An intergalactic journey to the popularization of modern art in museum-based websites for children

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore how modern art is disseminated among children through museum-based websites. As a matter of fact, there are few well-known museums and galleries that have websites specifically designed to enable children to gain insight into the artworks and the protagonists of their collections or to visit their rooms virtually. Specifically, these websites create an interactive learning environment based on the combination of education and entertainment ("edutainment") and on specific discourse and multimodal strategies that recontextualize art expert discourse for the young lay audience. Thus, the analysis focuses on the popularizing discursive practices used in three museum-based websites for children: *Tate Kids*, *MetKids*, and *Destination Modern Art: An Intergalactic Journey to MoMA and P.S.1. Tate Kids* and *MetKids* are examined both quantitatively and qualitatively, while *Destination Modern Art* is investigated only qualitatively, as it partly differs from the other two.

Keywords: popularization for children, art discourse, museum-based websites for children, edutainment, discourse analysis, corpus analysis.

1. Introduction

The Internet gives us access to content on an ever-increasing number of sites and webpages intended for children and aimed at popularizing different types of knowledge, from science to geography. They can be designed by institutions, individual teachers, private companies or publishing houses, and they can be either generic platforms or discipline-specific sites. In any case, they support informal home-based learning that crosses the boundaries of school walls, and which is rooted in "edutainment" (also

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called "infotainment"). This expression, coined by the National Geographic documentarian Bob Heyman, indicates the combination of "education" and "entertainment" (Aksakal 2015: 1232), which has a self-evident goal, namely, "to inform and entertain their overt audience – children" (Djonov 2008: 217). This "two-faced" Janus essence of educational websites is shared by many other educational products such as TV programmes, informative books, music, films, videogames, and multimedia software. Generally, the term "edutainment" describes "[…] a hybrid genre that relies heavily on visual material, on narrative or game-like formats, and on more informal, less didactic styles of address" (Buckingham – Scanlon 2005: 41). Together with the above-mentioned characteristics, educational websites are also characterized by the metaphor of learning as an adventure or travel (Buckingham – Scanlon 2004; Stenglin – Djonov 2010), and by their dual addressees, children and adults (Djonov 2008). Indeed, parents buy personal computers for their offspring believing that this might lead to successful educational achievements (Okan 2003, 2011; Buckingham – Scanlon 2004).

Within the framework of a constructivist and one-to-one approach to learning (Okan 2003, 2011; Buckingham – Scanlon 2004) created by the medium, educational websites exploit multimodality (Kress – van Leeuwen 2001) "such as pictures, sound, animation, and video" (Turner – Handler 1997: 25), and the users' possibility to navigate the website, thereby constructing personal "multiple reading paths" (Kress – van Leeuwen 2006: 204) according to children's motivation and interests, and to the structure of the website (see also Lemke 2002; Baldry –Thibault 2006; Maier et al. 2007; Djonov 2008; Maier 2008; Stenglin – Djonov 2010). Lastly, children enjoy the interactivity of these websites, mostly "drill-and-practice" activities that provide feedback on their knowledge acquisition through test scores, or even more complex problem-solving and simulation games (Buckingham – Scanlon 2004).

Given their importance, education products have begun to receive growing scholarly attention. For example, multimodality in coursebooks and informative books has been explored with a focus on how knowledge is construed thanks to the collaboration between illustrations and verbal texts (see for example, Unsworth 2005, 2006; Kress – van Leeuwen 2006). This interrelation has also been studied in connection with videos (Cesiri 2020) and educational hypermedia for children (Silletti 2017; Diani – Sezzi 2020; Diani 2021). As far as hypermedia are concerned, elements such as navigation and interactivity, user orientation, and the development of children's multiliteracies have also been considered (among others, Buckingham – Scanlon 2004; Djonov 2005, 2007, 2008; Zhao 2008, 2010, 2011).

When facing the discursive strategies involved in the popularization for children, the few studies on the recontextualization of specialized knowledge for a young audience in an informal learning context have focused on a wide range of materials and domains, that is, the popularization of legal concepts in targeted websites and information books (Engberg – Luttermann 2014; Sorrentino 2014; Diani 2015, 2018), of the EU's geography and organization in two websites of the European Union (Diani – Sezzi 2019), of information connected with tourist destinations in English and Italian travel guidebooks for children (Cappelli – Masi 2019), and issues concerning environments in two English and Italian magazines for children (Bruti – Manca 2019). Other studies investigate the translation of informative books for youngsters (Reiss 1982; Puurtineen 1995), for example on history (Sezzi 2015, 2017), and of non-fiction picturebooks (Masi 2021; Wozniak 2021).

Against this background, the dissemination of modern art for children stands out for its peculiarity. If children's non-fiction on artists' lives has carved an important niche in the publishing market for children, art popularization aimed at children on the World Wide Web basically takes two forms: either the traditional arts and crafts websites suggesting projects and activities for children, or websites sections of museums and art galleries promoting their onsite workshops and events for youngsters and families (Sabatini 2017). However, some internationally recognized museums and art galleries take a different route. These museum-based sites aim to explain the artworks and life of the protagonists of their collections and exhibitions (Sezzi 2019) or enable young generations to take virtual tours of their halls. Therefore, they go beyond "craftivity" web portals and museum websites sections in which workshops and events for kids and families are presented for promotional ends (Sabatini 2017).

This type of websites involves museums' fundamental stakeholders, namely future citizens, by introducing them to the world of art so that these websites turn into "primary space[s] for the exposure to the world's artist and artworks" (Kuh 2014: 153). Thanks also to their websites, museums and galleries fulfil their role of "active cultural agents, trying to realize their basically educational aims in a rapidly changing cultural market" (Bondi 2009: 113).

In this light, their promotional ends are not hidden but fully rooted in museums' nature since "[L]ike advertisers, museums have target audiences, which at the moment are principally the younger visitors that will hopefully grow up to become loyal museum members and sponsors and then bring their families and friends to the museum" (Smith Bautista 2014: 221). The major risk in addressing children is, in this case, that the synergistic union between education and entertainment characterizing knowledge

popularization for children might lead to spectacularization in some blogs or children's museums:

> Co-construction of knowledge through children's engagement can be dazzling but, at the same time, boil down to "fun but forgettable". In fact, mothers' blogs, for example, and some web pages from children's museums, seem to indulge in hyperbole and to long for / offer marvels, coming close to show-business and advertising discourse, where children are often used as "actors" in a kind of spectacularization. (Sabatini 2017: 66)

To my knowledge, the museum and gallery websites disseminating art history online have been investigated only in three studies: Fina (2020) analyses the soundscape of pictorial descriptions in twenty audioguides in English specifically intended for children, which are accessible from the official website of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in Manhattan; Sezzi (2019) delves into the popularizing strategies used to disseminate art knowledge in the section "Explore" of the website for children of the Tate Gallery (*Tate Kids*), which presents the life and the works of the artists exhibited in the gallery itself; Bondi (forthcoming) identifies how readers are engaged on the website *Tate Kids* and on the website for children of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (*MetKids*).

Following the last two studies, this paper aims at illustrating and comparing the popularizing strategies adopted in the websites *Tate Kids*, *MetKids* and *Destination Modern Art: An Intergalactic Journey to MoMA and P.S.1* to better understand the dynamics of popularization of modern art for children. Therefore, Section 2 illustrates two of the websites under investigation (*Tate Kids* and *Metkids*), Section 3 introduces the methodology adopted, Section 4 presents some preliminary results of the analysis of *Tate Kids* and *MetKids*, while Section 5 examines *Destination Modern Art*. Some concluding remarks are then provided in the Conclusions section.

2. *Tate Kids* and *MetKids*: The *MuseKids* corpus

Tate Kids[1] is one of the two websites dedicated to young people (for children aged 6 to 12) launched by the Tate Galleries. As a matter of fact, *Young Tate* (for young people aged 13 to 25) and *Tate Kids* are the "most notable digital

1 https://www.tate.org.uk/kids, accessed August 2022.

projects" (Smith Bautista 2014: 203) of the four art galleries in London, Liverpool and Cornwall known as Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Tate Liverpool, and Tate St Ives. In particular, *Tate Kids* was redesigned in order to meet the aims explicitly stated in the Tate website's section named "Our Vision":[2] more specifically, as Jackson (2009) emphasizes, its mission is "to increase public knowledge, understanding and appreciation of art by the creation of a colourful, relevant, interactive Web site with engaging content that would both entertain and educate the intended audience of six to 12 years old." The website is characterized by three main macro-sections, in the form of clickable horizontal bands that make up the homepage design: the section "Make", which gathers subsections presenting sets of instructions that children can follow in order to create works of art or objects, such as "Draw a dancer" or "Make a robot"; "Game & Quizzes", which allows children to play interactive games and quizzes on the different artists and art techniques, including, for example, "Art Parts", where children can draw in the missing parts of famous artworks, or quizzes on several subjects, such as "Which art superhero are you?" and "Which artist should design your bedroom?"; finally, the last macro-section is called "Explore", where visitors can read about artists and art movements. Within the homepage, there are two other sections: "What's new" puts in the foreground the new elements of the web, for example, new games, which can also be found in the dedicated section; instead, "Tate Kids Gallery" allows young users to create and share their own gallery of works.

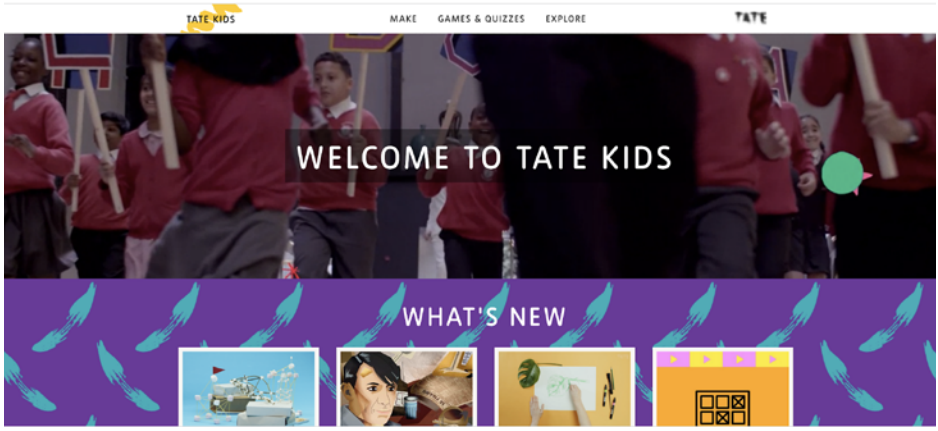

Figure 1. Homepage – *Tate Kids*. https://www.tate.org.uk/kids © Tate, London

2 https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/our-priorities, accessed August 2022.

The three main sections can be accessed even from the header and menu bar at the top of the homepage. The layout of the homepage characterizes the entire website: all the pages have a horizontal structure as they are divided into horizontal brightly uniform-coloured bands with equally vivid child-like motifs such as stars, paintbrushes, or flashes of lightning and umbrellas. The typeface is Tate's font, which is also used for Tate's logo. It is a component of Tate's "global brandscape" (Pierroux – Skjulstad 2011: 206) to create Tate's corporate identity (Sabatini 2015: 113).

The present analysis is centred on the section "Explore", which is the most informative part of the website. This section's main title, "Go on an art adventure", is overlaid on a video showing a close-up of a child's eyes looking at Matisse's *The Snail*, with colourful stylized patterns of abstract forms floating around. These elements epitomize the importance of visual perception (Bondi 2009: 113) in the learning process (Sezzi 2019) and the metaphor of learning as an adventure or journey (Buckingham – Scanlon 2004; Stenglin – Djonov 2010) that, in this case, becomes an "educational adventure about art" (Stenglin – Djonov 2010: 187).

In particular, "Explore" includes the subsections "Who's who?" on the artists and "What's that?" on the art movements. The links to the different topics are clickable, white-framed pictures with a title embodying the content and a palette icon, signalling that the pages are informative. These webpages are centred on the photos of the works of art exhibited in the galleries.

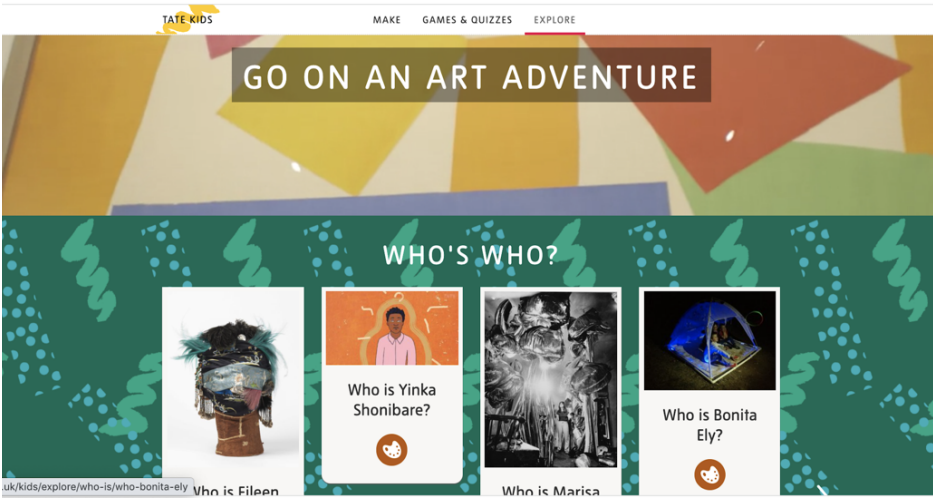

Figure 2. Section "Explore" – *Tate Kids*. https://www.tate.org.uk/kids © Tate, London

The second museum website for a young audience under analysis is *MetKids*,[3] the website of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York dedicated to children from 7 to 12 years old. Its launch in September 2015 was accompanied by the words of the CEO of the Metropolitan Museum that underline the importance of children as an audience and of the accessibility of art:

> The Met has always been a place of discovery for young visitors and their families. We have developed many resources and programs over the years for this important audience, and #MetKids demonstrates even further our commitment to making the Met – and to making art in general – as accessible as possible to kids and families.[4]

The website includes forty videos, news, and projects that offer a digital experience of the museum. It is conceived as a digital support before, during, and after the visit to the Met's rooms and halls.[5] The concept at the heart of the website is a vision of the Met as a "huge time machine"[6] that allows children to explore the art of distant worlds and times by simultaneously learning from experts and by sharing their own experience with other peers. The idea of art as an adventure is therefore also subsumed by *MetKids*.

Following the concept underlying the website, the homepage shows three navigation paths. The first one is "Explore the Map": it is a full-screen illustrated map of the museum that interprets the museum's various collections.

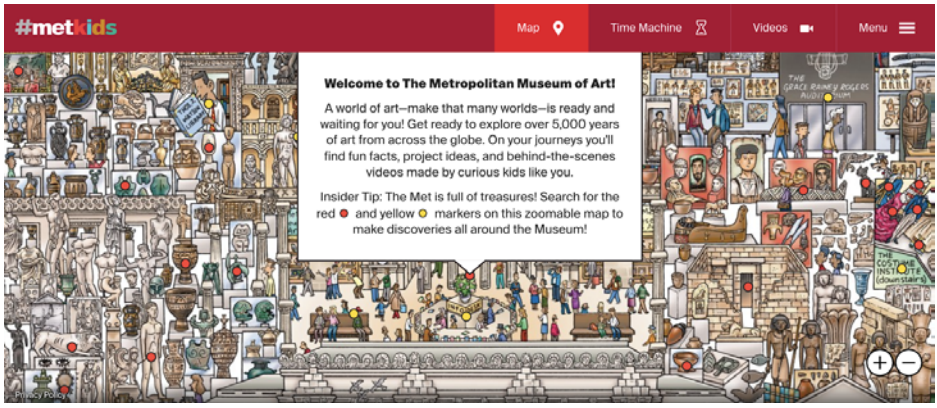

Figure 3. Homepage – *MetKids* https://www.metmuseum.org/art/online-features/metkids/explore/ © Met, NY

3 https://www.metmuseum.org/art/online-features/metkids/, accessed August 2022.
4 https://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2015/metkids-launch, accessed August 2022.
5 https://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2015/metkids-launch, accessed August 2022.
6 https://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2015/metkids-launch, accessed August 2022.

It allows children to explore the collections from an interactive zoomable map.[7]

This map access to a series of subsections of the museum artworks. They are subdivided into exploratory categories, enriched with links to the *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Visual Arts*, which is "a guide developed by New York City visual arts educators for grades PreK-12 and included by agreement with the New York City Department of Education, Office of Art and Special Projects." These links aim to clarify difficult terms and to provide additional information. The second channel for navigating the website is "Hop in the Time Machine", which allows children to search for an object of interest based on a specific period, geographical area, or theme ("Big Ideas", namely, "topics of interest resulting from audience research and feedback from the #MetKids Advisors").[8] The third navigation channel ("Watch Videos") is connected to forty videos showing children as "investigative reporters, animators and producers".[9] Their purposes range from answering children's questions, as tutorial videos, to suggesting creative activities ("Q&A", "Made by Kids", "Create", and "Celebrate").

The sub-subsections on the Met's artworks are divided into "Discover", "Imagine", "Create", and "Fun Facts". These webpages centre on one specific work of art within the museum, whose picture is again accompanied by a verbal text describing it and presenting the related artist or art movement. Only the sub-sections on Modern European and American Art are considered for the analysis.

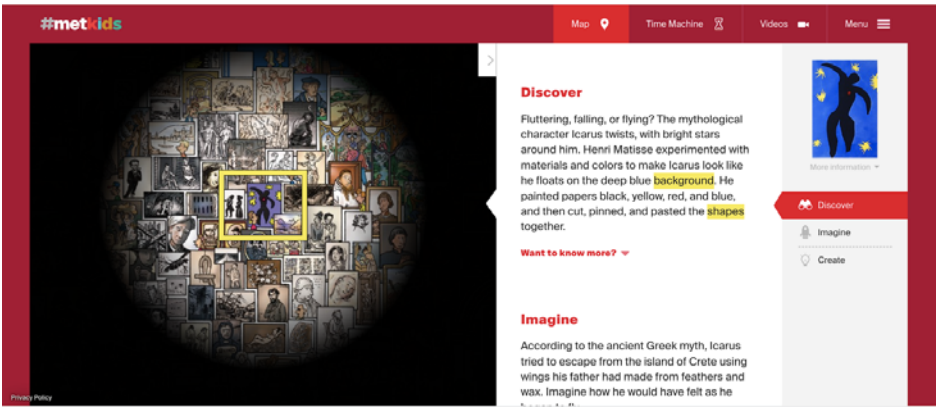

Figure 4. "Discover" – *MetKids*. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/online-features/metkids/explore/337069© Met, NY

7 https://www.metmuseum.org/art/online-features/metkids/explore/, accessed August 2022.
8 https://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2015/metkids-launch, accessed August 2022.
9 https://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2015/metkids-launch, accessed August 2022.

Specifically, the corpus *Musekids* consists of 49,379 tokens, and it is composed of the sections "Explore" of the *Tate Kids* (29,998 tokens) and "Discover" of the *MetKids* (19,381 tokens). It was collected in 2019, and it is part of the project "Museum online communication for children and early teenagers (from 6 to 14 years old)" (FAR 2019) of the Department of Studies on Languages and Culture, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy.

The third website, *Destination Modern Art: An Intergalactic Journey to MoMA and P.S.1*[10] is described separately in paragraph 5 because it has a different structure even though it shares some characteristics with *Tate Kids* and *MetKids*. It is not part of the quantitative analysis given its limited verbal text.

3. Methodology

The discursive strategies used to popularize art in the *Musekids* corpus are examined by gathering different approaches. Precisely, the expression "popularizing strategies" is intended as including different types of explanation, of questions, of citations, and of engagement markers.

As highlighted by Sezzi (2019) for the website *Tate Kids*, the six "types of explanation" as defined in Calsamiglia and van Dijk's taxonomy (2004: 372) are fundamental in disseminating art and are creatively exploited. Their use is corroborated by other studies on different educational websites and products for young people (among others, Diani – Sezzi 2019). The types of explanation are categorized as follows:

a. "Denomination" or "designation" is a strategy that introduces new terms or objects and their specialized denominations (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 381). It is associated with expressions such as "called", "known as", "meaning" (Garzone 2006: 91-92);
b. "Definition" is strictly interrelated with definition. It subsumes the explanation of unfamiliar words by describing the properties and characteristics of the objects they refer to (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 375; see also Garzone 2006: 92);
c. "Reformulation" or "paraphrase" implies that a "discourse fragment" is rendered "easier to understand than the original discourse fragment" (Garzone 2006: 94). Appositions, parentheses, dashes, quotes and

10 https://www.moma.org/interactives/destination/, accessed August 2022.

metalinguistic expressions usually introduce this strategy (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 383);

d. "Exemplification" concerns the use of specific examples in order to explain general phenomena (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 383);
e. "Generalization" works in the opposite way how the previous strategy does since general conclusions are drawn from specific instances (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 383);
f. "Analogy" or "association" (Calsamiglia – van Dijk 2004: 376) is based on the comparison with objects that can be more easily understood by the layman, like similes or metaphors.

Given that one of the features that characterizes museum discourse is the recourse to quotations (Lazzeretti 2016), the analysis also contemplates the different forms of quotations seen as an indication of the relevance and credibility of the information to be conveyed to non-experts, though these elements are not typically found in popularization for children.

In particular, Calsamiglia and López Ferrero's (2003) classification of styles of quotations – they use the term "citations" – detected in popularization of science for adults seems particularly appropriate. The different formulae are described according to their insertion within the text: therefore, their categories include "direct citation" and "indirect citation"; "integrated citation", which "has the form of indirect citation but with segments – of greater or lesser extension – signalled as being cited directly/literally with clear graphic or typographic marking, mainly with quotation marks or marked fonts (boldface or italics)" (Calsamiglia – López Ferrero 2003: 155); "inserted citation", introduced in the main discourse by means of markers such as "in the words of" or "according to".

As mentioned, popularization for children is defined by the co-presence of two apparent polarities: education and entertainment. This two-faced Janus nature of what is termed "edutainment" finds the convergence of these components in the use of questions. On the one hand, questions have an engaging function as they directly address the audience, and, on the other, they convey information by anticipating users' questions and objections (see, for example, Hyland 2002).

With regard to engagement markers, not only are both *wh*-questions and polar questions taken into account, but also imperatives, exhortatives, exclamations, colloquial features, and personal forms used to address the readers are considered, as they are frequently adopted in different educational materials (Diani 2015; Sezzi 2015, 2017, 2019; Silletti 2017; Bruti – Manca 2019; Diani – Sezzi 2019; on art see Sezzi 2019; Bondi forthcoming).

However, it must be underlined that some of the above-mentioned elements are not investigated. In fact, engagement markers are limitedly and foremost analysed in comparison to the use of the typologies of explanation and of quotations, namely, those strategies that primarily convey information and, henceforth, can be said to be the main "knowledge bearers".

Musekids was annotated using the UAM corpus tool (O'Donnell 2008a, 2008b). It is a free downable software for manual or semi-automatic linguistic annotation of text corpora. At first, *Musekids* was annotated at a document-level, thereby identifying the webtexts of *MetKids* and the webtexts of *Tate Kids*, and secondly, at a segment-level: segments of each text were annotated on the basis of a coding-scheme grounded upon the different types of explanation, of questions, and of engagement markers. After the annotation was completed, UAM automatically performed a chi-squared test that highlighted the statistically significant popularizing strategies in each sub-corpora by comparing the texts from Tate and Met's websites for children.

4. Making the most of the popularizing strategies: Some results

Table 1 shows the statistically relevant data as signalled by the UAM corpus tool thanks to one or multiple "plus" signs: one plus sign ("+") means a weak significance (90%), two plus signs ("++") stand for medium significance (95%), and three plus signs ("+++") for a high significance.

As indicated in the scheme, *Tate Kids* relies more on the types of explanations and on citation styles to introduce children to modern art, whereas *MetKids* hinges more on users' engagement. The *Met* website for children seems to be tipping the balance more in favour of the audience's involvement rather than on clarifications or on the use of artists' and experts' words.

Table 1. Popularizing strategies in *MetKids* and *Tate Kids*

Feature Total Units	Met Kids N= 1571		Tate Kids N=1593		ChiSqu	Sign.
Popularizing Strategies	N	Percent	N	Percent		
• *Types of explanation*	129	8.21%	339	21.28%	107.193	+++
• *Citation-styles*	14	0.89%	49	3.08%	19.347	+++
• *Engagement strategies*	1428	90.90%	1205	75.64%	131.782	+++

Interestingly, a closer look at the different popularizing strategies under investigation discloses that there are no relevant preferences for specific types of explanation when comparing the two sub-corpora.[11]

Table 2. Types of explanation and citation-styles in *MetKids* and *Tate Kids*

Feature Total Units	Met Kids N= 1571		Tate Kids N=1593		ChiSqu	Sign.
	N	Percent	N	Percent		
Types of explanation	N= 129		N=339			
• *Denomination*	42	32.5%	90	26.55%	1.666	
• *Definition*	16	12.40%	53	15.63%	0.776	
• *Reformulation*	19	14.73%	31	9.14%	3.054	+
• *Exemplification*	25	19.38%	75	22.12%	0.419	
• *Generalization*	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0.000	
• *Analogy*	27	20.93%	90	26.55%	1.573	
Citation-styles	N=14		N=49			
• *Direct - citation*	5	35.71%	33	67.35%	4.552	++
• *Indirect - citation*	3	21.43%	9	18.37%	0.066	
• *Integrated - citation*	2	14.29%	7	14.29%	0.000	
• *Inserted - citation*	4	28.57%	0	0.00%	14.949	+++

Both *MetKids* and *Tate Kids* rely equally on the different types of explanations. Denominations in the two sub-corpora mainly refer to art techniques (1)[12] or movements (2):

(1) See the red and blue dots in this painting? They are based on the kind of dots used to print comic strips and other images in newspapers, *called Benday dots*. Roy Lichtenstein used patterns and colors inspired by comics in most of his paintings. (*MetKids*)

(2) He was one of a group of artists making art in the 1960s *who were called pop artists* because they made art about "popular" things such as TV, celebrities, fast food, pop music and cartoons. (*Tate Kids*)

11 The definitions within the body of the texts of *MetKids* have been considered. The definitions provided by moving the cursor on the underlined expression have not been annotated.

12 Emphasis added in the examples.

By the same token, definitions are primarily associated with art terminology, as in examples (3) and (4), where it is specified what "panoramas" are or what "Cubism" is:

(3) *Panoramas were large paintings meant to give viewers a sense of what it would feel like to be in the place shown*. They would have fascinated people the same way movies do today. (*MetKids*)

(4) While he was studying at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, Ben Nicholson discovered cubism. *Cubism was a style of art invented in around 1907*. (*Tate Kids*)

Yet, they also cover all those terms that are supposed to be difficult for children to understand given their limited background knowledge and experience of the world (Myers 2003). Definitions of terms like "asylum" (5) or "psychologist" (6) are therefore given:

(5) Van Gogh's brother Theo shipped art supplies to the asylum where Van Gogh was staying so he could draw and paint as he was getting better. *An asylum is a place where people who are mentally unwell are cared for*. (*MetKids*)

(6) Surrealists were inspired by a famous psychologist called Sigmund Freud. (*A psychologist studies behaviour and how people think*). (*Tate Kids*)

The necessity to be precise and to provide children with all the indispensable information to understand artists' lives is combined with the strategy of exemplification, as in (7) where specific instances of a natural type of glue are offered, or examples of what types of animals George Stubbs liked drawing (8) are presented:

(7) This robe is made from an animal skin. When painting on animal skins, artists often mixed pigments with a natural glue – like cactus juice, fish eggs, or boiled hide scrapings – to help the paint stick. (*MetKids*)

(8) Stubbs liked drawing all animals, especially ones from exotic countries. He loved finding out about new species like zebras, cheetahs and moose. (*Tate Kids*)

Exemplifications can take more complex forms when they are inserted in the descriptions of the works of art, thereby playing an essential role in the

interpretation of the paintings or of the statues exposed in the Metropolitan Museum or in the Tate Gallery, as in the following example:

(9) This work shows a view of Henri Matisse's studio: we can see part of his large painting The Dance (now at the Museum of Modern Art, New York), propped against the far wall. Even though this painting shows a real scene, the artist played with the sense of depth and perspective. He arranged the chair with the blue-and-white seat, the three-legged sculpture stand (holding a vase of flowers), and the painting against the back wall in a tricky way. *For example, one leg of the sculpture stand seems to rest in the grass depicted in the painting*. (*MetKids*)

In the above example, Matisse's *Nasturtiums and the painting "Dance"* (1912) is presented. In this case, exemplification is an essential part of its description: the verbal texts on the objects of art are usually short descriptions *in praesentia* (Bondi 2009: 126), as a picture of the works of art always accompanies the text so that "[t]he potential of multimodality is here exploited to the full" (Bondi 2009: 126). It is said that the artist plays with the lines of perspective as can be seen in one of the legs of the tripod table that invades the painting on the wall of his studio. Therefore, the example guides the gaze of the child viewer, making him/her discover the details of the artworks and offering him/her "an interpretative key to visual perception" (Bondi 2009: 126).

In (10), the exemplification provides the key to understanding Gowda's symbolism:

(10) She is famous for using unlikely things to make her art. These are things used every day in India, but to Sheela Gowda they have a symbolic and sometimes mystical meaning. *For example, the scraps of tarpaulin and old oil drums she uses in her installations represent the simple slum houses of poor Indian workers, as this is often what they use to construct them***.** (*Tate Kids*)

Analogy has a double function, too, in both the sub-corpora. Firstly, similes in popularization for children are linked to the children's world, to the "common experiences of the lay reader" (Gotti 1996: 219). These references are a strategy of popularization that connects the expert discourse with "other elements of non-scientific/specialized culture" (Myers 1989: 171), such as music, cinema, television, or sport. Thus, analogies are created between art and children's lives in order to make the art understandable and make young people appreciate it. They do shorten the distance between the world of art discourse and the world of young visitors, as in examples (11) and (12):

(11) Just in case, the artist provided the owner of the sculpture with a copy of the head made from plaster, which is much lighter than marble. The artist even wrote a note suggesting that the owner place the extra Medusa head on a table with a candle inside – *just like a modern-day jack-o'-lantern*. (*MetKids*)

(12) All the rich men and women would go to the races and the horses were so famous that everybody knew their names (*a bit like the way we know footballers' names now*). (*Tate Kids*)

Analogy is also exploited in the descriptions of the works of art in *Tate Kids* and *MetKids*; similes often become "visual anchors" that help the readers in the interpretation and boost their visual literacy:

(13) A girl in red holds on tightly to the arm of an older woman dressed in blue, whose eyes are so dark that *her face almost looks like a mask*. The tops of trees in the background frame their heads like green halos, while a hut and wildflowers peek out from behind the older woman's shoulder. (*MetKids*)

For instance, the face of one woman represented in one of Gauguin's paintings (*Two women*) is compared to a mask and two crowns of trees in the background are said to resemble two halos, hinting at a deeper meaning. Indeed, these short descriptions are always followed by a question that makes children reflect upon the art objects presented on the webpage, suggesting the appropriate response (see Bondi forthcoming).

In point of fact, this text is complemented by the following question "What do these surroundings and their pose tell us about these two women, and how did the artist make them look both the same and different?". It involves the readers, making them think about the meaning and the technique used in the painting.

Similarly, in example (14), the elements in Paul Nash's landscapes are said to evoke persons, animals, or other fantastic creatures. The artists' words are also reported to support this interpretation and to stimulate children's imagination:

(14) The features in his landscapes often seem to be more than just a tree or a hill. *They have characteristics that make them look like animals, people, or other strange creatures*. When he was young, Paul Nash was fascinated by a group of tall elm trees that grew at the end of his garden. These

> trees were very old and he thought they looked as if they were "Hurrying along stooping and undulating like a queue of urgent females with fantastic hats". (*Tate Kids*)

Again, the structure of a short description ending with a final question is to be found on *Tate Kids*' webpage: "Do you ever look at things in the landscape like gnarled tree trunks or clouds and think they look like animals, people or monsters?".

As observed by Bondi (forthcoming), questions involving the users ("you") centre on readers' "speculation" on the *MetKids* website, whilst questions on the *Tate Kids* website have children's experience at their core. In general, analogies in the preceding descriptions are key to understanding and appreciating the artistic works.

The last type of explanation in Calsamiglia and Van Djik's classification is reformulation. On both websites, this strategy is especially used with foreign specialist terms, and it evidently goes hand in hand with denomination:

(15) Fashions like this are known as haute couture, which, in French, *literally means "high sewing."* Haute couture is sewn by hand instead of with sewing machines and is created to fit the person who buys it perfectly. This type of fashion design is often extremely creative, daring, and unusual – not the kind of clothing people wear every day. (*MetKids*)

(16) Wallis never had an art lesson. At the time, art was never taught in schools. Wallis taught himself how to paint. Even without any training, he just did it, because he wanted to. This is why his paintings are called naïve. *This means that he did it without knowing any of the technical methods of how to paint*. (*Tate Kids*)

Reformulations are slightly more significant in *MetKids* (Table 2), where there are three unusual instances:

(17) Where do they lead you? Where else can you find lines? In all of Vincent van Gogh's paintings and drawings, he repeated lines and colors to create rhythm and movement. In this picture *Van Gogh [van GO]* uses them to show a nearly empty hallway. Notice how they make it look like there is depth by drawing your eye into the distance. That's called perspective. (*MetKids*)

(18) Introducing Marie, a fourteen-year-old ballerina who lived in France. When she was just six years old, she and her sisters started taking dance classes at the Paris Opéra. There, Marie met the artist *Edgar Degas [d-GAH]*, who loved the ballet and often sketched the dancers practicing in class and hanging out backstage. (*Met Kids*)

(19) The designer of this dress was Yves Saint Laurent. *His first name is pronounced like "Eve,"* but many people simply use his initials: YSL. (*MetKids*)

As the above examples show, foreign artists' names are somehow phonetically transcribed so that children can pronounce them correctly (17-18), or a clue is given by indicating an English word with a similar pronunciation (19). This systematically occurs in the other American museum website, that is, the MoMA website for children (see the following paragraph).

As already mentioned, citation is not a common strategy in children's popularization, but it is frequent in museum discourse (Lazzeretti 2016). Different styles of citations are also employed in the museum-based websites for children under analysis. *MetKids* sometimes uses inserted citations to introduce voices not belonging to the world of art. These voices provide the knowledge necessary for appreciating and deciphering the artworks (20). *Tate Kids* prefers to let the artists speak so that they can offer their own interpretation or explanation of their work and life so that they can offer (21):

(20) According to the ancient Greek myth, Icarus tried to escape from the island of Crete using wings his father had made from feathers and wax. Imagine how he would have felt as he began to fly. (*MetKids*)

(21) And what's it like to have a secret identity? One Guerrilla Girl said: "It's like having a super-power"
And does anyone know their secret identities? The Guerrilla Girl known as Frida Kahlo says:
"Hard to tell. Partners know. Very close friends. My dog knows!". (*Tate Kids*)

In general, the analysis highlights the effort of *Tate Kids* and *MetKids* to make modern art comprehensible to children. As a matter of fact, the two museum-based websites rely on five out of six types of explanations to help children appreciate and interpret modern works of art, trying to create texts that are both precise and easy to understand. In addition, they use two popularizing

strategies that appear to be specific to this type of website, that is, citations and phonetic clarifications of some foreign artists' names.

5. "That's not art! It's a fire extinguisher": The website for children of MoMA

Another type of museum-based website is the MoMA (Museum of Modern Art)'s website for children: *Destination Modern Art* is midway between an online "artdventure" game, that is, "an educational adventure about art" (Stenglin – Djonov 2010: 187), and museum websites such as *Tate Kids* and *MetKids*. Like *MetKids*, *Destination Modern Art* is an interactive resource that focuses on a visit to the Museum of Modern Art and to its affiliate, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York City. It is aimed at young children aged 5 to 8 and was created with two goals in mind: the primary aim was "to provide younger children with the tools they needed to begin looking critically at art", focusing on specific works of art; the second one was "to inspire children and their parents to do that 'looking' at MoMA and its affiliate, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center" (Schwartz – Burnette 2004).

Figure 5. *Destination Modern Art* – MoMA for children. https://www.moma.org/interactives/destination/© MoMA, NY

In particular, children are accompanied on the virtual tour of the museum in Manhattan by an alien character. As stated by Schwartz and Burnette (2004), it is "a friendly and inquisitive alien, whose lack of familiarity with the art environment allows questions with varying degrees of complexity. In this way, the alien could serve as the impetus for discovery and allow the children to interact directly with the art." The presence of a speaking character, in this case, addressing the users both with speech bubbles and voice-over, is a typical element of educational websites (Buckingham – Scanlon 2004).

The alien's spaceship mission is based on an animated tour of MoMA's permanent collection followed by a "treasure hunt" in P.S.1 that encourages children "to find the permanent artworks scattered throughout the building" (Schwartz – Burnette 2004).

In the MoMA section, by selecting artworks, visitors can learn about the works of art, artists, their techniques, and inspirations. Children are primarily engaged in activities through interactive icons titled "Tools", "Listen", "Look", "Words", "About", and "Idea", the latter including ideas to create children's own artworks. This website is mainly based on multimodality and interactivity since its essential core is to make children learn about art through activities. Therefore, the information load is mainly distributed between interactive activities and pictures of the artworks. The section "About" is the more informative one. Even though its texts are reduced to the minimum and revolve around a photo of a work of art, some popularizing strategies are nonetheless used.

There is only one *definition* (22) in the form of an apposition:

(22) For many years, Marcel taught at the Bauhaus, *a famous German design school*.

As a matter of fact, pictures play a major role, and the limited verbal text is focused on the lives of the painters, the designers, or the sculptors of the works of art at the MoMA and at the P.S.1. For example, denominations referring to art movements are always anchored to a specific work and no definitions follow (23):

(23) Frida's paintings are sometimes *called Surrealist*. Surrealist art is inspired by dreams. (*Destination Modern Art*)

Direct citations are also employed. At the beginning of almost every artist's brief biography, there is a quotation of his/her own words (24), such as the following one by Polly Apfelbaum:

(24) "I always wanted to be an artist, even before I knew what an artist was." (*Destination Modern Art*)

The other strategy, which is systematically adopted, is the type of reformulation as found in *MetKids* that helps children pronounce the names of foreign artists (Fig. 6). Furthermore, it is also used for complex American names whose pronunciation might be ambiguous:

(25) Click on each number to learn a fact about Polly Apfelbaum [*Ap-full-bom]*

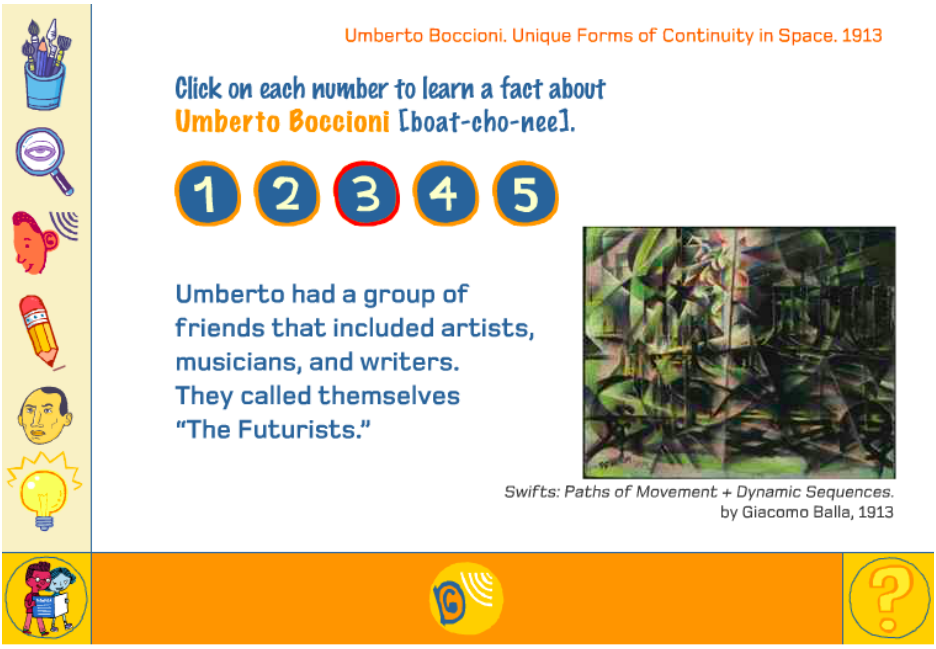

Figure 6. Umberto Boccioni – *Destination Modern Art*. https://www.moma.org/interactives/destination/© MoMA, NY

6. Conclusions

Popularization for children has a Janus essence as it combines educational goals with entertainment. The Internet is the hotbed for disseminating knowledge among youngsters as it effortlessly combines these two elements. Websites play a major role within the domain of informal education in many disciplines, for example, in science. Instead, art popularization on the web mainly takes two forms: art and crafts websites and sections of art

museum websites aiming at promoting workshops for families and children. However, few art museums go against this tendency: the British Tate gallery, the American Metropolitan Art Museum of New York, and MoMA have websites specifically dedicated to children, *Tate Kids*, *MetKids*, and *Destination Modern Art*.

The analysis of the verbal popularizing strategies accompanying the photos of the works of art in the corpus *MuseKids* (composed of the more informative sections of *Tate Kids* and of *MetKids*) shows that nearly all types of explanations are used with no significant differences between the two websites. They are all oriented towards children's familiarization with art. The analysis demonstrates that the first two websites aim at introducing art in a precise and accessible way relying on denominations and definitions*:* not only do they refer to art terms dealing with art movements, art techniques or art groups, but also to terms or names of people that might not be familiar to children.

In addition, modern art is made less obscure and indecipherable with exemplification and analogy, especially within the descriptions of the works of art. Exemplifications allow the child user to guide his/her gaze in discovering details and interpreting the artworks. Similarly, analogy, being rooted in children's world, tries to bring the world of art closer to children: it is used both for connecting art discourse to children's own lives and for supporting and boosting their visual literacy. Creative use of reformulation is identified in *MetKids,* which is linked to the concern of making children pronounce the names of the artists correctly. This systematically occurs in *Destination Modern Art*. Foreign or strange artists' names are thus clarified so that they are both precisely pronounced and, simultaneously, they are not perceived as obstacles by young users.

In *Destination Modern Art*, the verbal texts accompanying the pictures of the works of art are more concise and essential. Nonetheless, the website does resort to almost all types of explanations.

There is no space for *generalization* on any of the three websites: this is probably due to the fact that artworks are presented as unique. The uniqueness of art might also explain the use of citations, especially of the artists' words. As a matter of fact, their individuality and their creativity are in this way emphasized. Art popularization on these three websites is also shown to be creative and unique, combining accuracy and accessibility.

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