



A Linguistic Exploration of Carnavalesque Food Performances in the Digital Age

Prof. Dr. Sofia Rüdiger

Dr. Rita Vallentin

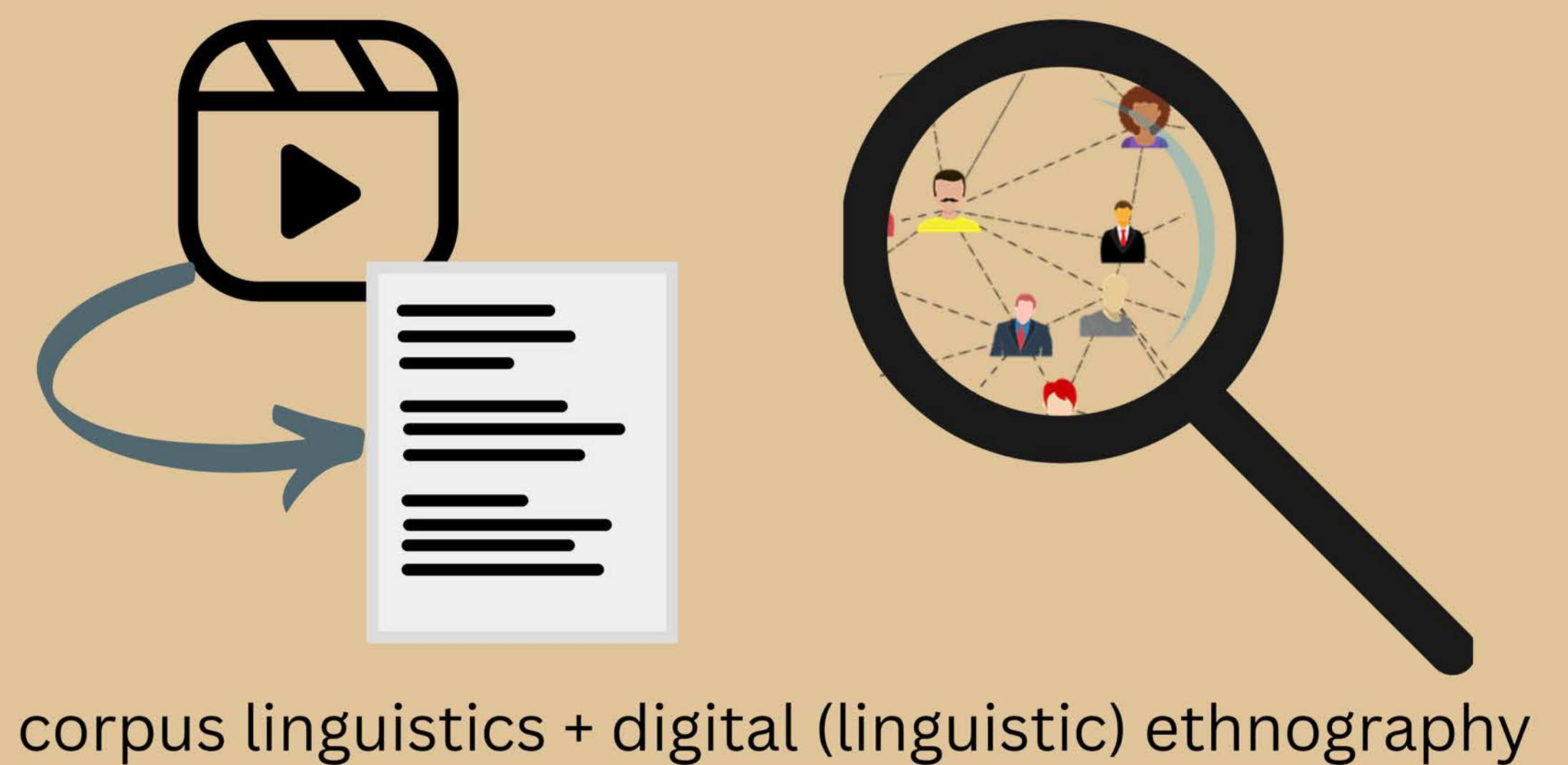
Ryan Fountain

The 'Carnavalesque' and Performative Excess



- as per Bakhtin (1984), the 'carnavalesque' is a joyful, chaotic reversal of social norms that mocks authority and celebrates the body
- temporary escapes from normative eating and food-related behavior (health, moderation...)
- research interest: digital genres which explicitly break with established cultural norms of healthy eating and moderation

Methods



corpus linguistics + digital (linguistic) ethnography

Research Questions

- 1) How is over-consumption discursively justified in 'eating-as-entertainment' videos?
- 2) Which role does the linguistic performance of the video hosts play in their popular allure? What are the functions of eating processes (e.g., chewing and swallowing) in both the linguistic performance in general as well as the performance of over-consumption specifically?
- 3) Which types of (food-related and other) identities are constructed in 'carnavalesque' food videos and what kind of discursive strategies are employed to this end?
- 4) How are virtual (over-consumption) eating communities created and maintained?

Corpora and Selected Findings

Mukbang/
Eating Shows



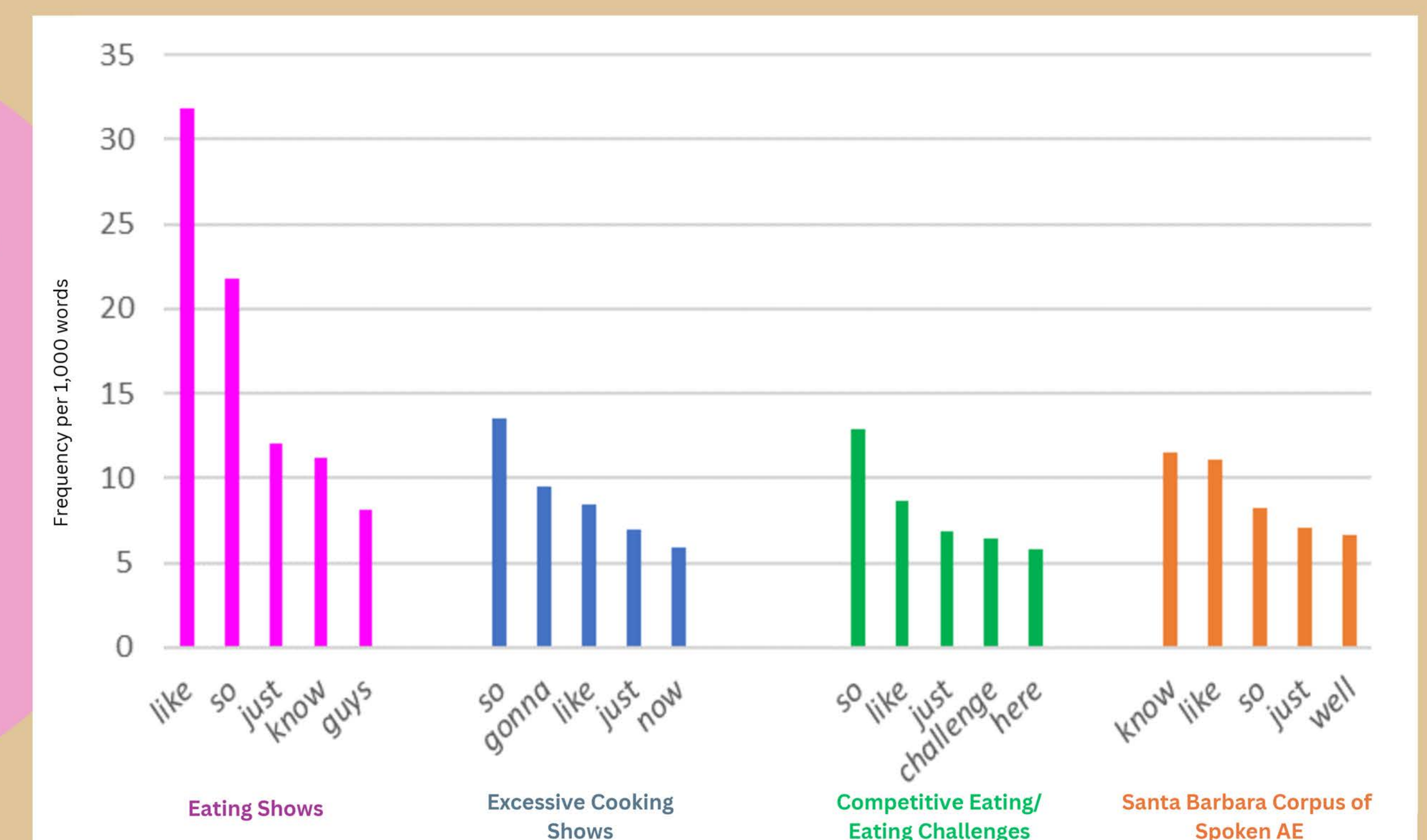
Excessive
Cooking Shows



100 videos
(10 videos by
10 performers)
each

The most frequent content words in each corpus show that all of them rely heavily on discourse and stance markers (*like, just, so, know*). Carnavalesque Consumption videos simulate conversational immediacy and intimacy as part of an audience-oriented performance.

Figure 1. Most frequent content words per 1,000 words per corpus



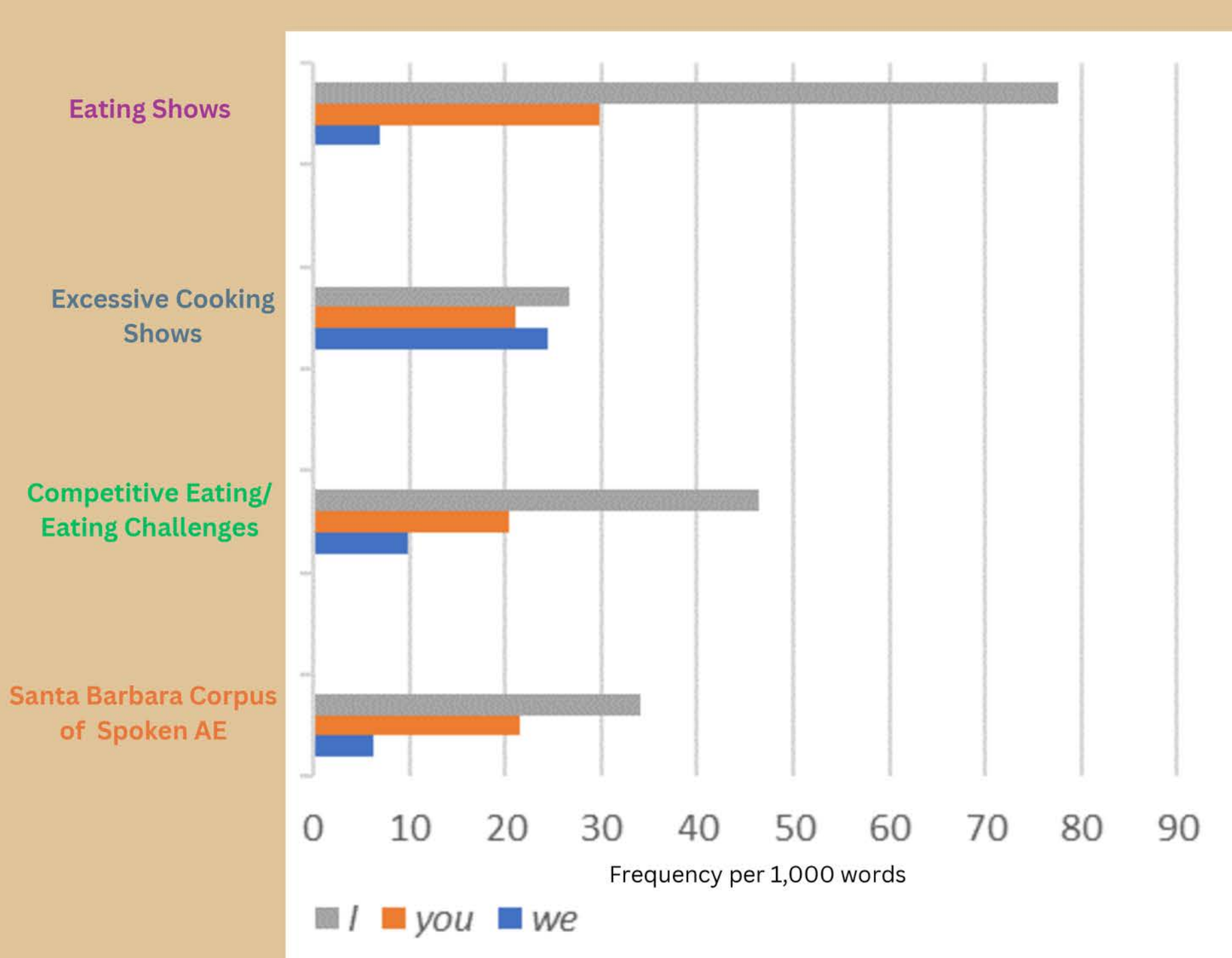
Competitive Eating/
Eating Challenges



Cheat Day Vlogs
(in the process of transcription)



Figure 2. Pronouns per 1,000 words per corpus



The most frequent personal pronouns in the three corpora are *I*, *you* and *we*. Especially in the Eating Shows, the use of *I* (surpassing even the conversational data from the SBCSAE) shows a focus on the eating performers' stories and performances of self online. The frequent use of *you* across the videos signals a form of direct address of the audience whereas the *we* suggests jointly produced actions.

Figure 3. Most frequent collocates with *food*

In Eating Shows, *food* most frequently co-occurs with multi-functional items such as *like* and *so*, which are predominantly used as discourse markers and thus indicative of the oral, dialogic conceptualization of the videos. *So* additionally often functions as intensifier in adjectival food description. The verb *know* illustrates epistemic stance related to specific food items.

Eating Shows	
5L/5R	Frequency
like	110
so	61
food	54
all	43
know	39

Excessive Cooking Shows	
5L/5R	Frequency
giant	66
time	22
make	17
favorite	16
like	15

In the Excessive Cooking Shows, *food* co-occurs with lexical items that stem from the pseudo-instructive nature of the videos (*time*, *make*), reference size (*giant*), or indicate an evaluation (*favorite*). In this case, *like* is mainly used in comparative constructions.

In the Competitive Eating/Eating Challenges corpus, *food* co-occurs with items indicative of the main activity type, i.e., *challenge* and *challenges*, clarifying to viewers the specific nature of the videos. Items like *all* and *so* are mostly used to underline 'quantity' as an essential characteristic of food challenges and competitions.

Competitive Eating/Eating Challenges	
5L/5R	Frequency
challenge	93
so	43
challenges	32
all	31
food	23

