

DESCRITTORI VISIVI PER L' ASSAGGIO PROFESSIONALE:
LESSICO, SENSORIALITÀ E STANDARDIZZAZIONE

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ABSTRACT

Although sensory judgments are often considered to be subjective, their standardization can be observed in certain social contexts. This article aims to discuss and analyze the situated practices through which sensory qualities are verbalized—identified, recognized, described, shared—through lexical resources in tasting activities. This lexicon refers not only to the sensations of the participants but also to professional repertoires of categories, which reflexively standardize both descriptors and tasting practices. The empirical data come from a video recorded course for tasters held in Trento in the winter of 2017. Multimodal conversation analysis has been adopted to analyze which descriptors are used and how they are produced when a cheese sample is examined, with a particular focus on visual inspection. The analysis focuses on how these descriptors are mobilized *in situ*, by the panel leader but also by the other participants, not only referring to the object and its perception, but also making use of different written documents (tasting sheets, standardized lists of descriptors). Three embodied methods used by the panel leader are identified: ostension, evidencing and comparison, showing and inviting the participants to look and see relevant features of the object, but also to make sense of the descriptors used to name them. We also consider how these descriptors generate agreements and disagreements and are validated in an authorized and authoritative way by the panel leader. Far from being mere resources for expressing subjective judgments, descriptors are a way of normalizing these judgments, and of introducing a standardization of the practice of tasting as well as the products tasted.