

Research Report: The Discourse of Organic Food Promotion: language, intentions and effects.

1. Background

The UK Organic food market is now the third largest in the world, with a value of two billion dollars and an annual growth rate of approximately 10% (Sahota 2007). Its importance is not only economic. Organic purchasing reflects growing public concern about food production and consumption, and its personal, social and environmental impact, and is also perceived as a component of lifestyle. In addition, debates about food in contemporary society foreground issues concerning persuasive communication in both public and private decision making. Our project examined the language and social construction of organic food promotion (OFP), communicative strategies employed by writers of promotional materials, and public reactions to them.

Promotion, in the organic food sector at least, should be understood in two overlapping senses: as commercial marketing and as political campaigning. Many organic farmers perceive the production and retail of organic produce as environmental campaigning. In recent years however some organic retailers have become large and profitable, and likely to be seen more as models of commercial entrepreneurial success than political commitment (Wright and McCrea 2007). Some writers have criticised the organic food movement for joining the corporate food industry it initially opposed (Lilliston and Cummins 1998, Guthman 2004, Pollan 2006, Fromartz 2006).

A major aim was to investigate to what extent, and with what consequences, the language of OFP echoes that of commercial marketing and Public Relations (PR). In recent decades marketing and PR techniques have moved beyond the commercial sphere, being adopted by non-commercial organisations such as schools, universities, hospitals, trade unions, churches etc. (Moloney 2006:6). In this respect, their adoption by organic campaigners mirrors a wider trend among charities and pressure groups. However, legitimate questions may be raised as to what models and practices of communications best suit the organic movement's aims and ideals, maximising support.

PR discourse has specific characteristics. Communications are always self-interested, presenting a wholly favourable image rather than a balanced case. They tend to be anonymous rather than attributed to named authors. They subscribe to an implicitly behaviourist, mechanistic model of communication, assuming that if the correct stimulus is identified it will evoke the desired response. Yet recent UK history of public reactions to food issues is full of examples of changes in attitude and purchasing behaviour which have taken the food industry by surprise. These include concerns about supermarket practices (Lawrence 2004, Sims 2007), GM food (Cook 2004), and fast food (Spurlock 2005), pressure to change school meals after the TV series *Jamie's School Dinners*, the fair trade movement (Lamb 2007), and even the growth of the organic sector itself.

Although there is research into consumer attitudes to organics (Latacz-Lohmann and Foster 1997, Weatherell et al. 2003, Padel and Midmore 2005, Morven and Willock

2004, Padel and Foster 2005, Duffy et al 2005, CONDOR 2005, Tadjewski and Wagner-Tsukamoto 2006,) there is none on how promotional language influences them.

2. Objectives

Our aim was to discover what linguistic, rhetorical and semiotic choices are made in OFP, the thinking behind them, and public reactions to them. Our objectives were to answer the research questions:

1. What are OFP's characteristic language choices?
2. What are its non-linguistic semiotic choices and how do they relate to linguistic choices?
3. Why do its writers make the choices they do and how do they construct public responses to these choices?
4. How does the public react to and evaluate OFP, and which linguistic and semiotic strategies and themes resonate with them most successfully?

Of these, 1, 3 and 4 have been met most fully, and our findings are detailed below. As our main focus was language, question 2 has been less fully addressed, but arises under other headings.

3. Methods

The project used a distinctive methodology already successfully deployed in earlier research projects (Cook, Robbins and Pieri 2002, 2003) and currently in a new project (Cook, Gillen and Twiner 2007), combining:

- interviews, to investigate writers' conscious communication strategies
- textual analysis to investigate linguistic and rhetorical choices
- focus groups, to examine public reactions to linguistic and rhetorical strategies.

Through this combination our research sought to contribute to the development of discourse analytic methodology, by integrating corpus and close analysis of text with investigation of participant intentions and responses, thus escaping over-reliance on textual analysis without reference to context, overgeneralisation from analysts' own readings, assumptions about senders' intentions (Stubbs 1996, Widdowson 2004, Wodak et al. 1999).

3.1 Data

Five datasets were collected:

1. **A corpus of over 750,000 words** divided into two categories: OFP, and material promoting non-organic food. The organic component contains many genres such as product labels, newsletters, adverts, reports, press releases, with a balance between multiple and independent retailers, farm types, and the various British nations and regions.
2. **Transcriptions and recordings of Eight Focus Groups** representing a variety of ages, incomes, ethnic and family profiles who explored product labels and a promotional leaflet. Focus group discussions and interviews were transcribed in

full to allow greater attention to linguistic detail (Myers 2004:44, Myers and McNaghten 1999).

3. **Transcriptions and recordings of interviews with sixteen stakeholders** directly or indirectly responsible for the communicative strategies of organisations, including influential lobby groups, certification agencies, organic producers and retailers, food writers, and a major supermarket.
4. **Fieldnotes** of participant observation at training events, trade shows, conferences, farms, training centres.
5. **300 labels, packages and leaflets**

3.2 Data Analysis

1. Corpus analysis software (Wordsmith 4) identified frequent words and collocations, as well as statistically significant 'keywords' (Scott 2005). Results guided the selection of typical texts for close analysis and for discussion with focus groups and interviewees.
2. Close textual analysis gave insight into aspects of text composition, such as visual design, not revealed by corpus analysis.
3. Thematic analysis. Dataset 2 and 3 were coded for content using qualitative software (Atlas.ti), allowing identification of themes not always revealed through linguistic analysis.

4.0 Results

4.1 The corpus

Despite the apparently polarised views of the organic and non-organic sectors, there is increasing convergence across this divide regarding the arguments, rhetoric and language. The same is true of the polarity between small and large producers and retailers: one which no longer maps onto the organic/non-organic divide. Many in the organic movement are adopting by default conventional marketing strategies and language without considering alternatives, and no longer seek to be distinct from mainstream marketing. Much OFP can be described as formulaic and conventional. This applies to many large organic producers, many smaller organic producers, and promotional material by campaign organisations.

4.1.1 Arguments

Arguments in favour of organic agriculture divide into four main areas generally prioritised as follows:

- eating pleasure
- health
- environment
- socio-political structures

Thus “tastiness” is now foregrounded by supermarkets, campaign groups and many smaller retailers as the dominant argument in favour of organic food, followed by health and then environmental benefit. Arguments for possible social and political benefits of smaller scale production and localised retail are rare. Thus the re-design of ‘Tesco Organic’ (described by Tesco as a “pillar brand”) has recently demoted environmental arguments in favour of “tastiness”. Smaller companies have long adopted similar strategies (“Taste is top of our agenda” as one box-scheme puts it). Surprisingly, given their non-commercial environmentalist missions, campaign organisations also prioritise taste in their point-of-contact literature. The Soil Association’s leaflet ‘10 Reasons to Buy Organic’ has elevated “Top for taste” to first reason, and relegated “Good for wildlife and the environment” to tenth, making no reference to the positive social effects of promoting small independent farms, local produce, and fair rates for producers - all of which featured prominently in the original article (Tawse 1992) from which its title descends. Exceptions to this general trend include successful box schemes, who while using some marketing-style language, maintain references to environmental and social benefits in point-of-contact literature:

Let your weekly shop take care of itself... and the planet.
A fair deal for all our farmers
(Points 2 and 3 in box-scheme mailshot introductory leaflet)

and do not elevate tastiness:

- [Interviewer:] What about just the quality of the food, the tastiness? Is that a big factor?
-We don’t make claims on that. We let people decide for themselves. (Box scheme MD)

Reasons for the elevation of “tastiness” are complex. As a subjective quality, it is less refutable than health or environmental claims, and is thus a ‘safer bet’. Indeed, health claims may be in second place only because they are more contestable

taste isn’t a claim, whereas health is a claim, legally (Supermarket brand manager).

‘Tastiness’ is believed by market researchers to be the main motivator of organic purchasing among the uncommitted. The elevation of taste also reflects an uncritical acceptance by some in the organic movement of the received marketing wisdom that self-interest rather than social and environmental concern are the main motivators of attitudes to food. (Attitudes do not necessarily correlate with purchasing behaviour, however).

4.1.2 Rhetoric

The dominant rhetorical strategy of organic food retail is to offer a story of production focusing upon the small-scale family firm and its history, location and farming methods, with particular emphasis - in meat and dairy production - on animal welfare. The farmer and often other family members are named, with reference to earlier generations if the farm is inherited. Farmers are typically male, couples heterosexual, and families nuclear.

This strategy lends itself to genuinely small-scale family businesses. It is nevertheless a key component in product presentation by even the biggest retailers, who name and/or picture individuals. 2006 packaging for *Tesco Organic skinless breast fillets* featured:

“One of our farmers Paul Woodhouse”, though he “has been managing farms” rather than owning them.

4.1.3 Language

4.1.3.1 Dialogic style

OFP encodes an apparently dialogic style (Bakhtin 1968, 1984), and foregrounds the interpersonal rather than ideational function of the message (Halliday 1973:22-46), even when there is no interactive dialogue or intimate relationship between sender and receiver. This common technique in persuasive market discourse is described by Fairclough (1992) as ‘synthetic personalisation’. This stance is reflected, for example, in OFP’s very high incidence of direct address

Welcome to simple good food This will get your tastebuds going, (Food Magazine, The Guardian)

and first and second person pronouns which lend the discourse the collusive character of face-to-face interaction

Food should tell a story and, because we know what it is, we can tell you: from farm to table, the Riverford way. (our underlining, Riverford Organic Vegetables communication)

The atmosphere of personal interaction is also created by a preference for contractions over full forms (*don’t* not *do not*) and familiar over formal lexis (*Mums* not *Mothers*) and phrasing (*fork out*, *weird and wonderful*).

4.1.3.2 Vague and evaluative language

OFP language is often vague (Channel 1994, Cutting 2007) using for example (our underlining):

- comparatives and superlatives without reference points (*better quality*, *the best beef*);
- mitigators of numerals (*over four hundred chemical pesticides*) rather than exact figures
- unattributed normative opinions in impersonal constructions (*there is growing concern about*).

Similarly there is dominance of evaluative and affective terms (e.g. *trust*, *passion(ate)*, *fair(ness)*, *justice*, *stand by*, *endeavour*, *car(e)/ing*) and phrases (e.g. *held in trust*, *can trust*, *we believe (in/that)*, *we care (passionately)*, *value*) and self-focused language telling the addressee “*About Us*” or “*Our Philosophy/Mission/ambition/idea/aim*”.

4.1.3.3 Sensual and tactile imagery

Taste is inherently sensual and tactile. Words referring to taste (*flavour*, *taste*, *tastiness*) and further modifying them (*delicate*, *delicious*, *distinctive*, *flavoursome*, *full*, *intense*, *mouth-watering*, *natural*, *peppery*, *real*, *succulent*, *superb*, *sweet*, *tangy*, *tasty*, *unique*, *wonderful*) are notably frequent, particularly in expanded noun phrases (NPs) with a proliferation of pre- and post-modifiers, such as the 20-word NP on the Duchy ready-made meal packet used with our focus groups.

This flavoursome recipe is made from [tender pieces of organic British chicken breast marinated in organic cider with a fresh butter glazed apple and cider sauce].

Such abundance of modification arguably represents iconically the extravagance it recommends

Our new fudge has [an indulgent and smooth texture, with a melt-in-the-mouth sensation]. It is [the perfect sweet treat for your sweetheart this Valentine's Day]... (Duchy New Handmade Fudge)

Bucolic landscape, animal welfare, traditional farming and food preparation also lend themselves to tactile imagery (more in the organic than non-organic corpus), as in this newsletter extract from a successful organic box-scheme

Other pigs trot about playfully, following us to sniff our clothes with their wet noses and chew our trainers (...) There are roomy huts to give the pigs shade, and during the summer Will makes sure they get plenty of mud to wallow in, which gives their skin a protective 'sunscreen'. (.....) The cows have shiny, healthy coats (Box-scheme newsletter)

Corpus analysis reveals a concentration by OFP on descriptions of farms and livestock from which the food comes. The following occur among the first 250 organic-corpus keywords using the non-organic corpus as a reference: *pollen, land, animals, poultry, birds, cattle, feed, chickens, flour, broiler, broilers, manure, clover, livestock, pollination, insects, pasture, earth, flours, flock, grass, compost, grazing, seed, sheep, bees, landscape, moorland, fed, farmer, mountain, fields, hedges, wheatgrass, grass, feeding*. A recurrent theme evoked by OFP, ironically for the UK's predominantly urban population, is thus an idealised rural idyll. In contrast, non-organic corpus keywords indicate an imagery which is predominately in the kitchen rather than on the farm. OFP is thus a prominent example of rethinking the relation between firm and customer, re-focussing on the point of production rather than of retail or consumption. This innovative focus appears to have originated in smaller retailers, where close relations with producers lend it credibility, and to have been copied less convincingly by supermarkets.

4.1.3.4 Poetic Language

OFP is prone to uses of language (Jakobson 1960) of a kind commonly associated with poetry (Leech 1966) and other literary discourse (Cook 1994) and advertising (Cook 2001). This is evident in product descriptions on packaging where the emphasis on food as a sensual experience lends itself to poetic descriptions (see 4.1.3.3), and in promotional leaflets and web pages where attempts to establish intimacy between narrator and reader, and a story-telling stance (see 4.1.2), are also quasi-literary in nature.

A noticeable tendency for organic producers, as they expand, is to move away from factual and prosaic descriptions of themselves and their products towards the standard "poetic" language of high-profile marketing, moving also from arguments about the positive environmental and social impact of small-scale organic farming towards arguments about taste and pleasure. Longer narratives and descriptions give way to "punchier" compressed wording - with Tesco, significantly, being both the largest and the least wordy of all UK organic retailers.

There is frequent use of parallelism, including:

a) rhythm

High in Vitamin C
High in Vitamin A
Washed and ready to eat
(Tesco Organic Watercress, spinach and rocket)

b) alliteration

sparkling soft drinks to tantalise your taste buds (Whole Earth)

c) grammatical and lexical repetition

It's good for the environment
It's good for wildlife
It's good for you (Abel and Cole)

d) narrative structure

We've recently started working with three new farms....
We've just been to visit our new farmers....
We then drop in on Mark Melly and his wife Jane...
Our final stop is Manor Farm in Wiltshire....
We leave Pip's farm totally thrilled....
(Paragraph openings in Abel and Cole Newsletter)

Some more general literary techniques found in OFP of smaller producers, include dialect speech

We still be at your local market, ready to greet and advise you, to find out where we will be and when please click here. (Wessex organics)

or flowery personal narratives:

As Spring approaches I always feel unprepared, hung with the trepidation of an actor walking out on stage on first night, only knowing half his lines. (Waterland organics)

4.1.3.5 Negative definition of “organic”

Organic food and farming are often defined as what they are not. Words referring unfavourably to non-organic farming appear in the first 100 organic-corpus keywords: *residues, pesticide, drugs, conventional, antibiotics, chemicals, nicarbazin, drug, misuse, resistance, coccidiosis, fertilisers, pesticide, dangerous, lasalocid, concentrations, toxic, DMZ*. In the '10 Reasons' leaflet, five of the reasons are expressed negatively. Exclusively organic producers compare their produce with non-organic equivalents; retailers of both organic and non-organic produce do not.

I don't think we would ever use something to say these organic baby new potatoes taste better than normal new potatoes (Supermarket brand manager)

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 Interviewee beliefs and strategies

Although our interviewees were diverse in terms of organisations, positions, opinions and expertise, there were notable similarities across interviews. A surprising convergence was between campaigners' point-of-contact literature and OFP by supermarkets.

4.2.1.1 Content, language, and visual design

Even among those directly concerned with communication strategy, there was often general reluctance or inability to focus upon linguistic choices such as synonyms (*delicious* v *succulent* v *tasty*). They preferred to discuss propositional content, whether it is true, legal and accurate, and whether it is what consumers want to hear

we need to make sure it's legal, it's clear, and it's also got the right selling message on. (Technical manager, supermarket supplier)

although there is some tension between this and the interviewees' belief that consumers are most interested in emotional content (see below).

Where there was focus on language in response to specific questions, it tended to be brief and dismissive

I know this packaging and I know that, yes *succulent's* a difficult word but how the hell do you give the sense of flavour without words like that? (Supermarket food writer)

Questions tended to be answered with reference to visual design and positioning in store, rather than language.

Three years ago it was an electric blue sky, and a bright green...which kind of looks.... (Supermarket buyer)

I think the first most important thing which we then changed last year was where it is actually positioned. (Supermarket brand manager)

4.2.1.2 Beliefs and attitudes about consumers.

There was a general assumption that consumers were:

a) less interested in fact than "feeling" and more emotional than rational.

not all consumers are [concerned about factual correctness] because you know you want to have a nice feeling about the thing you've bought, you're buying into, emotion you're buying into, building your self esteem is one of the sorts of things you do when you shop. (Wine and food writer)

b) primarily self-interested

at the end of the day most people don't buy organic food because it is better for the environment you know, people aren't that altruistic, they are not going to dig deep into their pockets and pay extra like a pound for their tomatoes just because it's less polluting. (Campaign-group policy officer)

what we have discovered is that for many people it's about taste and health as the reasons for buying organic food. And the kind of worry, care for the environment has a slightly lower motivation for the majority of people. (Supermarket brand manager)

c) would not pay attention to wording

in reality you know people don't have a lot of time to read the packaging (Supermarket brand manager)

4.2.1.3 Beliefs about successful communication strategies

There was a general belief that arguments for organic food should mirror consumer preferences, and the main determiner of communication strategy should be market research. This was true of campaigners, who might aspire to lead rather than follow opinion, as well as commercial organisations.

Well the order changed and I changed it because we did some research, ... that showed that most people bought on taste, that was the main reason and at the time taste was right at the bottom and I just thought we need to put that at the top because that will hopefully engage people..... (campaign organisation)

There was unquestioning belief in conventional marketing effectiveness, with themes and wording being described as 'buttons' and 'triggers' for consumer response.

if I've got any respect for what the organic movement has done, it is that it has sold itself quite well to consumers, and that word *organic* is a **trigger** for many people, our research tells us, if we start to talk in consumer focus groups about food safety consumers rapidly start talking about organic food (Campaign communication team)

I spend a lot of my time making sure that what I write is factually accurate so to speak, but also hopefully presses those nice touchy, feely **buttons** which I actually think is part of the reason why consumers buy organic. (Food writer)

An exception to the above generalisations were representatives of a successful organic box scheme. Although winners of marketing and business awards, they sought to distance themselves both from conventional marketing language:

We try to stay clear as much as possible of the supermarket, supermarket type phrases like, you know, delicious, succulent pork chops (Box scheme writer)

and to maintain a commitment to providing substantive information

So it's not just a fluffy story. We do give facts. So for example we did a newsletter about air freight last week and you know I insisted that there was a sentence that said, we don't ever air freight. (Box scheme MD)

They thus distinguished themselves carefully from supermarkets, emphasising

our job is to keep educating people about what it is they're eating. (Box scheme MD)

in contrast to

I don't think supermarkets in general educate people about what organic is and what it isn't, and what's allowed and what isn't allowed. I think it's actually the media that does that, and the Soil Association or bodies like the Soil Association. (Supermarket brand manager)

4.3 Focus Groups

4.3.1 Texts discussed

Focus groups were firstly asked to discuss packages for organic food products from supermarkets, and secondly the '10-Reasons' leaflet. Packages were selected to exemplify highly professional large-scale marketing, and represent different price profiles, product types, and marketing styles. The leaflet exemplified campaigning material.

4.3.2 Reactions to language

Studies of how people read promotional material face the paradox that they are being asked to read and reflect upon wording which is normally read very casually (O'Halloran 2003). As one participant commented:

but then if you read the words which I will be honest I don't tend to do at all, P 2: Focus Group 30 Nov 06, 00.25.05

Discussions indicated however that in everyday encounters with such material, our participants pay least attention to poetic descriptions, and preferred to assess factual statements such as ingredients. Where they focused (or were asked to focus) upon more rhetorical elements, their reactions were far from uniformly favourable. Words such as 'succulent' and 'chopped' which our interviews suggest have been confidently chosen to attract readers, frequently had the opposite effect.

I wouldn't buy something that said the word *succulent* on it because that for me conjures up the image of fat and I would just think, 'oh no I don't want that' (...) Focus Group 30 Nov 06, 00.58.08

I don't like these words that remind me that these animals are butchered, so – no its true, it does jar because you have got these happy organic pigs and then you have got words like – *cuts* and *coarsely chopped* and *succulent* is a bit dodgy as well (...) Focus Group 3-1, 00.42.21

Words like *coarsely chopped* and things don't help! Focus Group 5-1, 00.14.54

That is the sort of thing that irritates me, it is just bacon for god's sake. Focus Group 30 Nov 06, 00.18.40

Often the detailed information and the foregrounded descriptions are seen as contradictory:

When you read the ingredients though the stuff in here that (...) – it has things like ascorbic acid in it, so okay it might be organic but it has still got stuff in (...) it gives you the guy who makes the sausages and how they are fed and they have got warm beds in the winter and mud

baths in the summer. So it is really like you know over-egging it. Focus Group 13 Nov 06, 00.27.10

It is surprising though how much junk is still in stuff. Like if you look at organic baby food, I have been quite shocked. Focus Group 13 Nov 06, 00.37.08

4.3.3 Distrust

4.3.3.1 Supermarkets

Related to this rejection of flamboyant descriptions was widespread distrust of retailers, drawing upon other independent sources of information, suggesting that organic food purchasing may be despise, rather than because of, its promotional strategies.

Opposition was expressed towards supermarkets, although that is where most participants shop.

And also I don't trust supermarkets anyway to be honest with you, I don't and the fact that if, and you can quote me, on the tape for this, – for example I know they have space specific things don't they, that say, it isn't grown within a certain range or something or other, a chemical is being used all that kind of stuff. I don't believe that for a minute, I don't believe if supermarkets are going to make some money out of it, I don't trust them – I do trust the more locally grown stuff but not supermarkets. (...) Focus Group 13 Nov 06, 00.06.26

Particular antipathy was reserved for Tesco with most of the 121 references to it being very negative. One participant, when asked what he did not like on a packet replied simply 'Tesco' explaining:

I sort of have an idea of organic as a sort of wild – grow it yourself, eat it yourself sort of thing which is appropriated by a large company. Focus Group 5-1, 00.11.40

Quite independently, another participant in another group used the same single-word answer, adding:

There does seem to be a contradiction between the image of Tesco as this major you know billion-pound turnover company that screws its suppliers for everything it can get to have supermarket domination and a friendly green organic provider of produce – that's just my view. Focus Group 4-1, 00.09.12

4.3.3.2 'Ten Reasons'

Whilst many participants did not trust supermarkets, they were not necessarily convinced by organic alternatives. The first reason cited on the Soil Association Ten Reasons leaflet is supported by evidence from a "recent poll". All focus groups, regardless of age or socio-economic background, queried the validity of this evidence.

I think they are almost a bit disgraceful really to start off with a poll you have conducted yourself with no sort of reference to sample size or no independent source. Focus Group 6-2, 00.00.40

This initial scepticism set the tone for discussion of later points in the leaflet. One bullet point claims that organic food is healthier because it has 'No Nasty Additives' (a phrase deploying both alliteration and colloquial lexis) but the accompanying text explains that

of the 290 additives permissible in the EU, 32 can be used in organic food, eliciting comments such as:

I think it is the conflicting information, people are always sceptical about it and it says *no nasty additives*, you think oh great that for me is like well you are trying to gain my trust here and you are trying to be up front and be honest, then just say 'reduction of additives' or 'healthier style' rather than that. Focus Group 4-2, 00.30.27

Reason 8 is 'High Standards', backed up with the vague, emotive claim that 'Organic food comes from trusted sources' which are 'inspected at least once a year' (our emphases). Rather than satisfying curiosity or offering re-assurance this point raised questions. For all groups this account lacked the rigour they hoped for in an inspection system:

I mean I am a bit worried about things like *trusted sources* because what they are saying is they are trusted because they inspect them once a year, is that enough? Focus Group 6-2, 00.39.01

4.4. Summary of focus groups.

Overall focus group discussions suggested a degree of immunity to marketing and promotional language, distrust of organisations (especially supermarkets, especially Tesco), and some considerable fatalism and cynicism about the food chain in general.

4.5 Overview

OFP and multiple-retail marketing are converging, each copying from the other. While some organic retailers still distinguish themselves from multiple-retail marketing, there is a tendency for both smaller organic retailers, and point-of-contact campaign literature, to adopt its language, arguments and assumptions. The main factor affecting opinion is not presentation, but customer knowledge about the practices and trustworthiness of the retailer. Whatever their buying habits, for many people food is no longer treated as a casual purchase, motivated by considerations of cost and 'brand image', but is an expression of personal beliefs and concerns.

Activities

Attendance at

- Conferences in 'Outputs'.
- 'If Food Could Talk' conference, City Hall London, 2005
- Farm Shop training day, Worcester, 2006
- Courtyard Farm, Norfolk, 2006
- Soil Association conference, London, 2006
- Organic Products Europe Trade Fair, Olympia, 2006
- Westminster Diet and Health Forum: Parents, Children and 'Healthy Living', 2006
- Soil Association conference, Cardiff, 2007
- Organic Products Europe Trade Fair, Olympia, 2007
- Economic and Social Data Service: 'Cooking numbers and eating words', Leeds, 2007
- Supermarkets debate, Hay festival, 2007

- RSPB Hope Farm, 2007
- Ashlyn's Organics, Essex

Outputs

- Article in preparation intended for *Discourse and Society*
- Article in preparation intended for *Sociologia Ruralis*
- Website <http://creet.open.ac.uk/projects/language-of-food-politics>
- Inaugural professorial lecture (Cook) Open University May 2006 (drawing on this and other projects).
- Paper at BAAL (British Association for Applied Linguistics) conference, 2006 (Cook)
- Paper at AAAL (American Association for Applied Linguistics) conference 2007 (Cook)
- Paper accepted for the European Society of Rural Sociology Conference, August 2007. (Reed, Twiner).
- Paper accepted BAAL conference 2007 (Cook, Twiner)
- Invited paper at LACA (Local Authorities Caterers' Association) Annual Conference, 2006 (Cook)

Impacts

- Findings requested by: Food Writers' Guild, Organic Farmers and Growers, Tesco, Abel and Cole.
- Briefing to Soil Association communications committee, April 2006.
- Talk for Soil Association, Hay Book Festival, May 2007
- Briefing to Soil Association, June 2007

Future Research Priorities

- Relation between marketing language, opinion and behaviour in other food-political debates.
- Public reaction to 'ethically committed' marketing language.
- Ethnic and religious differences in food-politics debates.

REFERENCES

- Bakhtin, M.M. 1968. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Bakhtin, M.M. 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Channell, J. 1994. *Vague Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CONDOR (Consumer Decision Making on Organic Products) 2005 <http://www.condor-organic.org/>
- Cook, G. 1994. *Discourse and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cook, G. 2001. (Second edition) *The Discourse of Advertising*. London: Routledge.
- Cook, G. 2004. *Genetically Modified Language*. London: Routledge.
- Cook, G., Robbins, R. and Pieri, E. 'The Presentation of GM Crop Research to Non-Specialists: a case study'. ESRC R/000/22/3725. November 2001- November 2002.
- Cook, G., Robbins, P. and Pieri, E. 'The discourse of the GM food debate: how language choices affect public trust.' ESRC RES/000/22/0132 January-December 2003.
- Cook, G., Gillen, J. and Twiner, A. 'The Discourse of the School Dinners Debate' ESRC RES-000-22-1947 February 2006-February 2007.
- Cutting, J. ed. 2007. *Vague Language Explored*. London: Palgrave.
- Duffy, R., Fearn, A. and Healing, V. 2005. 'Reconnection in the UK food chain. Bridging the communication gap between food producers and consumers'. *British Food Journal* 107: 17-33.
- Fairclough, N. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Fromartz, S. 2006. *Organic, INC*. Orlando: Harcourt.
- Guthman, J. 2004. *Agrarian Dreams. The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1973. *Explorations in the Function of Language*. London: Arnold.
- Jakobson, R. 1960. Closing statement: linguistics and poetics. In *Style in Language*, ed. T A Sebeok. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Lamb, H. 2007. The Fairtrade Consumer. In *The Handbook of Organic and Fair Trade Marketing*, eds. S. Wright and D. McRea, 54-84. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lawrence, F. 2004. *Not on the Label*. London: Penguin.
- Latacz-Lohmann, U. and Foster, C. 1997. 'From 'Niche' to 'mainstream' - strategies for marketing organic food in Germany and the UK'. *British Food Journal* 99: 275-282.
- Leech, G.N. 1966. *English in Advertising*. London: Longman.
- Lilliston, B. and Cummins, R. 1998. Organic vs 'Organic': The corruption of a label. *The Ecologist* 28, no. 4: 195-200.
- Mihaljevich, P. 2007 'Case history: Duchy Organics.' In *The Handbook of Organic and Fair Trade Marketing*, eds. S. Wright and D. McRea, 115-127. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Moloney, K. 2006 (second edition). *Rethinking Public Relations: the spin and the substance*. London: Routledge.
- Morven, M.G. and Willock, J. 2004. 'Producers and consumers of organic meat. A focus on attitudes and motivations'. *British Food Journal* 106: 534-552.
- Myers, G. 2004. *Matters of Opinion. Talking about public issues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Myers, G. and McNaghten, P. 1999. Can focus groups be analysed as talk? In *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice*, R.S. Barbour and J. Kitzinger (eds.) London: Sage. 173-85.
- O'Halloran, K. 2003. *Critical Discourse Analysis and Language Cognition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Padel, S. and Midmore, P. 2005. 'The development of the European market for organic products: insights from a Delphi study'. *British Food Journal* 107: 626-647.
- Padel, S. and Foster, C. 2005. 'Exploring the gap between attitudes and behaviour. Understanding why consumers buy or do not buy organic food.' *British Food Journal* 107: 606-625.
- Pollan, M. 2006. *The Omnivores Dilemma. The search for a perfect meal in a fast-food world*. Bloomsbury.
- Sahota, A. 2007. The International Market for Organic and Fair Trade Food and Drink. In *The Handbook of Organic and Fair Trade Marketing*, eds. S. Wright and D. McRea, 1-28. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Scott, M. 2005. Help menu. *Wordsmith Tools*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Available on-line at <http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/>
- Sims, A. 2007. *Tescopoly*. London: Constable.
- Spurlock, Morgan. 2005. *Don't eat this book*. London: Penguin.
- Stubbs, M. 1996. *Text and Corpus Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Tadjewski, M. and Wagner-Tsukamoto, S. 2006. 'Anthropological and consumer research: qualitative insights into green consumer behaviour'. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 9: 8-25.
- Tawse, S. 1992. reproduced in NOFANY (Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York) 2004 <http://nofany.org/hottopics/10reasons.htm> (accessed 12 December 2005)
- Weatherell, C., Tregear, A. and Allinson, J. 2003. 'In search of the concerned consumer: UK public perceptions of food, farming and buying local'. *Journal of Rural Studies* 19: 233-244.
- Widdowson, H.G. 2004. *Text, Context, Pretext*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., and Liebhart, K. (1999). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (transl. A. Hirsch and R. Mitten), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wright, S., and McCrea, D. eds. 2007. *The Handbook of Organic and Fair Trade Food Marketing*. Oxford: Blackwell.