emphasized by a preference for verbs belonging to the semantic field of satisfaction and happiness (e.g., *love*, *appreciate*, *like*), as well as the construction of the verb *to be* followed by adjectives (i.e., *to be inspired*, *firm admirers*, *excited*), confirming a positive evaluation towards the organized event.

- (6) At Slow Art Day HQ, *we were excited* to see Grounds for Sculpture bring out nearly 1,000 people for their first annual event. (SAD_2021)
- (7) *We loved* their detailed four-step brochure, and their *thank-you* gifts. (SAD_2021)

By referring to themselves in the first-person plural, bloggers reduce the distance between themselves and their audience and present themselves in a humanized way, with actual feelings. Mental-process verbs (e.g., *recommend*, *believe*, *agree*) are also used to make general statements toward SAD or to comment on a quote or reported statement by a museum curator or participant (8)–(9). Here (9), it is interesting to see how bloggers engage with a potential interlocutor, giving feedback on what has just been reported.

- (8) *We believe* slow looking provides a great opportunity for people to enjoy art and each other on a deeper level. (SAD_2021)
- (9) At Slow Art Day HQ, *we agree with* Pamala Eaton: “When you slow down and pay attention to your space and place you start to see more value in them.” (SAD_2021)

This dialogue with potential interlocutors is also carried out at the end of most posts, where bloggers thank museums, museum curators, and organizers for the event that they have organized. Through the use of these repeated phrases, *we* constructs the blogger as representative of the organization in forms of stakeholder engagement, maintaining contact with their museum network, creating a bond between past (10), present, and future (e.g., *we look forward to...* in Example (11)).

- (10) At Slow Art Day HQ, *we want to thank* the McMaster Museum for the long-time leadership they have provided to the Slow Art Day movement, including this year. (SAD_2021)
- (11) (...) *we look forward* to seeing what she has in store for next year’s event. (SAD_2020)

Such engagement also happens with the binomial *we-you* in which bloggers directly address visitors, participants, and readers in a one-to-one dialogue. In Example (12), bloggers invite readers to take part in a slow art activity by interactively using the affordances presented in the post, which again contribute to the “action game” of the dialogue.

- (12) Below are images of the artworks, which *we encourage you* to experience slowly using the AGO’s prompts (...). (SAD_2021)

In 8.9% of cases (19 hits), *we* also appears under a biographical form, revealing the personal plans, emotions, and experiences of the authors (13)–(15).

- (13) (...) finally visit the museum next year, when *we plan* a European summer tour of Slow Art Day sites. (SAD_2021)
- (14) *We imagined ourselves in this scene*; felt the soft warmth of the light, and really immersed ourselves in the calm before the storm. (SAD_2020)
- (15) When *we started Slow Art Day 10 years ago*, *we* primarily wanted museums to use the web in the service of sending more people into real spaces. (SAD_2020)

Finally, in around 6% of “exclusive *we*” cases, bloggers appear as “guides” (Tang and John 1999) through the text (16), directing readers through their writing process, showing them what they have decided to include from the museum’s events (*provide, include, summarize, keep, profile, etc.*).

- (16) Below *we provide photographs*, details and videos about each of the performances, starting with the painter Ioia Iturri. (SAD_2021)

Once more, participants and readers are constantly called out for engagement throughout the post. In the next section, we will explore in more detail the way(s) in which other participants are directly addressed throughout the blog.

4.3 Addressing readers as visitors: The use of *you*

From an examination of *you* used as a term of address, with a total of 212 hits, it emerges that it is mostly used when referring to the reader as an actual participant of SAD. As the main aim of this blog is to report museums’ organization of their SAD, bloggers tend to report and share prompts and materials that were given to visitors on the day of the event by the institution itself. By doing so, they function as a direct channel between museums, readers, and potential visitors and participants. When sharing prompts produced by the individual institutions they focus on, bloggers somehow appropriate themselves of the voice of the institution: they

address the reader through the voice of the museum or gallery in the prompts that guide the slow appreciation of art. In this fusion, the two voices – the SAD team and the institution involved in SAD events – become indistinguishable.

Prompts that SAD bloggers choose to share can be classified as an explicit form of interaction that involves “demanding”, which is used by museums to interact with their audience, who, according to Ravelli (2006, 74), are actively expected to respond. This form of interaction can take place through questions or through commands. As Ravelli (2006, 75) points out, with questions, visitors are asked to answer actively, becoming effective participants of the text that they are reading. Examples (17)–(18) exemplify how museums question their visitors to elicit their engagement with the activities of SAD.

(17) How does this perspective add to or change your interpretation of the artwork up to this point? (SAD_2020)

(18) What did the experience feel like to you? (SAD_2021)

On the one hand, despite engaging in a conversation with their visitors, museums remain in charge of communication by being the ones to ask the questions, while allowing visitors “to share knowledge and to take up the given by the museum” (Ravelli *ibidem*, 74). On the other hand, through questions, visitors are guided and ‘taken by the hand’ in further understanding the specific activity proposed by the museum.

Moreover, reported prompts show museums engaging with visitors through commands. While on the one hand, the use of the imperatives elicits active responses from visitors, making them feel involved, on the other, it reinforces the unidirectional role of the museum, which is characterized by a “lack of reciprocity” (Ravelli *ibidem*, 74). However, the peculiarity concerning SAD in 2020 and 2021 is that in most cases, it takes place at home or in a “safe space” where visitors feel at ease in virtually viewing an art exhibition or in taking part in a particular activity. This means that despite unidirectional instructions from the museum, visitors may not feel overwhelmed when following them. Furthermore, visitors are encouraged to become active co-creators of meaning by either participating in the online group discussion at the end of the activity, by posting the event on social media, by leaving a comment, or through a simple hashtag containing the keywords of the event (19). Engagement and involvement are also created by encouragement to take part in practical activities (20)–(21), where visitors are guided “step by step” on how to engage with a work of art (e.g., *imagine, draw, close, find...*).

- (19) Arrange things *you* find around your home to make a temporary found-object sculpture that is inspired by your favorite choice. Take a picture of your sculpture. Post it to social media and tag @womeninthearts and @slowartday. Write down all the emotions *you* feel. (SAD_2021)
- (20) Imagine *you* could walk into this painting. (SAD_2020)
- (21) Close *your* eyes and imagine that your arms are the cables holding them above the ground. (SAD_2020)

It is interesting to notice that *you* is also reported in participants' quotes and comments which are part of most posts. Through the participants' voice *you* is used to report their (always positive) feedback towards the museum, organization, artists, and artworks (22)–(23).

- (22) “Congratulations and THANK YOU for today’s work and the follow-on resources. What lovely teamwork and expertise to share with us educators. Thanks to all participants, too!” (SAD_2021)
- (23) “Love that *you’re* doing this. This is the sort of thing I need to lift my spirits, just like every visit to your gallery has always done. Thank *you!*” (SAD_2020)

In this context the SAD bloggers somewhat trigger a communicative situation with various voices: by including the participants' comments they give them visibility, allowing a reciprocal dialogue with the museum, but also with other readers and hence potential visitors. SAD bloggers act as theatre directors, as they are the ones in control of the dialogue among the various actors. The *mise-en-scène* of different voices almost makes the blogger invisible, but certainly contributes to constructing the view of the blogger as the mediator allowing different voices to meet. Joining these different voices in forms that make the blogger almost invisible, in forms that resemble the montage typical of films, does not mean, however, that they do not have the power of selecting and sequencing these voices, much in the same way as a director behind the scene.

In 43 cases, on the other hand, *you* is used to address the reader in forms where bloggers actually engage directly with their audience, whether it is to put them in contact with museums (24), hence functioning once more as a channel of communication, or to guide through the text (25) and provide them with further reading recommendations (26).

- (24) If *you* would like to be updated with the NMWA's events *you* can follow them on Facebook, Instagram. (SAD_2021)
- (25) Below *you* can find pictures of the featured installations, links to the videos, and a brief description of each. (SAD_2021)

- (26) Or, *you can also read* a summary of some of the key questions and ideas as compiled by our Slow Art Day intern Johanna Bokedal. (SAD_2020)

The use of *can* allows readers to feel as if they are actively able to interact with the bloggers, while viceversa SAD writers are providing tools of empowerment for their audience, giving them to the opportunity to follow their recommendations.

In the remaining cases, *you* addresses readers and participants as human beings with no specific function:

- (27) We hope *you have a wonderful* new year wherever you are in the world. (SAD_2021)

4.4 Reporting other voices

As mentioned in Section 4.1, the conjunction *that* is the starting point to show various voices being reported, hence it is anticipated by speech verbs such as *say, write, comment, conclude, mention* and so on. Besides the pronoun *we* which has already been explored (Section 4.1), the subjects and actors of these reported thoughts and comments vary from participants and visitors to museum curators, educators, artists, and authors. Participants are mostly quoted anonymously, except for some cases (28), while artists and museum and gallery curators are addressed with their full name or first name if it is the second or third time that they are being cited (29). By specifying the role of people that are being mentioned and quoted, SAD bloggers support their opinions reinforcing the significance of the success of the event. In some cases, reported voices are used to further share the thoughts of the participants (third parties): in Example (30) we notice how the voice of the MOMus Acting Director is used by bloggers to inform readers about their participants' request. This shows how dialogue happens on many levels involving various participants.

- (28) Alissa Giangiulio, one of the event participants, *said that* she could see some of the artist Isaiah Zagar himself in the mural on 1328 S. 8th Street (pictured above), and commented that: (...). (SAD_2020)
- (29) (...) includes a video interview with Pamela Eaton, *where she explains that* Slow Art Day is an opportunity for people to simultaneously develop an appreciation for art and local artists. (SAD_2021)
- (30) Maria Kokorotskou MOMus Acting Director, also *said that* all participants asked the Museum to host in-person slow looking events after the pandemic. (SAD_2020)

Direct quotations are used to support indirectly reported speech, especially of curators, educators, and organizers (31)–(32) just to present external voices directly at the bottom of the post in a dedicated quotation section, this time also belonging to participants (33)–(34). With direct quotations, alternative voices are not filtered by the bloggers. Again, first singular and/or plural pronouns in quotes function as references to the “biographical self” of the speaker or to the speaker as “opinion-holder”. The presence of a pronoun *you* in the quotes (Examples (34) and (35)) shows, once more, how quoted voices are often represented as interacting with the SAD team (*thank you, as always... we look forward to...*) and the blog becomes a space for the representation of dialogue with and within stakeholders.

- (31) Suzie Luke, Public Program and Learning Officer at the Bendigo Art Gallery, *said that* many participants “tremendously positive feedback” about the artist, artworks and the gallery itself (...). (SAD_2020)
- (32) Josh Heuman, Curator of Education & Public Programs at The Power Plant, *writes that*: “In little ways, this COVID-19 pandemic is pushing us to re-think how we might use online platforms to think beyond the four walls of The Power Plant.” (SAD_2020)
- (33) “*Even I, as the facilitator, found new perspectives I had never thought about before! Thank you, as always, for allowing the Frye to be part of global Slow Art Day! Especially in these uncertain times, we look forward to the opportunity to slow down, look closely, and spend some time with a work of art.*” CAROLINE BYRD, EDUCATION COORDINATOR, FRYE ART MUSEUM (SAD_2021)
- (34) “*This is my favourite painting at the AGO! I always spend a long time in front of it and always pick up something new each visit.*” (SAD_2021)
- (35) “*Happy Slow Art Day! I like the slow art from (artist) Caitlin Keogh very much! Thank you for sharing her work with us in slow motion during this global event, and it fits well with quarantine schedules as it invites us to slow down and enjoy the discoveries art can offer.*” (SAD_2020)

Participants’ comments and quotations also contribute to rendering the text more evaluative through the use of positive adjectives. As a matter of fact, arguments are assessed in attitudinal terms and could be classified under Martin and White’s (2005) subcategory of Affect, with adjectives and boosters related to the semantic fields of awe (*amazing, incredible, and sublime*), newness (*unexpected, surprising*) and wellbeing (*mindful, peaceful*). Adjectives belonging to the Affect’s subcategory of social valuation are related to empowerment (e.g., “...gives more confidence”), and to elements of accessibility (e.g., *accessible*). Adjectives belonging to the affect

subcategories of happiness and satisfaction include positive feelings such as the sense of excitement (e.g., *excited*) and that of pleasure (i.e., *grateful, impressed*).

As a core part of SAD posts, participants' comments certainly contribute in different ways to the dynamicity and dialogism of the posts. On the one hand, they trigger a change in the register and style of the texts, while on the other hand, by adding an organizational unit to the post, they visually provide a dynamic structure-pattern of the text. Reported comments allow a dialogic expansion of the conversation between readers, bloggers, and curators, providing various points of view on SAD activities and a space for sharing resources of the different activities.

5. Conclusions

The study has focused on the impact of the pandemic on the dialogicity of the SAD blog, starting from a comparison of posts before and during that time. An overview of the keywords of the pandemic years has highlighted an increase in first- and second-person pronouns, as well as an increase in forms of reported discourse, thus drawing attention to participant-related dialogicity. The rest of the analysis has confirmed how the pandemic – with its inevitable shift of many activities to a purely digital context – has determined a heightened awareness of the potential functions of digital media in constructing and maintaining relations.

Adopting the perspective of dialogic action games (Weigand 2010), the definition of participants inevitably has a wider focus, including both participants in the immediate and in the extended context – whether directly involved in the immediate context of the blog as blogger and reader or in the extended context of the SAD event to be promoted, thus including the voices of the institutions and visitors that the blog itself aims to bring together. We have therefore been able to explore the nature of this heightened attention to dialogicity. The function of the blogging team, aiming to promote participation in the SAD event, has manifested itself in the direct presence of the bloggers but also in an intense presence of the voice of the reader (as potential or real visitor of SAD events) and of the institutions involved. Even more importantly, this wide perspective has illuminated the power of the blogger to merge with the cultural institution or to set the scene for forms of constructed interaction between the main interactants in the SAD event.

The identities manifested by the different textual voices have allowed us to highlight the peculiarities of the discourse of an organization that has the specific role of promoting an event. The blog post focusing on each specific SAD event becomes a space for the *mise-en-scène* of the interaction between participants in at least two directions. On the one hand, by merging the voice of the blogging

team with the voice of the institutions, the post guides the user through the experience of slow art appreciation. On the other hand, by constructing a dialogue between the potential visitor and the art institution, the post represents the blog as a dialogic space where bloggers take up the role of stage directors setting up opportunities for dialogue and performing this online. The promotional function of the blog – clearly manifested also in the intense and selective use of evaluative language – is emphasized by these two peculiarities of communicative action: recreating the slow art experience for readers and setting up a space for direct interaction between (potential or actual) visitors and institutions. Subjectivity and evaluative language remain important elements of blogging, but in ways that differ widely from other contexts and that may reflect the specificity of cultural intermediation.











More generally, we hope to have shown how important it is when looking at dialogicity and at a specific dialogic action game, to identify both the immediate and the extended context, as this can help us define the nature of the interaction and identify the direct and mediated participants. In our case, it helps define the role of blogs in promoting an appreciation of the event. This promotional function is realized by staging the interaction between participants, by giving voice to the cultural institutions involved and constructing forms of dialogue with (potential or actual) visitors.

The study has obvious limitations, as it centres on a single specific case study and no generalizing conclusions can be easily drawn on the promotion of cultural events in general. However, the study of the representation of participants and of the specific actions observed sounds promising and suggests the need for further exploration of participant-related dialogicity in other contexts, to check whether the same features can be found in other blogs of cultural intermediators or even in cultural promotion in general. It could also be useful to integrate the analysis of participant-related dialogicity with further aspects of the model, to identify their specific contribution. Much in the same way, it would be interesting to provide a cross-platform analysis of dialogicity in blogs and social media.

This would contribute to assessing whether the nature and function of digital communication tools can be better defined within the system of options available in the digital ecology of organizational communication. It could also help understand whether blogs, rather than being dismissed in the current proliferation of social media, may simply be in the process of being redefined in their role and functions. Rather than eliciting comments from the audience, which is often left to other media, they can be used to create a polyphony of textual voices and somehow stage the interaction with and within participants, as well as the identities involved.

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