# Measuring the reactivity of bilingual consumers to an alternative use of languages: a case study for the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia

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**Abstract.** The general objective of this research is to test whether the use of non-official languages in marketing communication strategy can affect the consumers' order of preference for food products. The sample of consumers used in the study is represented by university students living in the Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia where a local minority language (Friulian) is spoken<sup>1</sup>. Three languages have been compared to evaluate their impact on marketing communication: Italian (official language of the market), English (the global language) and Friulian representing the local language. Statistical analysis has been conducted by using the multivariate conjoint methodology approach able to rank the importance of the product's attributes.

The research has measured consumers' responses to the language used in marketing communication and compared the reactions of consumers' having different identities and language skills. The results have shown that the language that generates the maximum preference for a food product depends on the consumers' identity and minority language skills, and on the communication-mix strategies adopted by the marketing companies. English language marketing has not increased the preference for products. Marketing messages in the minority language have produced a competitive advantage with minority consumers and emotionally stimulated the others.

Key-words. Food preferences, consumer behaviour, languages, conjoint analysis, marketing.

**1. Introduction.** Recent marketing research has confirmed the interest in marketing communication using "non-conventional" or "non-official" languages such as English in non-

English-speaking countries, dialects and minority languages in specific geographical contexts. The targets of this model of communication are many: to segment demand and create

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niche markets for specific groups of consumers; to generate more empathy in a specific market context; to stimulate the sense of belonging to a specific community; to draw attention to a minority or local community; to suggest authenticity, specialty or better quality; to solicit the symbolic meanings of products; to generate emotional cues, and so on (Askegaard & Madsen 1995, Compagno 2000, Rosa & Sillani 2001, Cisilino 2004, Verganti 2009).

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between the languages used in marketing communication strategies and the consumers' preference for food products. Specifically, the research has analysed the results of three separate studies having common theoretical backgrounds, methodological approaches and targets (Sillani & Bruno Bossio 2012) in order to verify the effects of marketing communication strategies using non-conventional languages on the consumers' preference for food products. The sample of consumers used in the studies is represented by university students living in the Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia where a local minority language (Friulian) is spoken. Three languages have been compared in order to evaluate their impact on marketing communication: Italian (official language of the market), English (the global language) and Friulian representing the local language. In all studies statistical analysis has been conducted using the multivariate conjoint methodology approach. As the original studies had produced partially contradictory results, a comparison was thought to be necessary in order to ascertain the repeatability of the experiment.

2. The research. Let us assume that the recipient of a written message is able to decode its meaning in more than one language and is behaving rationally by considering only the objective meaning of the message and by being indifferent to the language in which the message is written. Then, the words "Giallo" and "Yellow" indicate exactly the same attribute, a specific colour with the same value in a common chromatic scale, and their preference ranking will be indistinguishable in the two languages. At the opposite, if the language in which the message is written is not indifferent to the consumer, the words "Giallo" and "Yellow" may stimulate different emotional cues and be associated with different preferences. In this case the difference between preferences for "Giallo" and "Yellow" is different from zero and can be considered a measure of the intensity of the consumer's emotional reaction to the language used, respectively Italian or English. Generalizing, it can be said that the differences between the preferences for the same message encoded in different languages will provide a measure of the consumers' reaction to the language; this measure is not absolute but depends on the languages being compared.

In this research consumers' preferences have been estimated by conjoint analysis, a multivariate statistical

analysis which evaluates the attractiveness of a product from the preferences of their attributes, which are hypothesized to be separable and additive, for example, colour, flavour, taste, and so on (Green et al. 2001, Gustafsson et al. 2001. Cicia et al. 2004, Molteni & Troilo 2007, Furlan & Martone 2011). The preferences assigned to a measurable level of the attribute, for example the level "Yellow" colour, is called "utility". In addition to level utility, conjoint analysis estimates the relative importance of the attribute in determining the preferred version of the product. The relative importance of the attribute is the difference between the maximum and minimum utility of its levels expressed in percent of the sum of the differences of all the attributes of the product. The relative importance, therefore, is a measure of the sensitiveness of the consumers to the attribute and, in the case of the attribute "language", a measure of the intensity of the consumers' emotional reaction to the language used for describing the attribute, in short of their own linguistic sensitivity.

In this paper conjoint analysis is used to estimate the utility of marketing communication represented by messages that are identical in meaning, but are encoded in different languages. The purpose of the research is to evaluate the consumers' sensitiveness to these messages and to establish the importance of the attribute "language" in determining consumers' preferences.

The utility of a message encoded in a specific language reflects the con-

tribution of a given language to generating the ranking of preferences for a given product. The most useful language is the one that generates the highest ranking of preference for the product and signals the way of communication most preferred by the consumers; in other words it is the "ideal" language to communicate that particular product to those particular customers.

The utilities measured by conjoint analysis depend on the attributes and levels used to describe the product profiles. Consequently, both the sensitivity and language preference measured by conjoint analysis depend, as well as on the languages used, on the other attributes and levels used to describe the products and on the products themselves. In conclusion, using different tests you can get different results.

In order to evaluate the repeatability of the results obtained by the alternative use of English, Italian and Friulian, the results of three different tests have been compared. These tests were not part of a single experimental plan but had been devised for different research purposes; consequently, if the tests gave different results, this could not be ascribed to any aspect of the test. The characteristics of the three tests relevant to this paper are described below (Tables 1, 2 and 2a).

Test A. Linguistic characterization of an advertising character. The test imagines that a hypothetical cartoon artist is asked to create a linguistically-denoted advertising mascot in order to publicize a cheese produced in

	Attributes	Levels
Test A	Name of character Character's favourite pet Character's catch phrase	Giacomo; James; Jacum Topo; Mouse; Surîs Formaggio per tutti; Cheese for everybody; For- modi per duci
	Character's favourite food	Formaggio; Cheese; Formadi
Test B	Name of wine Origin of wine Language Values Price (€/bottle)	Cabernet; Chardonnay Friuli; Australia Grappolo d'uva; A bunch of grapes; Rap di ue Un pozzo per l'Africa; Contro l'alcolismo; Dal 1897; Absent 4.10; 4.40; 4.90
Test C	Brand Cured ham Ecolabel Shelf life** Price (€/roll)	Casa del prosciutto; Cjase dal persut; Casa del prosciutto*; Cjase dal persut* Parma; San Daniele Absent; Abbiamo risparmiato acqua ed energia; We saved water and energy; O vin sparagnade aghe e energjie 5; 7 1.20; 1.60

### Table 1. Attributes and levels.

\* Golden-yellow text on a dark red background, reminiscent of the colour of cured ham.

\*\* In days.

a region where a minority language is spoken. The character is described by four attributes (name, favourite pet, catch phrase and favourite food) encoded alternately in English, Italian and Friulian. The test objective is to establish the linguistic characterization of the mascot in the advertising profile which is preferred by consumers. In particular, all the character attributes are linguistic variables and the test compares monolingual communication profiles (English, Italian or Friulian) with multilingual profiles (combinations of the three languages). In the test all languages are equivalent as they are used to give the same information and appear with the same frequency. It is a test on the use of multilingualism for commercial purposes in the territory of a linguistic minority. Each profile is given a score of 1 to 10.

Test B. Use of unconventional languages on the packaging of a food product for encoding complementary messages. This test simulates the purchase of a wine to be chosen from an assortment of bottles described by three attributes (wine name, geographical origin, price) and a message. The message consists of two additional attributes: the first (a linguistic variable) uses the expression "bunch of grapes" either in Italian, A well-known cartoon artist is asked to create a character mascot to advertise a Friulian cheese. Express your preference for the following characters assigning

each one a score from 1 to 10 (higher score indicates higher preference).							
Character's name	Favourite pet	Catch phrase	Favourite food	Preference score			
Giacomo James James Jacum	Mouse Topo Mouse Surîs	Cheese for everybody Formadi par ducj Formaggio per tutti Formaggio per tutti	Formaggio Cheese Formadi Cheese				
 Giacomo	 Surîs	 Formadi par ducj	 Formadi				

Table 2. Preference grids, tests A and B.

Test A

Test B You are going to a party with some friends and decide to buy a bottle of wine. Express your preference for the following bottles assigning each one a score from 1 to 10 (higher score indicates higher preference).

 Wine name	Origin	Message	Price (€/bottle)	Preference score
 Chardonnay	Australia	Grappolo d'uva - contro l'alcolismo	4.1	
Cabernet	Friuli	A bunch of grapes - dal 1897	4.4	
Chardonnay	Australia	Rap di ue	4.1	
Cabernet	Friuli	Rap di ue - contro l'alcolismo	<b>4</b> .9	
Chardonnay	Friuli	Grappolo d'uva - un pozzo per l'Africa	4.4	

English or Friulian, the second either supports or does not support a certain value. The geographical origins considered are the territory of the minority language and an Englishspeaking country; all the languages in the test are combined with all the origins. The test evaluates the use of the language of globalization and of a minority language in the promotion of both a local product and a product imported from a country using the global language. Only a single linguistic variable is considered and its importance is evaluated in determining consumers' preferences, both with respect to product attributes important in directing the choice and with respect to unusual messages in the communication of the product under exam. The test ranks the importance of the languages, in the sense that the national language is used to encode the main information, while the international and minority languages are only used for information that the respondent might disregard for the expression of preference. This is a test on the use of a minority language or global language as an alternative to

Brand	Product	Ecolabel	Shelf life*	Price	Preference score
Cjase dal persut	Parma	Abbiamo risparmiato acqua ed energia	7	1.6	
Casa del prosciutto (1)	Parma	vin sparagnade			
		aghe e energjie	7	1.2	
Casa del prosciutto	San Daniele		5	1.2	
Cjase dal persut (1)	San Daniele	We saved water and			
		energy	5	1.6	
 Casa del prosciutto	 Parma	 vin sparagnade			
-		aghe e energjie	5	1.2	

#### Table 2a. Preference grid, test C.

You are hungry and you decide to buy a packaged roll. Express your preference for the following products by assigning a score from 1 to 100.

\*In days.

(1) Golden-yellow text on a dark red background, reminiscent of the colour of cured ham.

the national language to encode a complementary message added to those already reported in the national language in the territory of a linguistic minority. Score range from 1 to 10.

Test C. Use of unconventional languages on the packaging of a food product for encoding primary communication messages. The test simulates the purchase of a packaged roll to be chosen from an assortment of cured ham rolls described by five attributes (brand, product, ecolabel, shelf life, price). The brand name is written alternatively in Italian or Friulian and either with a standard type font and background or with a coloured type font and background. The attribute "product" compares two well-known dry-cured hams, Prosciutto di San Daniele from Friuli and Prosciutto di Parma from another Italian region. The attribute eco-label might be absent or encoded in the expression "we saved water and energy" written in English, Italian, or Friulian. The two linguistic attributes are not "pure": the brand attribute combines the language variable with the variable colour; the ecolabel attribute combines the variable absent / present with the variable language. The test evaluates the importance of linguistic variables that are not "pure" in determining customers' preferences and compares them with the conventional attributes of the product. Languages in test C are not equal as they are used to provide different information and appear with different frequencies. It is a test on the use of a minority language or global language as an alternative to the national language to encode some of the main

messages conveyed in the territory of a linguistic minority. Preferences are expressed on a 1 to 100 scale.

The experimental designs for detecting the preferences in individual tests include: 13 profiles of advertising characters for test A (including 4 for controls), 20 profiles of bottles for test B (including 4 for controls), 18 profiles of rolls for test C (including 2 for controls). The attributes and their levels in the three tests are listed in Table 1. The questions put to respondents, and some profiles of the advertising characters, bottles and rolls are given in Tables 2 and 2a. The plans of the three experimental tests are orthogonal, and the preferences recorded were processed with the "package" SPSS 15.0 Conjoint<sup>TM</sup>.

Tests A and B were administered in May 2011 to a non-probabilistic sample of 194 students at the University of Udine. To make sure that the order of administration did not affect the results, half of the sample was given test A before test B, while the other half was given test B first. Test C was administered in April 2012 to a non-probabilistic sample of 311 students at the University of Udine. The respondents were informed of the research object only after agreeing to participate, so that language competence and the emotions associated with language use would not influence the composition of the sample. All activities related to the administration of the tests were conducted in Italian; respondents used English and Friulian only when it was required by the tests. This article summarizes the results of the analysis of the linguistic variables associated with identity and language proficiency.

**3.** Consumer profile. After recording the preferences, the identity and language competence of the respondents were ascertained by dichotomous variables expressed in modality yes or no. Regarding the identity the questions were "Are you Friulian?" and "Are you Italian?". To establish English and Friulian language competence, the questions were "Do you understand ...?" and "Do you speak ...?". Cross-checking the responses three identities were identified -Friulian, other Italian and foreign and three levels of language proficiency - speaks, understands and does not understand. Given that all respondents were students enrolled at an Italian university, it was assumed that everyone was able to understand and speak Italian. In tests A and B, the sample of respondents was represented by males (44%) and females (56%) aged 18 to 28. 26.6% of respondents were enrolled in humanities, 44.1% in science and 29.3% in business school or law. The majority of students declared they were both Italian and Friulian (71.8%), 23.4% of respondents said they were Italians but not Friulians, and 4.8% foreigners. With regard to language skills the majority declared to understand and speak English (87.5%), 47.4% to understand and speak Friulian. In addition, a large minority (34.9%) were able to understand Friulian but did not speak it. 10.5% of respondents said they did not belong to the minority but were able to understand

the minority language. From the point of view of decoding and attributing meaning to the messages of the tests, it was found that English was not understood by 6.7% of respondents while Friulian was not understood by 17.7% of the sample and that, overall, 23.4% of respondents were not able to understand at least one of the three languages of the tests.

In test C, 51.4% of respondents were males and 48.6% females, aged 19 to 27. All respondents were enrolled at a university. 60.3% said they were both Italian and Friulian. 37.1% declared to be Italian but not Friulian and 2.6% said they were from abroad. With regard to language skills, 80.4% declared they understood and spoke English, while 40.8% said they were able to understand and speak Friulian. In addition, a fairly large minority (27.3%) were able to understand Friulian but did not speak it. 31.7% of the sample said they did not belong to the language minority but were able to understand the minority language. From the point of view of decoding and assigning meaning to the communication messages, it was found that English was not understood by 3.5% of respondents while Friulian was not understood by 31.8% of the sample and that, overall, 32.7% of respondents were not able to understand at least one of the three languages of the tests.

Both tests showed that, for Friulians, Friulian and Italian identities were complementary and not alternative. Moreover, in both tests, a portion of the respondents were not able to understand all the languages being compared and, consequently, the meaning of all the messages they were translating. This aspect does not invalidate the results of the research; instead, it reproduces a real-life situation where marketing campaigns often use languages that are unknown to a part of the potential consumers.

**4. Results and discussion.** Table 3 reports the measures of sensitivity (emotional reactions) to the language attributes related to the identity and language skills in English and Friulian as declared by the respondents. On account of their small number, foreign students were excluded from the tests. A measure of the respondents' linguistic sensitivity was provided by the following data:

- i) for test A, by the mean difference between the maximum and minimum utility value of the four attributes;
- ii) for test B, by the relative importance of the attribute "language" in determining the preferred profile;
- iii) for test C, by the sum of the relative importance of the linguistic attributes "brand" and "ecolabel".

Comparisons between the values reported in Tables 3 and following can only be made within the same test and are based on t tests elaborated by the SPSS Tables 15.0 software.

By grouping respondents according to their identity (Table 3) it was demonstrated that the intensity of linguistic sensitiveness of Friulians and

			Test A (1)	Test B (2)	Test C (3)
Identity	Friulian Other Italian	(a) (b)	1.9 2.1	19.1 25.4 a***	48.5 56.1 a***
English proficiency	Speaks Understand Does not understand	(a) (b) (c)	2.0 1.7 2.1	21.4 c*** 19.5 9.4	51.4 52.9 52.0
Friulian proficiency	Speaks Understands Does not understand	(a) (b) (c)	2.1 1.9 1.8	19.1 20.2 24.6 a*	48.3 48.0 59.2 a***, b***

Table 3. Consumer sensitiveness to the language used in commercial communication.

(1) Mean difference between maximum and minimum value of the 4 linguistic attributes (utility).

(2) Relative importance of the attribute "language" (%).

(3) Sum of the relative importance of the attributes "brand" and "ecolabel" (%).

When averages within the same column are different, the score of the category with the smallest average is written next to the category with the greatest average. The results are the output of two-tail tests with reliability: 0.10 (\*), 0.05 (\*\*) and 0.01 (\*\*\*).

of other Italians was not statistically different in test A but different in tests B and C, where the other Italians proved to be more sensitive to linguistic stimuli than Friulians. By categorizing respondents according to their English language skills significant differences were found only in test B, where the sensitivity to linguistic stimuli of English speakers was higher than that of those who did not understand this language. By classifying respondents according to their Friulian language skills it was demonstrated that the sensitivity to linguistic stimuli of the three categories of respondents was not statistically different in test A and different in tests B and C. In particular in test B students who did not understand Friulian were more sensitive (with a modest level of significance of 0.10) than those who spoke it; no other significant differences emerged. In test C respondents who did not understand the minority language were more sensitive to the linguistic attributes of the test than those who spoke Friulian and those who did not speak it but were able to understand it, with a higher significance level of 0.01. There were no significant differences between those who spoke and those who only understood the minority language.

In practice, in those tests where languages were not equal (tests B and C) consumers not belonging to the linguistic minority and those who did not understand the minority language had a more intense emotional reaction compared to the consumers belonging to the minority and to those who spoke the minority language. Conversely, in those tests where languages were equal (test A), there were no emotional reactions of different intensity.

Tests B and C produced the same results when comparing identities

				Identity							
				Friulians (a)			Other Italians (b)				
			Mean	Compar	ison	Mean	Compar	rison			
				column	row		column	row			
Test A (1)	Italian English Friulian	(a) (b) (c)	-0.080 -0.764 1.349	b** a***; b***	b***	1.246 -0.523 -0.568	b***; c***	a***			
Test B (2)	Italian English Friulian	(a) (b) (c)	0.143 -0.206 0.063	b*** b***	b***	0.482 -0.024 -0.457	c***; b*	a***			
Test C (3)	Italian English Friulian	(a) (b) (c)	1.700 -0.591 0.159		b***	3.553 -0.826 -2.198	b**; c**	a***			

Table 4. Preferred languages and identities.

(1) Mean difference between maximum and minimum value of the 4 linguistic attributes (utility).

(2) Relative importance of the attribute "language" (%).

(3) Utility mean of the two linguistic attributes (3 levels for Italian and Friulian, 1 level for English).

When averages within the same column are different, the score of the category with the smallest average is written next to the category with the greatest average. The results are the output of two-tail tests with reliability: 0.10 (\*), 0.05 (\*\*) and 0.01 (\*\*\*).

and different outcomes when comparing language skills. English language skills were relevant only in test B, which took into consideration the profiles of products coming from English-speaking countries. Moreover, in this test, English language skills and minority language skills were found to be diversely associated with language sensitiveness: English speakers gave more importance to the attribute "language" than those who did not understand it; conversely, those who spoke Friulian gave less importance to languages than those who did not understand it.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 show the utility of the attribute "language" in relation to the identity and languages skills of respondents. Foreign students were again excluded due to their small number. For tests with more than one linguistic attribute, the averages of the utility achieved by the respective attributes are reported.

Table 4 reports the results of the comparisons across columns, showing the language with the highest utility, in other words the "preferred" language of Friulians and Italians. Friulians expressed higher preferences for Friulian in test A, for both Italian and Friulian in test B, and less preferences for English in tests A and B. With these respondents there were not significant differences in test C. It is clear that the language sensitivity of Friulians was mainly stimulated by the comparison of Friulian and English in test A and by the comparison

			Mean	Speaks (a) Comparison column row	Un Mean	ederstands (b) Comparison column row	Does n Mean	oot understan (c) Compariso column ro	nd m mv
Test A (1)	Italian English Friulian	(a) (b) (c)	0.225 -0.645 0.788	b*** b***	0.657 -1.101 0.689		0.880 -0.991 0.932	b* b*	
Test B (2)	Italian English Friulian	(a) (b) (c)	0.226 -0.179 -0.047	b***; c***	0.296 0.046 -0.341		-0.006 0.022 -0.016		
Test C (3)	Italian English Friulian	(a) (b) (c)	2.579 -0.357 -0.980	b*; c*	1.745 -2.195 0.390		0.905 -2.034 0.390		

Table 5. Language preferences and languages skills in English (utility).

(1) Mean difference between maximum and minimum value of the 4 linguistic attributes (utility).

(2) Relative importance of the attribute "language" (%).

(3) Utility mean of the two linguistic attributes (3 levels for Italian and Friulian, 1 level for English).

When averages within the same column are different, the score of the category with the smallest average is written next to the category with the greatest average. The results are the output of two-tail tests with reliability: 0.10 (\*), 0.05 (\*\*) and 0.01 (\*\*\*).

of Italian and Friulian, on one side, and English on the other side in test B. The other Italians expressed higher preferences in the presence of Italian and similar preferences for English and Friulian in all tests. The sensitivity to languages of Italian respondents was mainly stimulated by the comparison between Italian on one side and English and Friulian on the other in all tests.

By comparing the results reported in Table 4 across rows, it appears that, in all tests, Italians from other regions expressed higher preferences than Friulians for the national language; Friulians and the other Italians expressed non-significantly different preferences for the language of globalization; finally, Friulians expressed higher preferences than the other Italians for the minority language. In conclusion it can be said that the language preference for the national language and for the minority language was influenced by the local identity while the preference for the global language was not.

In Table 5, comparing the data across columns, it is shown that respondents who declared to speak English expressed higher preferences for Italian and Friulian in test A, and for Italian, although with different levels of significance, in tests B and C. With this group of respondents English scored lower preferences in all tests. The students who declared to understand English but could not speak it expressed non-significant differences between the utility of the three languages. The respondents who said they did not understand English expressed significant differences only in test A where Italian and Friulian were preferred to English. Comparing the data across rows no significant differences emerged for any language in any test. Finally, the preferences for a single language (comparing across rows) resulted to be independent from language skills in English. In comparisons between languages, better skills in the English language were accompanied by significant preferences for Italian and, in test A. also for Friulian.

Table 6 shows the utility of the attribute "language" in relation to the Friulian language skills of the respondents.

Comparing the utilities across columns it can be observed that the respondents who declared to speak Friulian preferred this language in test A. both Italian and Friulian (without significantly different results) in test B and Italian in test C. With these subjects English obtained the smallest preference in all tests. It appears that the language sensitivity of respondents who spoke Friulian was driven primarily by a comparison between: i) Friulian on one side and Italian and English on the other in test A; ii) Friulian and Italian on one side and English on the other in test B; iii) Italian and English in test C.

Respondents who did not speak but understood Friulian preferred Italian and Friulian in test A, Italian in test B and did not express significantly different preferences in test C. For these respondents, language sensitivity was mainly stimulated by a comparison between Italian and Friulian on one side and English on the other in test A and between Italian on one side and English and Friulian on the other in test B.

Respondents who did not understand Friulian preferred Italian to Friulian in all tests and expressed similar utilities for English and Friulian in all tests. The language sensitivity of these respondents was stimulated primarily by comparing Italian and Friulian in all tests.

When comparing utilities across rows in Table 6 it is evident that: 1) the respondents who said they did not understand Friulian expressed higher preferences than Friulian speakers for the national language in tests A and B and similar preferences in test C: 2) there were no significant differences in preferences for the language of globalization among respondents with different Friulian language skills; 3) in all tests, the respondents who declared to speak Friulian expressed higher preferences for the minority language compared to those who did not understand it. Considering that the differences regarding the minority language were found to be more significant than those regarding the national language, it appears that a knowledge of the Friulian language has influenced language preferences in different ways, determining higher preferences for the minority language, lower preferences for the national language and almost zero preferences for the language of globalization.

Finally, since tests A and B were

			-				-			
		Mean	Speaks (a) Compo	arison	Ur. Mean	iderstand (b) Compar	rison	Does n Mean	ot under: (c) Compa	stand rison
			coumn	row		coumn	row		coumn	row
Test A (1)	Italian (a)	-0.268			0.721	b***	a**	0.928	c**	a**
	English (b)	-0.939			-0.536			-0.368		
	Friulian (c)	1.655	a***	b***	0.365	b*		-0.639		
	(-)		b***	c***						
Test B (2)	Italian (a)	0.093	b***		0.289	b*** c***		0.390	c***	a*
	English (b)	-0.196			-0.154			-0.029		
	Friulian (c)	0.104	b***	c**	-0.135			-0.360		
Test C (3)	Italian (a)	1.478	b*		2.067			3.824	c** b*	
	English (b)	-1.028			-0.172			-0.770		
	Friulian (c)	0.495		c***	-0.054		c***	-2.823		

Table 6. Language preferences and language skills in Friulian (utility).

(1) Mean difference between maximum and minimum value of the 4 linguistic attributes (utility).

(2) Relative importance of the attribute "language" (%).

(3) Utility mean of the two linguistic attributes (3 levels for Italian and Friulian, 1 level for English). When averages within the same column are different, the score of the category with the smallest average is written next to the category with the greatest average. The results are the output of two-tail tests with reliability: 0.10 (\*), 0.05 (\*\*) and 0.01 (\*\*\*).

administered to the same subjects at the same time and, as shown in the previous tables, respondents have expressed different language preferences or different levels of significance in the presence of different tests, it can be concluded that the sensitivity to the language used can depend on the particular test administered, that is on the communication context and on the communication content.

Table 7 reports the preference shares obtained through communication in English, Italian and Friulian. Preference shares are usually interpreted as market share (Furlan & Martone 2011) or as a percentage of consumers who buy a particular good

selected among other similar ones. In this paper preference shares were estimated using the Logit model, starting with the individual utility of respondents and simulating market segmentation using three alternative product profiles. With test A two simulations were made: one to compare three monolingual product profiles and another to compare a monolingual profile with two bilingual profiles; the latter was also used for tests B and C. In total, four market simulations were carried out: 1) test A<sub>so</sub> simulates a market contended by three publicities using "monolingual" advertising characters who either speak Italian, English or Friulian and are equal for all the other aspects; 2) test

	Monolingual (1)		Plurilingual (2)	
	Test $A_{so}$	Test $A_{S1}$	Test B <sub>S1</sub>	Test $C_{S1}(3)$
Italian	30	31	38	48
English	20	24	28	24
Friulian	50	45	34	28
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 7. Preferences for the product communicated in Italian, Friulian or English (%).

(1) All the attributes of the same profile are encoded in the same language.

(2) All the attributes of a profile are encoded in Italian. All the competitors' attributes are encoded in Italian except one, encoded either in English or in Friulian.

(3) The attribute "Brand" is always encoded in Italian, the attribute "Ecolabel" is always present and either encoded in Italian, English or Friulian.

A<sub>s1</sub> simulates a market contended by three publicities, a monolingual one with all the attributes of the advertising character being expressed in Italian, and two bilingual ones with three attributes in Italian and one in English or in Friulian and identical for all other aspects; 3) test  $B_{S1}$  simulates a market contended by three bottles of wine that report on the label the Italian language text "Grappolo d'uva" or the English language text "A bunch of grapes" or the Friulian language text "Rap di ue" and are identical for all the other features; 4) test C<sub>s1</sub> simulates a market contended by three packaged rolls which report the ecolabel text in either Italian, English or Friulian but are identical for all the other features.

The data reported in Table 7 show that, according to the test results, the products which have used the national language in commercial communication have achieved market quotas of between 30 and 48%; those which have used the English language have obtained market quotas of between 20 and 28%; products which have used the minority language have obtained a market share of between 28 and 50%. Furthermore, in test A, the monolingual profile in Friulian (test  $A_{s0}$ ) has achieved a better result compared to the Italian and Friulian bilingual profile (test  $A_{s1}$ ). In conclusion, communication in a minority language has proved to have the highest variability in market share but also the best results (50% of a market contended by three products).

The results of marketing communication in a minority language depend more than others on the experimental test, in other words on the communication-mix adopted. So communication in a minority language is the most difficult to manage, requiring careful verification, but it can also produce the best results. In particular, communication in a minority language has provided the best result in test A in which the three languages were "equal", forcing<sup>2</sup> respondents to think about the comparison between languages; maybe for this reason, with respondents who did not belong to the minority and did not understand the language, it stimulated a more intense emotional reaction than with Friulians or Friulian speakers.

**6. Conclusion.** Conjoint analysis has proved to be a very useful tool for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing communication performed with a mix of languages including non-conventional languages and, in particular, minority languages. The sample used does not allow to draw general conclusions because of its size, lack of randomness and stratification; however, it has permitted to make some preliminary considerations about the reaction of bilingual consumers to this form of marketing communication.

In communication-mix strategies for the marketing of food products, minority languages have an effect on consumers' preference. The communication language generating the maximum preference for a food product depends on the customers' identity and language skills (recipients), on the communication ambience (empathy), and on the communication-mix strategies adopted by the active subjects of the communication process (senders). In communication contexts where a national language, a global language and a minority language are used, the minority language is able to ensure a preference that is greater than that of the global language, or at least equal to it. In particular, the use of a minority language in communication-mix strategies for the marketing of food products increases the preference of the consumers' belonging to the language minority or having the best skills in the local language. In addition, it emotionally stimulated consumers who did not belong to the minority and were not indifferent to the relation between majority and minority. English language skills do not influence the preferences for products communicated in this language, but may increase the sensitivity to other language by favouring the demand of products communicated in the national language and, in some cases, also in the minority language.

In conclusion, communication mixes including a minority language produced a competitive advantage with minority consumers and emotionally stimulated the other customers making them familiar with specific marketing mixes. In the case of the Friulian language in Friuli, the emotional reactions of Friulians to the benefit of the local language could be less intense than the emotional reactions of the other Italians to the benefit of the national language. This phenomenon seems to depend on the characteristics of the communication mix. When this happens, in a mixed population including Friulians and non-Friulians, the mean preferences are not significant and could give the impression that the favourite language is Italian even if the majority of consumers prefer Friulian.

<sup>1</sup> A Romance language belonging to the Rhaeto-Romance family and attested from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it is spoken by a large proportion of the population of Friuli. It is officially recognized by the Italian State and supported by law 482/99 on the protection of linguistic minorities.

<sup>2</sup> In test A all attributes were linguistics and, in order not to express identical preferences for all profiles, respondents had to compare languages.

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