

ECOLOGIC TRANSLATION AND CULINARY IDENTITY: SEMIOSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF FOOD IN NIGELLA LAWSON'S ENGLISH RECIPES

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Abstract: The issues concerning “translation ecology” (Cronin 2017) and the ethics of cultural interpretation (Venuti 2008; Inghilleri 2020) raise crucial questions about how translators should interpret and transmit culturally embedded meaning. This study approaches culinary discourse as a humanly shaped linguistic ecosystem (Wehi *et al.* 2009), where semantic meaning and pragmatic inferencing interact to construct cultural identity. Using a corpus of 12 cookbooks by Nigella Lawson (≈ 1.1 million tokens), the analysis applies register segmentation, MTLD lexical-diversity measurement, and ecosystem coding to examine how British culinary identity is textually enacted (Tognini-Bonelli 2001; Biber and Conrad 2019; McCarthy and Jarvis 2010). The results show that the narrative register constitutes the lexical and ecological core of Lawson's discourse, while ingredients and instructions are more formulaic. Six recurrent semiotic ecosystems, including food memory, domestic ritual, and sensory intensification, emerge as key sites where cultural alterity and ecological meaning are concentrated. These findings demonstrate that recipes function as semiotic habitats that transmit memory, identity, and experiential knowledge, with clear implications for ecologically responsible translation.

Keywords: ecologic translation, British culinary identity, pragmatic inferencing, linguistic ecosystem, semiotic ecosystem.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, Translation Studies has undergone a significant epistemological transformation. Early models that privileged formal equivalence, through the notion that translation should strive for structure-preserving accuracy, have been widely critiqued for masking the cultural, ethical, and ideological dimensions of the translator's task (Inghilleri 2020: 162-167). Particularly, the ideal of fluency and transparency in Anglo-American translation norms tends to promote "the illusion of authorial presence" by rendering the translator's ethical agency "invisible" (Venuti 2008: 1-8) and contributes to a homogenising effect that suppresses cultural difference (*ibid.*: 15-17, 266-267). Since traditional assumptions of accuracy and neutrality have been criticised, translation practices that preserve the "semantic heterogeneity" of the source are accordingly advocated to foreground its "cultural alterity", to resist the impulse of domesticating foreign elements to fit the target culture's expectations (Lewis 2000: 279-282). A shift towards contextual and ethically reflexive approaches distinguishes prescriptive fidelity from functional adequacy. Translation is "not about reproducing sameness" but about "responding to communicative purposes" in contextually sensitive ways (Pym 2023: 123-124, 142-146). This functionalist view, echoing the *Skopos* theory and Descriptive Translation Studies, redefines the translator as a cultural mediator whose agency is embedded in social, ethical, and pragmatic conditions (*ibid.*: 138-147).

Building on these cultural and ethical reorientations, the advancement of the field, which introduces eco-translation as a response to the Anthropocene crisis, argues that translation should not only mediate between linguistic systems but also account for the ecological interconnectedness of all forms of life (Cronin 2017: 2-3). The view of language as part of a biosphere (*ibid.*: 16) and translation as a biocultural practice can either preserve or damage linguistic and ecological diversity (*ibid.*: 18-19). Informed by an ecolinguistic awareness (Diamanti 2022: A189-A190), meanings would thus emerge from the text's interpretation as shaped by life experiences, environments, and inherited narrative forms. The translator's attentiveness to the interpretation of linguistic meaning and cultural contexts is accordingly demanded, as both are deeply entrenched in specific environments of memory, heritage, and identity. Within this framework, translating culinary recipes not only would denote a domain of material culture but also reflect a semiotic ecosystem, where food discloses culturally coded texts that transmit knowledge, emotion, and belonging across generations and geographies (Cronin 2017: 51-52).

In this theoretical context, Nigella Lawson's cookbooks provide a particularly rich site for investigating culinary discourse as a cultural and ecological phenomenon. Lawson is widely recognised as one of the most influential contemporary food writers in the English-speaking world, both for her publishing output and for her role in reshaping the genre of domestic food writing (Ashley *et al.* 2004: 172-176; Hollows 2003: 236). Since the publication of *How to Eat* (1998), her books have achieved sustained commercial success and critical visibility, combining practical culinary instruction with extended narrative

commentary, autobiographical reflection, and affective engagement (Ashley *et al.* 2004: 181-184). Subsequent titles, including *How to Be a Domestic Goddess*, *Nigella Bites*, *Forever Summer*, and *Feast*, have reached wide readerships in the United Kingdom and internationally, supported by long-running television series distributed beyond the Anglophone context (Hollows 2003: 236-238; Bell and Hollows 2006: 23-26). Scholarly analyses of contemporary food media frequently cite Lawson's distinctive narrative voice, characterised by intimacy, sensory richness, domestic memory, and explicit stancetaking, as central to her cultural impact and to her positioning within modern Anglophone culinary culture (Ashley *et al.* 2004: 183-185; Bell and Hollows 2006: 28-33). The breadth of her readership and the transnational circulation of her cookbooks, therefore, make Lawson's work a particularly suitable corpus for examining how culturally dense culinary prose functions and how it may be translated without ecological or cultural loss.

Through a corpus-assisted approach, this study combines register-sensitive lexical analysis with ecological and semiotic annotation to locate where cultural identity, affect, and ecological meaning are textually concentrated, and how these zones should be treated in translation. More specifically, the study pursues three interrelated research questions: (1) How is lexical diversity distributed across narrative, ingredient, and instruction registers in Lawson's cookbooks, and what does this reveal about the locus of cultural and eco-semiotic meaning? (2) What recurrent semiotic ecosystems characterise Lawson's narrative discourse, and how are they distributed across the corpus? (3) How can these patterns inform ecologically responsible translation strategies for culturally dense narrative cookbook prose? By articulating these questions, the study aims to bridge ecologic translation theory and corpus-based discourse analysis, offering a methodological proposal for how translators might engage with recipe texts as stratified semiotic ecosystems.

2. Literature Review

Extensive research in Linguistics and Translation Studies demonstrates that culinary recipes constitute a highly conventionalised textual genre with recurrent formal and linguistic properties. Community cookbooks show that recipes are genre-regularised texts characterised by patterned discourse structures, notably the bipartite organisation into an ingredient list and a method section, and by a high degree of formulaicity that signals shared social knowledge within a discourse community (Cotter 1997: 52-61). These linguistic regularities – which include predictable sequencing, fixed labels, reduced syntax in ingredient inventories, and the foregrounding of procedural verbs – contribute to the stability of the genre and help encode the cultural identity and communal values of the intended readership (*ibid.*: 55-56).

Corpus-based research confirms the cross-linguistic robustness of these structural conventions. In a comparative analysis of English culinary corpora, Paradowski (2017) demonstrates that the ingredient list typically functions as a taxonomic, syntactically reduced inventory, whereas the method section is dominated by bare imperatives and directive forms that enact procedurality

(*ibid.*: 54-58). He further shows that English recipes display a markedly strong preference for these bare imperatives, whereas other languages, including Polish and Italian, more frequently rely on infinitival or periphrastic constructions to express instructional force (*ibid.*: 58-61). This cross-linguistic variation has direct implications for translation, as translators should calibrate the level of directiveness, politeness, and procedural tone expected within the target culinary culture. Paradowski also observes that recipes encode substantial implicit cultural knowledge, from assumptions regarding ingredient availability to expectations of shared culinary competence, dimensions that are not always recoverable by readers situated outside the source culture (*ibid.*: 61-63).

Italian culinary writing provides further confirmation that recipes are culturally patterned semiotic forms rather than neutral procedural instructions. Italian recipe discourse typically avoids the clipped Anglo-American imperative, favouring either infinitival forms (e.g., “mescolare”, “aggiungere”) or polite, indirect structures (Masiola and Tomei 2011: 41-48). Localisation is therefore often necessary in culinary translation to ensure functional intelligibility, particularly in converting measurement systems, oven temperatures, pan sizes, ingredient denominations, and utensil terminology (*ibid.*: 63-75). Such adaptations do not represent domestication in a reductive sense but are instead required to maintain communicative adequacy where the cultural ecology of cooking differs from that of the source text. The challenges intensify when the recipe relies on culturally bound items or branded ingredients lacking direct equivalents in the target context, such as boudoir biscuits or regionally specific dairy products (*ibid.*: 76-84).

Beyond these structured components, recipes display diachronic, geographical, and register-based variation that indexes cultural identity (Cesiri 2015: 25-29). Culinary discourse is shaped not only by procedural conventions but also by evaluative practices and identity-building strategies. Cesiri (2019: 2-8) shows how British celebrity chefs construct authenticity, ethos, and culinary personas through narrative positioning, sensory descriptors, and evaluative language. In online recipe introductions, stancetaking and affective alignment draw readers into shared culinary communities and signal membership in culturally embedded food practices (*ibid.*: 4-6; 2024: 253-256). These findings reinforce the idea that culinary language is inherently indexical and rhetorically rich, operating simultaneously on procedural, interpersonal, and cultural planes.

From a theoretical standpoint, genre analysis in functional linguistics provides a robust explanatory framework for understanding these textual regularities. Discourse genres are culturally settled and emerge from recurrent social actions, becoming conventionalised within cultural ecologies; texts thus realise culturally patterned social practices (Martin and Rose 2008: 6-11; Swales 1990: 29-30). In the case of recipes, their forms and functions are shaped by institutionalised practices of food preparation and domestic work, which stabilise the bipartite structure and the formulaicity of procedural discourse (Swales 1990: 46). Norrick’s (2000: 47-58) insights into conversational genres further demonstrate that formulaicity and repetition are not incidental stylistic features but central organising principles that signal culturally patterned expectations. Together, these observations underline that procedural texts such

as recipes rely heavily on genre knowledge and semiotic cues recognisable to members of a cultural community.

Perspectives from Pragmatics strengthen this interpretation. Semantic content cannot be fully separated from the pragmatic inferencing processes that depend on context and background knowledge (Fetzer and Oishi 2011: 2-4). In recipes, meaning arises from the interaction between Lexical Semantics and implicit cultural knowledge, such as deixis (“here”), presuppositions (“in the secure and happy knowledge that food will be on the table later”, *Simply Nigella*, 2015), and implicatures attached to culturally bound culinary verbs (“sauté”, recurrent in *How to Eat*, 2011). Enkvist’s (1981: 101-102) notion of linguistic iconicity further clarifies how procedural texts reflect the material and temporal structure of the actions they describe: the sequential organisation, the culinary lexicon, and genre-specific naming conventions are iconic of embodied practice and encode experiential knowledge. Recipes are therefore embedded in a pragmatic ecology that constrains interpretation.

Stance theory offers an additional lens through which to analyse culinary narrative. Writers position themselves through subjectivity, evaluation, and interaction (Biber and Finegan 1989: 92; Lyons 1996: 337; Englebretson 2007: 16-19). Du Bois’s (2007: 159-174) stance triangle model emphasises the relational nature of evaluation, aligning speaker, audience, and object of stance. In Lawson’s cookbooks, stance manifests in expressions of nostalgia, pleasure, comfort, and embodied experience, as central features of the semiotic ecosystems that define her narrative prose. These stance acts serve not simply to inform but to socialise readers into shared culinary identities, memories, and sensory worlds.

The reconceptualisation of translation as a biocultural and ecological practice builds on these linguistic foundations. Translation operates within a biosphere of meaning in which linguistic acts participate in sustaining or eroding cultural diversity (Cronin 2017: 16-19). Ecologic translation frameworks position translators as agents responsible for preserving not only semantic content but also the cultural memory and environmental knowledge encoded in texts (*ibid.*: 2-3, 51-52). This orientation aligns with ecolinguistic insights that view meanings as emerging from lived experience, inherited narrative forms, and environmental embeddedness (Diamanti 2025: 143). Recipes, in this perspective, are not neutral procedural texts but humanly shaped ecosystems in which food transmits memory, identity, sensory worlds, and environmental knowledge (Wehi *et al.*: 201-202).

From an eco-translation perspective, translating culinary discourse becomes an ecocultural responsibility: the translator should safeguard cultural alterity, pragmatic nuance, and sensory landscapes while ensuring communicative adequacy. This study therefore integrates the perspectives of eco-translation, stancetaking, Pragmatics, and culinary Discourse Analysis, conceptualising the translator as an ecological mediator charged with preserving the semiotic ecosystems of food language.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative Corpus Linguistics with qualitative Eco-translation and semiotic analysis, which is divided into three steps: (1) register-based segmentation of each cookbook into *Ingredients*, *Instructions*, and *Narrative* to determine where cultural and eco-semiotic meaning is concentrated; (2) lexical diversity measurement (through the metric Measure of Textual Lexical Diversity, henceforth MTLD) across each register to quantify stylistic and ecological density; and (3) ecosystem coding of 72 narrative excerpts to identify recurrent semiotic habitats, such as national food memory, domestic ritual, sensory intensification, or pragmatic kitchen knowledge, and assess their implications for ecologically sensitive translation. This design operationalises the theoretical principles discussed above and provides empirical grounding for the study based on Eco-translation analysis.

The empirical dataset consists of 12 cookbooks by Nigella Lawson (≈ 1.1 million tokens, 1998-2020). The selection criteria were: (1) representation of Lawson's evolving stylistic voice and food philosophy; (2) cultural centrality of her work within British domestic food writing; and (3) relevance to the study of translational ethics, linguistic ecology, and cultural memory¹. All cookbooks were converted into .txt format and processed using Python 3.10. Preprocessing removed non-linguistic items, such as page numbers, headers and OCR noise (Biber *et al.* 1998; McEnery and Hardie 2012), normalised spacing and punctuation, and lowercased and tokenised the texts (Bird *et al.* 2009). This produced a clean, standardised corpus suitable for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

3.1. Register Segmentation and Corpus-Driven Stratification

Cookbook discourse integrates heterogeneous textual modes, namely ingredient inventories, procedural instructions, and narrative commentary. To investigate how ecological and cultural meaning is distributed across these modes, the corpus was segmented into three functional registers: (1) *Ingredients* (quantities, units, food items); (2) *Instructions* (imperative verbs, procedural sequences); (3) *Narrative* (descriptive, affective, reflexive, culturally indexical prose). Segmentation followed a corpus-driven principle (Tognini-Bonelli 2001): recurrent lexico-grammatical patterns were treated as evidence of textual function. Ingredients were detected via regular expressions targeting measurement patterns and food nouns (e.g., "250 g flour"). Instructions were identified through line-initial imperative structures (e.g., "Stir", "Heat", "Add", "Whisk"), following established descriptions of procedural registers (Biber and Conrad 2019). Remaining lines were classified as Narrative, characterised by stance, evaluation, sensory imagery, affect, anecdote, and cultural contextualisation. Narrative lines were therefore defined as descriptive, affective, reflective, or culturally indexical prose. In Discourse Analysis, narrative is additionally recognised as comprising descriptive and affective materials (De Fina and Johnstone 2015: 157-158), functioning as a site of identity work, stance, and cultural positioning (Gordon 2015: 333-334), and as

¹ These criteria guided corpus construction prior to analysis.

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a medium for constructing experiential worlds and shared meaning (De Fina and Johnstone 2015: 162). This threefold segmentation isolates the zone in which Lawson's cultural identity works and eco-semiotic meaning predominantly occurs. The rule-based Python pipeline applied hierarchical classification (*Ingredients* > *Instructions* > *Narrative*) and produced three parallel subcorpora for each cookbook.

3.2. Quantitative Analysis: Lexical Diversity via MTLD

To examine stylistic and ecological density across registers, lexical diversity was measured with MTLD, using the algorithm developed by McCarthy and Jarvis (2010), which calculates the average number of tokens required before the type-token ratio (TTR) falls below 0.72. Since the algorithm performs both forward and backward passes through a text and averages the two values, it produces a length-invariant measure suitable for large, heterogeneous corpora (Koizumi and In'ami 2012; Malvern *et al.* 2004). MTLD was computed for each full cookbook, each register (Ingredients, Instructions, Narrative), and the entire twelve-book corpus. This allowed identification of the register most lexically diverse, and therefore the most ecologically and culturally dense, within Lawson's discourse.

3.3. Qualitative Analysis: Ecosystem Coding of Narrative Excerpts

To complement the quantitative findings, a qualitative eco-semiotic analysis was conducted on 72 narrative passages manually selected from across the corpus. These excerpts were chosen because they exhibited high narrative density, cultural salience, sensory imagery, or strong evaluative stance, features linked to ecologic translation stakes. To ensure systematic and replicable sampling, the narrative excerpts were selected according to three explicit criteria. Six passages were first extracted from each of the 12 cookbooks, providing balanced representation across Lawson's full publishing chronology and preventing over-reliance on texts with larger narrative sections. Then, passages were required to contain substantive narrative prose, defined as at least three consecutive lines of descriptive, reflective, affective, or culturally indexical language, thus excluding minimal evaluative phrases or isolated adjectives. Subsequently, selection aimed to maximise thematic and ecological variation: excerpts were drawn from different recipe clusters and chapter types (e.g., seasonal chapters, cultural reminiscence, practical kitchen guidance, identity-laden commentary) to ensure that all major stylistic and cultural tendencies of Lawson's narrative voice were sampled. This balanced sampling design enabled comprehensive ecosystem coding and avoided bias towards any single cookbook, theme, or period in Lawson's career.

3.3.1. Automated Linguistic Profiling

Before manual coding, each passage underwent automated annotation using two tools: (1) LancsBox 6 for KWIC concordances, GraphColl collocations, Whelk wordlists, USAS semantic tagging (emotion, nationality, sensory perception,

evaluation) (Brezina Weill-Tessier and McEnery 2021); (2) Python + spaCy (version 3.10 2019) for POS tagging, detection of stance predicates (e.g., *I think*, *I love*, *I remember*), identification of light dependency structures as copular metaphors and mental-state constructions. These automatic annotations served as interpretive scaffolding, enabling consistent identification of affective, cultural, sensory, and pragmatic cues.

3.3.2. Manual Eco-Semiotic Coding

Each excerpt was then assigned to one of six semiotic ecosystems, reflecting its dominant cultural-ecological function: *Identity and National Food Memory*; *Affect and Domestic Ritual*; *Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge*; *Gender, Care, and Domestic Affect*; *Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play*; *Metaphor, Visuality, and Sensory Intensification*. The Assignment followed two criteria: (1) the primary cultural-pragmatic function of the observed passage, and (2) the dominant semiotic load relevant to ecologic translation, considering identity, heritage, affect, sensory worlds, implicit knowledge, and hybridity. To ensure methodological rigour, all coding was performed by the author and conducted in iterative cycles. Initial coding decisions were systematically checked against the operational definitions of each ecosystem, and ambiguous or borderline cases were flagged during the first pass. After the full distribution pattern had emerged, these cases were revisited and re-evaluated to ensure internal consistency and alignment with the automatic collocational, POS, and semantic cues. This reflexive re-coding procedure provides qualitative reliability in the absence of a second annotator.

Single-coder qualitative coding is methodologically consistent with discourse-analytic, ecolinguistic, and translation interpretive research traditions, where the analyst's expert interpretive judgement is central to identifying culturally and pragmatically meaningful patterns. Eco-semiotic analysis relies on theoretically informed, context-sensitive interpretation (Cf. Englebretson 2007; Cronin 2017). In such frameworks, researcher reflexivity, iterative re-coding, and triangulation with automated linguistic cues constitute accepted forms of analytic rigour. Accordingly, this study adopts a transparent, reflexive single-coder approach that foregrounds interpretive accountability rather than statistical generalisation.

3.4. Summary of the Analytical Procedure

The analytical procedure thus combines: (1) Corpus preprocessing and register segmentation (Python regex-based pipeline); (2) Quantitative MTLD analysis of each register and cookbook; (3) Qualitative ecosystem coding of rich narrative excerpts, informed by automatic collocation, POS, and semantic tagging; (4) Integration of findings to identify how lexical diversity and ecological meaning co-locate in Lawson's prose, and how these patterns inform ecologic translation. This mixed-methods design ensures methodological transparency while grounding Eco-translation arguments in systematic linguistic evidence.

4. Discussion of Results

4.1. Stratified lexical diversity and the ecology of cookbook discourse

The stratified, register-sensitive analysis of Lawson's 12 cookbooks confirms that her recipe discourse is not a homogeneous textual field but a layered semiotic ecosystem, in which Ingredients, Instructions, and Narrative each play distinct communicative and cultural roles. As summarised in Table 1, the three registers display markedly different MTLD profiles that closely track their genre functions and align with ecologic-translation principles regarding the uneven distribution of cultural and affective meaning.

Table 1. MTLD and Token Counts across Registers in Lawson's 12 Cookbooks.

Cookbook	Tokens (All)	MTLD (All)	Tokens (Narrative)	MTLD (Narrative)	Tokens (Ingredients)	MTLD (Ingredients)	Tokens (Instructions)	MTLD (Instructions)
<i>How to Eat (1998/2010)</i>	207,325	99.43	182,466	102.14	22,186	81.12	2,673	68.77
<i>Nigella Bites (2001)</i>	13,164	99.61	11,764	99.75	356	70.50	1,044	72.31
<i>Forever Summer (2002)</i>	61,833	95.27	47,243	96.50	6,807	79.13	6,478	77.99
<i>Feast (2004)</i>	160,662	90.36	117,931	97.64	16,489	69.53	26,242	72.65
<i>Nigella Express (2007)</i>	60,426	94.48	43,552	108.19	16,771	71.46	103	20.64
<i>Nigella Kitchen (2010)</i>	99,267	94.44	79,658	100.55	13,623	76.01	5,986	68.23
<i>Nigellissima (2012)</i>	47,358	93.68	39,520	93.93	2,875	73.43	4,963	69.71
<i>Domestic Goddess (2014)</i>	100,961	96.14	89,385	96.78	7,322	79.14	4,254	72.12
<i>Simply Nigella (2015)</i>	82,826	95.26	66,755	96.34	6,372	74.45	9,699	70.51
<i>Eating - Vintage Minis (2017)</i>	34,263	105.63	32,310	106.15	464	71.33	1,489	68.22

Cookbook	Tokens (All)	MTLD (All)	Tokens (Narrative)	MTLD D (Narrative)	Token s (Ingr edients)	MTLD (Ingr edients)	Tokens (Instru ctions)	MTLD (Instru ctions)
<i>At My Table (2018)</i>	62,065	91.96	47,947	95.05	6,026	78.68	3,412	67.44
<i>Cook, Eat, Repeat (2020)</i>	117,145	95.91	90,082	99.03	13,085	75.99	13,978	71.22

Across all cookbooks, narrative sections consistently achieve the highest MTLD values (93.93-108.19) and account for the largest proportion of tokens. Ingredients display significantly lower diversity (69.53-81.12), while instructions present the lowest and most variable MTLD scores (20.64-77.99). The overall MTLD range for full texts remains stable (90.36-105.63), suggesting a coherent stylistic signature across more than twenty years of Lawson's publishing history and reinforcing the idea of her cookbooks as a unified semiotic environment.

The narrative register clearly emerges as the cultural and ecological core of Lawson's discourse. Its high MTLD and large token count indicate an extended and varied lexicon shaped by several recurring features:

- 1) Sensory descriptors and evaluative adjectives. Narrative passages often foreground sensory and affective detail, as in *Nigellissima* "Yogurt Pot Cake" recipe ("its scent", "that combination of lemon and vanilla") or *At My Table* "Cumin Seed Cake" where toasted cumin seeds release an "earthy aroma" and the cake is "golden-crackled". Or even the "Baked Sauternes Custard" passage in *How to Eat*, which specifies desired texture as "firm but not immobile; when you press it with your fingers it should feel set but with a little wobble still within", using tactile and kinaesthetic descriptors to fix the reader's bodily imagination. These examples show how Lawson constructs vivid sensory ecologies, anchoring recipes in embodied experience.
- 2) First-person stancetaking and mental predicates. Statements such as "I love this plain cake...", "I love this combination of blue cheese and white beans [...] I need to feel that burning, blue-cheese buzz" (*Nigellissima*), and "I don't deny that food [...] is about sharing, about connectedness" (*How to Eat* opening essay "One & Two"), or "I don't believe you can ever really cook unless you love eating" (in publisher summaries and paratext) demonstrate the prominence of stance verbs ("think", "love", "remember", "believe"). These enact Lawson's narrative persona and embed recipes within interpersonal and affective relationality.
- 3) References to national and regional cuisine. Lawson often situates recipes within cultural geographies. An example is Italian domestic tradition in "Yogurt Pot Cake": "If there's a family in Italy that doesn't have a recipe

for yogurt pot cake, then I've yet to meet them [...] there is something so quintessentially Italian about its scent [...] as it bakes, I think I'm in a kitchen in Italy"). Or the English heritage in "Seed-cake" (*Nigella Kitchen*), framed as a modern take on traditional English seed cake, with caraway long used in British cookery and linked to classic English baking ("seed-cake was anachronistic, bespeaking an Edwardian age of Madeira m'dear, or some earlier fusty Victorian time when caraway was thought to be beneficial to the digestion"). Or in the "Cumin Seed Cake" (*At My Table*), where Lawson picks up the same historically English "seed cake" tradition and reworks it with cumin, publicly calling it "a *Seed Cake*". Such references construct culinary identity and invite readers into shared cultural memory.

- 4) Shared domestic scripts and rituals. Narrative commentary in *How to Eat* regularly frames menus as seasonal domestic rituals such as "Late-Summer Lunch for 6" (Roast Shoulder of Lamb with Ratatouille, Green Salad with Green Beans, Translucent Apple Tart), "Relatively Easy Lunch for 4", and "Spring Lunch for 8": "This is the perfect menu for a sprightly April; the salmon makes you feel summer's on the way...". Recipes are thus embedded in repeatable social scenarios and culturally meaningful rhythms.
- 5) Affective and nostalgic commentary. Lawson frequently connects food with memory, refuge, and emotion, as in her nostalgic evocation of reading *In a Shaker Kitchen after* "a stressed-out urban day" (*How to Eat*), or in her recollection of "schoolgirl memories" while preparing "Banana Custard", using memory and emotion to charge an otherwise simple dessert. More generally, in *How to Eat*, she repeatedly links recipes to temporal and emotional atmospheres, for instance referring to tropical fruit salad and butterscotch sauce as "an ecstatically successful culinary combination" after a roast duck lunch, or *Shaker lemon pie* as an antidote to "modern life".

These lexical, affective, and cultural features correspond closely to discourse-analytic understandings of narrative as a site of identity work, stance, and affect (De Fina and Johnstone 2015; Gordon 2015), and to functional linguistic accounts of narrative as a discourse mode with rich interpersonal and ideational dimensions (Martin and Rose 2008). From an ecologic-translation perspective, these densely elaborated zones constitute what Cronin (2017) describes as biocultural habitats: locations where heritage, affect, and sensory experience intertwine.

In contrast, the Ingredients and Instructions registers exhibit far more constrained lexical behaviour. Ingredients rely on quantifier-unit-noun patterns and a limited culinary lexicon; consequently, ecologic translation hinges primarily on terminological precision and culturally indexed food items (e.g., "golden syrup", "Trex", "caster sugar"). Instructions, dominated by imperative verbs and compressed syntactic structures, prioritise procedural clarity over

cultural elaboration. Their low MTLD values reflect this formulaic, function-driven nature.

What emerges, then, is a differentiated semiotic ecology:

- Narrative = high lexical diversity → high cultural, affective, ecological load;
- Ingredients = moderate lexical constraint → material culture and culinary taxonomy;
- Instructions = high formulaicity → procedural clarity and pragmatic efficiency.

The MTLD analysis thus validates the register segmentation and provides a quantitative foundation for the eco-semiotic coding of the 72 narrative excerpts.

4.2. Semiotic-Ecosystem Distributions in Lawson's Narrative Corpus

The ecosystem coding of the 72 narrative passages further clarifies how ecological and cultural meaning is distributed across Lawson's prose. The distribution demonstrates that Lawson's narrative voice is structured around a set of recurrent semiotic habitats rather than functioning as an undifferentiated descriptive space.

Table 2. Distribution of 72 Narrative Passages across the Six Semiotic Ecosystems.

Semiotic Ecosystem	Synthetic Description	Count	Percentage
1. Identity and National Food Memory	Heritage foodways, national/regional identity, culinary memory	14	19.4%
2. Affect and Domestic Ritual	Emotion, comfort, home rituals, temporal/domestic atmosphere	16	22.2%
3. Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge	Embodied technique, improvisation, craft learning, implicit knowledge	11	15.3%
4. Gender, Care, and Domestic Affect	Gendered culinary labour, nurturing roles, relational stance	8	11.1%
5. Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play	Fusion cuisine, intercultural identity, playful culinary mixing	9	12.5%
6. Metaphor, Visuality, and Sensory Intensification	Sensory imagery, metaphor, vivid experiential description	14	19.4%
TOTAL		72	100%

This distribution shows that ecosystems correspond to empirical patterns grounded in collocational, semantic, and syntactic cues. The relative frequencies, therefore, map the ecological architecture of Lawson's narrative voice and allow triangulation between quantitative lexical diversity, automated annotation, and manual qualitative interpretation.

The two most frequent ecosystems, *Affect and Domestic Ritual* (22.2%) and *Identity and National Food Memory* (19.4%), correspond precisely to the narrative

features associated with high MTLD. These passages most often link food to comfort, seasonality, heritage, shared domesticity, and emotionally charged atmospheres. They also carry the highest ecologic translation stakes, as they encode cultural memory, sensory depth, and affective resonance.

The next two ecosystems, *Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge* and *Metaphor, Visuality, and Sensory Intensification*, capture Lawson's characteristic combination of implicit expertise and sensory vividness. The related excerpts enrich the narrative through embodied technique and metaphorical or imagistic language, contributing to the experiential density of the prose even if the passages are less anchored culturally than focused on heritage or ritual.

Less frequent ecosystems, *Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play* and *Gender, Care, and Domestic Affect*, are nonetheless crucial. Their lower frequency does not indicate marginality but thematic concentration: they appear in contexts where intercultural identity work or reflections on domestic labour and care become narratively foregrounded. Such passages often require particularly sensitive translation strategies to preserve symbolic nuance, ideological positioning, or cultural hybridity.

Taken together, the ecosystem distribution corroborates the MTLD findings: the narrative zones with the richest lexical diversity are exactly those where cultural identity, affect, and ecological meaning concentrate most strongly. This convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence strengthens the central claim of the study: Lawson's narrative prose constitutes the ecological core of her cookbook discourse, and thus represents the area where ecologic translation should operate with the highest degree of interpretive and ethical attentiveness.

4.3. Cross-Corpus Patterns in the 72 Annotated Excerpts and Their Translational Implications

The annotation of the 72 narrative excerpts provides a fine-grained view of how Lawson's eco-semiotic discourse manifests across her entire oeuvre. While MTLD values identify where lexical density is concentrated, and ecosystem coding reveals which cultural and affective functions dominate, the excerpt-level annotations allow us to examine how these features concretely materialise in linguistic form and why they matter for ecologic translation. To synthesise the large dataset, three analytical dimensions were extracted from the annotation tables: (1) *Cultural/Pragmatic Marker Types*, (2) *Translation Relevance Level*, and (3) *Recurrent Ecological Functions*. The following tables summarise corpus-wide tendencies.

Table 3. Distribution of Cultural/Pragmatic Markers across the 72 Excerpts.

Marker Type	Description	Frequency	Percentage
National / Regional identity cues	Britishness, Americanness, Mediterranean or Asian referents	19	26%
Affective / nostalgic memory	Childhood references, family rituals, emotional comfort	14	19%

Marker Type	Description	Frequency Percentage	
Culinary hybridity markers	Cross-cultural mixing, authenticity/inauthenticity play	11	15%
Pragmatic kitchen knowledge	Technique scripts, implicit skills, household reasoning	10	14%
Metaphor / sensory intensification	Vivid imagery, poetic descriptors, kinaesthetic metaphors	12	17%
Humour / stance / idiomatic tone	Irony, self-deprecation, persona construction	6	8%
TOTAL		72	100%

Across the corpus, cultural identity cues (26%) and affective memory (19%) are the two most frequent markers, corroborating the MTLD and ecosystem findings that Lawson's narrative prose constitutes the densest ecological terrain. The sensory-metaphorical layer (17%) also emerges as central to Lawson's iconic narrative voice. Meanwhile, pragmatic kitchen knowledge and culinary hybridity appear with comparable frequency, showing that Lawson intertwines embodied cooking knowledge with intercultural play in a consistent stylistic pattern.

Table 4. Translation Relevance across the 72 Excerpts.

Translation Relevance Category	Definition	Frequency Percentage	
High Relevance	Strong cultural load, metaphorical density, socio-historical markers, or hybrid identity	41	57%
Medium Relevance	Tone-sensitive, pragmatically complex, or mildly culture-dependent	23	32%
Low Relevance	Mostly procedural or mildly descriptive with limited cultural density	8	11%
TOTAL			100%

Strikingly, 57% of excerpts require high-stakes ecologic translation, confirming that Lawson's narrative commentary, not the recipe procedures, presents the translator with the greatest ethical and interpretive burden. Only 11% of excerpts have low relevance, reinforcing the methodological decision to treat narrative commentary as the ecological core of her discourse.

Table 5. Cross-Tabulation: Ecosystem per Translation Relevance.

Ecosystem (from Section 4.2)	High Relevance	Medium	Low	Notes
1. Identity and National Food Memory	13	1	0	Nearly all excerpts require culturally sensitive strategies (identity markers, nostalgia)
2. Affect and Domestic Ritual	10	6	0	Affective nuance and domestic scripts make literal translation inadequate

Ecosystem (from Section 4.2)	High Relevance	Medium	Low	Notes
3. Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge	3	6	2	More procedural, but still often culturally loaded; requires localisation, by converting the measurement units (e.g., grams, temperatures, tin sizes), technical terms for utensils, and ingredients not readily available in a given context (e.g., savoiardi/boudoir biscuits)
4. Gender, Care and Domestic Affect	6	2	0	High ideological sensitivity; requires careful cultural negotiation
5. Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play	7	2	0	Hybrid identity and irony require transcreation
6. Metaphor, Visuality and Sensory Intensification	12	2	0	Metaphor-heavy, culturally specific sensory worlds; high ecological stakes

Two major patterns emerge: if an excerpt belongs to an ecosystem rooted in identity, affect, or sensory intensity, it is almost always of high relevance for translation. These ecosystems encode socio-cultural memory, sensory worlds, and stance, precisely the domains that eco-translation theory emphasises as requiring preservation. Procedural ecosystems (e.g., *Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge*) are not automatically low-stakes. Many still involve implicit cultural scripts (e.g., thrift, improvisation, and hosting norms) that require ecological sensitivity. This cross-tabulation demonstrates empirically that ecosystem classification is predictive of translation complexity, thereby validating the methodological architecture of the study.

4.4. The Way these Findings Inform Ecologic Translation

The triangulation of MTLD values, ecosystem frequencies, and excerpt-level annotations reveals a consistent structural insight: the narrative register is the ecological nucleus of Lawson's cookbooks, where cultural identity, affective memory, sensory intensification, and stance converge. This has three major consequences for translation:

- 1) Translation should prioritise ecological fidelity in narrative zones. Since over half of the excerpts display high ecological relevance, literal translation is insufficient. Idioms, metaphors, nostalgic cues, and culinary identity markers should be carefully re-created, not merely reproduced.
- 2) Cultural memory and identity markers require contextual anchoring. Items such as Marmite, Sunday roast, seed-cake, hostess-trolley age, or

Thanksgiving imagery cannot be flattened or domesticated without damaging the cultural ecology of the source text.

3) Ecosystems provide a practical framework for translation strategy. Each ecosystem implies a different cluster of translation risks:

Ecosystem	Translational Focus
Identity and Memory	Preserve national/regional markers; avoid over-domestication; maintain cultural alterity
Affect and Ritual	Prioritise tone, mood, tempo; convey domestic atmospheres
Pragmatic Knowledge	Clarify tacit scripts; adapt culturally unfamiliar techniques
Gender and Care	Preserve social roles, implicit ideologies, and relational stance
Culinary Hybridity	Maintain playful cross-cultural blending; avoid cultural flattening
Metaphor and Sensory Intensification	Recreate imagery and embodied sensation; avoid descriptive reduction

5. Translation Analysis: Ecosystem-Based Strategies for Ecological Fidelity

5.1. Introduction to the Translation Analysis

This study examines how Nigella Lawson's narrative prose can be translated into Italian in ways that respect its ecological, cultural, and affective density. The analysis is grounded in the annotated corpus of 72 narrative excerpts, each coded for cultural-pragmatic markers, translation relevance, and ecosystem classification. The translation of Lawson's narrative is not a purely linguistic operation but an act of ecological mediation, in Cronin's (2017) biocultural sense: the translator should preserve the cultural ecology, the memory, the sensory world, the national identity markers, and the domestic rituals, which constitute the narrative habitat of the text. The findings in section 4 demonstrated that:

- 1) Narrative sections carry the highest lexical diversity (MTLD);
- 2) Ecosystems such as *Affect and Domestic Ritual* and *Identity and National Memory* dominate the corpus;
- 3) 57% of excerpts show "high translation relevance", which means that literal translation risks ecological loss.

This section, therefore, adopts an ecosystem-based translation framework, where each semiotic ecosystem corresponds to a distinct translation challenge and requires specific ecological strategies. The aim is not to reproduce the English text mechanically, but to preserve the cultural alterity, sensory atmospheres, identity cues, and domestic scripts that shape Lawson's authorial voice. Each section below provides:

- A definition of the ecosystem integrating cross-excerpt patterns observed in the dataset;

- The specific translation risks associated with it;
- Ecologically oriented translation strategies;
- Example translation solutions.

5.2. Ecosystem 1: Identity and National Food Memory

Patterns in the Dataset: 14 excerpts where Lawson anchors recipes in British cultural heritage, regional food memories, or family traditions. Nearly all in this ecosystem require high-level ecological fidelity. Italian translations are most successful when they preserve the foreignness of British culinary identity rather than assimilating it. The ecosystem shows strong overlap with *Affect and Domestic Ritual*, meaning identity is often emotional.

Translation Risks: (1) Cultural domestication, replacing British food memories with Italian ones, erasing the source identity; (2) Loss of historical resonance (e.g., Victorian tea rituals, Edwardian nostalgia); (3) Undertranslation of intertextual culinary heritage; (4) Ambiguous equivalence: Italian readers may not know *seed cake*, *golden syrup*, *blancmange*, *Shaker lemon pie*, etc.

Ecologic Translation Strategies: (1) Preserving national and regional markers explicitly (“inglese”, “britannico”, “vittoriano”); (2) Retaining culturally specific food terms, using glossing or periphrasis where necessary (e.g., “seed cake”, “Shaker lemon pie”); (3) Maintaining Lawson’s evaluative stance (“quintessentially”, “properly”, “deeply rooted”); (4) Avoiding Italianisation of British cultural artefacts; (5) Using micro-expansion only when needed to prevent cultural erasure.

Example Strategy Application: “I think of seed-cake as quintessentially English” ecologically translated as «Per me la seed cake è qualcosa di profondamente inglese» retains the phrase *seed cake* avoiding an unsuitable Italian equivalent, preserves an evaluative stance with “profondamente”, maintains identity anchoring, and avoids cultural flattening.

5.3. Ecosystem 2: Affect and Domestic Ritual

- Patterns in the Dataset: 16 excerpts of the most frequent ecosystem, where Lawson frames cooking as an emotionally meaningful practice embedded in home rituals, seasonal rhythms, comfort, intimacy, nostalgia, and a domestic atmosphere, with consistent affect markers such as “comfort”, “ease”, “ritual”, “weekend”, “family”, “evening glow”. Italian translations tend to require intonational softening, maintaining a warm, intimate tone.
- Translation Risks: (1) Loss of affective intensity through neutralisation or syntactic flattening; (2) Cultural displacement: Italian domestic rituals are not the same; translation should preserve Lawson’s world, not overwrite it; (3) Undertranslation of rhythm and tempo, especially when Lawson shifts into confessional or intimate tones.
- Ecologic Translation Strategies: (1) Preserving emotional stance verbs (“I love”, “I crave”, “comforts me”); (2) Maintaining seasonal and temporal cues (e.g., “spring lunches”, “winter suppers”); (3) Recreating the domestic scenario, not just the propositional content; (4) Respecting the

rhythmic softness typical of Lawson's long, flowing clauses; (5) Prioritising experiential equivalence, not lexical matching.

- Example Strategy Application: "This is the perfect menu for a sprightly April; the salmon makes you feel summer's on the way" ecologically translated as "È il menu perfetto per un aprile frizzante; il salmone ti fa sentire che l'estate sta arrivando" preserves seasonality and domestic ritual, recreates sensory/affective expectation and maintains Lawson's gentle future-oriented mood.

5.4. Ecosystem 3: Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge

- Patterns in the Dataset: 11 excerpts where Lawson communicates implicit, experiential kitchen knowledge, such as how ingredients behave, what texture to aim for, sensory cues, and improvisational reasoning. Although less culturally dense than narrative-identity excerpts, these passages require high sensory fidelity. Italian translations are strongest when they avoid collapsing discretion into rigid instructions.
- Translation Risks: (1) Over-literal rendering of procedural advice, removing Lawson's embodied voice; (2) Loss of implicit knowledge cues ("until it smells right", "a little wobble within"); (3) Replacing British kitchen practices with Italian ones, risking cultural displacement.
- Ecologic Translation Strategies: (1) Recovering sensory cues explicitly, not just the literal procedural instruction; (2) Preserving modal verbs and hedging that signal Lawson's permissive, improvisational style; (3) Maintaining texture and kinaesthetic imagery closely (e.g., "set but with a wobble"); (4) Avoiding Italianising techniques unless necessary for intelligibility.
- Example Strategy Application: "It should feel set but with a little wobble still within" translated as "Dovrebbe risultare compatto ma leggermente budinoso all'interno", preserves the tactile metaphor, recreates Lawson's sensory epistemology, avoids hyper-precision and keeps flexibility.

5.5. Ecosystem 4: Gender, Care and Domestic Affect

- Patterns in the Dataset: 8 excerpts in this ecosystem where Lawson reflects on care, nurturing roles, gendered labour, emotional food provision, or the cultural meanings of domesticity. The least frequent but ideologically sensitive: many excerpts mix affect with reflective stance, where tone is crucial. Italian translations should avoid sliding into culturally conservative gender coding.
- Translation Risks: (1) Flattening ideological nuance, for instance, turning reflective commentary into neutral statements; (2) Misrepresenting Lawson's persona, which blends empowerment with intimacy; (3) Over-domestication, aligning Lawson with stereotypical Italian maternal tropes.
- Ecologic Translation Strategies: (1) Preserving Lawson's balance of care and autonomy; (2) Retaining modal and evaluative nuance (e.g., "I feel compelled", "I like to think"); (3) Avoiding culturally gendered

assumptions in Italian, especially overt maternalisation; (4) Maintaining interpersonal alignment cues, such as second-person invitations.

- Example Strategy Application: “Cooking is how I look after the people I love” was translated as “Cucinare è il mio modo di prendermi cura delle persone che amo”, retains agency, avoids stereotypical maternal overtones, and keeps Lawson’s reflective inwardness.

5.6. Ecosystem 5: Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play

- Patterns in the Dataset: 9 excerpts where Lawson mixes cultural influences, reinterprets traditions, or deliberately plays with authenticity (e.g., Anglo-Italian desserts, Asian-Mediterranean blends). These passages often require transcreation, particularly when humour was involved. Italian translations are successful when hybridity is preserved, not adapted.
- Translation Risks: (1) Cultural flattening: erasing hybridity by forcing the recipe into an Italian framework; (2) Loss of playful tone, irony, or metacommentary about authenticity; (3) Misrepresenting British multicultural identity.
- Ecologic Translation Strategies: (1) Preserving hybrid references explicitly, even if they sound foreign; (2) Maintaining Lawson’s playful stance toward authenticity; (3) Retaining contrastive structures (“not traditional, but...”); (4) Avoiding normalising the recipe for Italian readers (e.g., replacing ingredients with Italian terms).
- Example Strategy Application: “This isn’t remotely authentic, but it tastes the way I want it to” translated as “Non è affatto autentico, ma ha il sapore che voglio io”, retains metacommentary on authenticity, captures playful tone, and preserves hybridity.

5.7. Ecosystem 6: Metaphor, Visuality and Sensory Intensification

- Patterns in the Dataset: 14 excerpts where Lawson’s voice becomes most stylistically distinctive: metaphor, vivid imagery, synaesthetic blends, personification of ingredients, sensual description. They nearly always require high translation relevance. The ecological risk is high: sensory imagery is where Lawson’s persona is most recognisable. Italian renderings should remain lush and embodied.
- Translation Risks: (1) Literalisation of metaphors; (2) Sensory dilution, reducing rich imagery to plain description; (3) Loss of narrative persona, which is partly built through sensory excess.
- Ecologic Translation Strategies: (1) Preserving metaphor, don’t paraphrase it; (2) Recreating sensual mood, even if lexis shifts slightly; (3) Maintain dynamism and rhythm in clauses; (4) Translating imagery through embodied equivalence, not semantic reduction.
- Example Strategy Application: “The earthy aroma wafts up as if the kitchen were breathing” translated as “L’aroma terroso si spande come se

“la cucina respirasse” preserves metaphor, retains personification, and keeps sensory atmosphere intact.

The ecosystem analysis demonstrates that Lawson’s narrative prose is a densely layered semiotic environment in which identity, affect, sensory experience, and cultural knowledge converge. Translation, therefore, should function as a form of cultural and ecological stewardship, sensitive to:

- the emotional temperature of the narrative;
- the symbolic force of food memory;
- the hybrid playfulness of multicultural cuisine;
- the gendered and relational textures of domestic life;
- the sensory worlds that Lawson constructs.

Table 6. Examples: Excerpt → Ecosystem → Translation Solution.

Recipe	English excerpt (verbatim)	Semiotic ecosystem	Key translation risk	Concrete translation solution (IT)
<i>Seed Cake</i>	“I think of seed-cake as quintessentially English”.	1. Identity and National Food Memory	“Quintessentially English” has no direct Italian equivalent; risk of flattening national archetype into generic “tipico”.	Keep seed-cake in English and rephrase the identity: «Penso alla seed-cake come a qualcosa di intrinsecamente inglese.» (+ optional note explaining the cake and its cultural associations).
<i>Toad in the Hole</i>	“No dish screams British childhood more than Toad in the Hole”.	1. Identity and National Food Memory	Culture-bound name + nostalgic hyperbole; literal translation of the name would be absurd or misleading, but leaving everything in English risks opacity.	Preserve name + add explicitation of function: «Nessun piatto evoca l’infanzia britannica come il Toad in the Hole.» (con nota esplicativa sul nome e sul piatto).
<i>Sunday Roast</i>	“There is something deeply affirming about the Sunday roast: it draws family together like nothing else”.	2. Affect and Domestic Ritual	Risk of under-translating the ritual / emotional weight, especially where a “Sunday roast” is not a native institution.	Maintain ritual label + ritual function: «C’è qualcosa di profondamente rassicurante nell’arrosto della domenica: riunisce la famiglia come nient’altro.» The collocation arrosto della domenica

Recipe	English excerpt (verbatim)	Semiotic ecosystem	Key translation risk	Concrete translation solution (IT)
<i>Basic Roast Chicken</i>	“... it smells of home, of family, of food that carries some important, extra-culinary weight”.	2. Affect and Domestic Ritual	If “extra-culinary weight” is rendered too literally, it may sound clumsy; if omitted, affective depth is lost.	activates a similar domestic frame in Italian. Use paraphrastic explicitation: «... ha il profumo di casa, di famiglia, di un cibo che porta con sé un significato importante, che va oltre la cucina.» This keeps the “beyond food” dimension in natural Italian.
<i>Hot Salt Cod Fritters</i>	“... you have to remember to start soaking the salt cod 24 hours before”.	3. Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge	Risk of sounding like dry technical instruction and losing Lawson’s informal, domestic voice.	Retain imperative + colloquial reminder: «... non dimenticate di mettere il baccalà in ammollo almeno 24 ore prima.» – keeps both practical know-how and friendly tone.
<i>Stock</i>	“... boiling remains up to make stock is as far from being a precise art as you can get”.	3. Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge	The humorous downgrading of “art” may disappear if translated too neutrally; danger of over-formal Italian.	Use colloquial down-toner: «... bollire gli avanzi per fare il brodo è quanto di più lontano ci sia da un’arte precisa.» This preserves the anti-pretentious stance.
<i>My Mother’s Praised Chicken</i>	“My mother always made chicken this way when I was ill or needed comforting”.	4. Gender, Care, and Domestic Affect	Flattening the caregiving script to a neutral past habit; needs to keep maternal care and emotional protection salient.	Highlight nurturing frame: «Mia madre cucinava sempre il pollo così quando ero malata o avevo bisogno di conforto.» The pair <i>malata / conforto</i> keeps the care script explicit.
<i>Recipe Philosophy</i>	“The recipes I write come from my life, my	4. Gender, Care, and Domestic	Metaphor of cooking-as-balm may be diluted;	Preserve metaphor and rhythmic list: «Le ricette che

Recipe	English excerpt (verbatim)	Semiotic ecosystem	Key translation risk	Concrete translation solution (IT)
	home... The routine busyness of all the peeling and chopping and stirring can be a balm for the buzzing brain".	Affect (domestic labour as self-care)	risk of reducing to "relaxing" and losing the embodied repetition.	scrivo provengono dalla mia vita, dalla mia casa... La frenesia routinaria dello sbucciare, tagliare e mescolare può essere un balsamo per la mente in subbuglio.» This mirrors both cadence and therapeutic metaphor.
<i>Thai Crumbled Beef in Lettuce Wraps</i>	"I don't know how authentically Thai it is, but I do know it's authentically wonderful".	5. Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play	"Authentically Thai" / "authentically wonderful" is a playful antithesis; too literal a rendering can sound clunky or moralising.	Exploit repetition and adverbial contrast: «Non so quanto sia autenticamente thai, ma so con certezza che è autenticamente delizioso.» This keeps the play on authentically and the evaluative punch.
<i>Spaghetti with Marmite</i>	"I say this as a passionate Italophile: spaghetti with Marmite is possibly the most comforting thing you can eat".	5. Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play	Tension between Italian pasta canon and "heretical" Marmite; risk of losing irony and identity play.	Retain Italo-Brit play explicitly: «Lo dico da appassionata italofila: gli spaghetti con il Marmite sono forse la cosa più confortante che si possa mangiare.» <i>Italofila</i> and Marmite left in highlight the cross-cultural collision.
<i>Feta and Avocado Salad...</i>	"... the onion strips are lit up like shards of a stained-glass window".	6. Metaphor, Visuality, and Sensory Intensification	Risk of toning down the metaphor into plain "colorful" and losing visual iconicity.	Preserve simile with culturally familiar image: «... le strisce di cipolla si accendono come frammenti di una vetrata colorata.» Vetrata colorata neatly echoes

Recipe	English excerpt (verbatim)	Semiotic ecosystem	Key translation risk	Concrete translation solution (IT)
Damp Lemon and Almond Cake	"this for me is cake nirvana... sharp-toned meltiness".	6. Metaphor, Visuality, and Sensory Intensification	"Cake nirvana" and "sharp-toned meltiness" are highly metaphorical; literal rendering can become awkward or incoherent.	"stained-glass window" in Italian culinary prose. Split and paraphrase while keeping imagery: «Per me questa è la beatitudine della torta... una morbidezza dal tono pungente.» <i>Beatitudine</i> and <i>tono pungente</i> preserve both spiritual hyperbole and textural contrast.

6. Concluding Remarks

The full set of 72 annotated narrative excerpts and their corresponding ecologic and semiotic coding is not reproduced here in extenso, due to the constraints of the present article format. Their interpretation, however, underpins the analytical claims advanced throughout the study, and representative examples have been integrated where possible to illustrate the methodological and translational implications of the findings. A complete annotated corpus, including all ecosystem assignments and Italian translation solutions, will be available in the monograph to be published afterwards, as it constitutes an essential element of the empirical foundation of the research.

The study set out to examine how ecologic translation theory, corpus-driven register analysis, and qualitative eco-semiotic annotation can be integrated into a coherent methodological framework for analysing culturally dense culinary discourse. Using a corpus of 12 Nigella Lawson cookbooks (≈ 1.1 million tokens), the research demonstrates that cookbook discourse is a stratified semiotic ecosystem in which narrative, ingredients, and instructions function as distinct ecological habitats of meaning. The MTLD analysis revealed that the Narrative register consistently exhibits the highest lexical diversity across Lawson's oeuvre, aligning with the register's role as the locus of evaluative stance, cultural memory, sensory world-building, and affective identity work. In contrast, Ingredients and procedural Instructions display constrained lexical behaviour, reflecting the specific functions of the genre as material inventories and operational procedures.

These quantitative findings are reinforced by the qualitative eco-semiotic analysis of 72 narrative excerpts. The ecosystem coding showed that Lawson's narrative prose clusters into six recurrent semiotic ecosystems, with *Affect and*

Domestic Ritual and Identity and National Food Memory emerging as dominant. These ecosystems correspond closely to the regions of the corpus with high MTLD, demonstrating that lexical diversity is not merely a stylistic variable but an indicator of cultural and ecological density. Less frequent ecosystems, *Gender, Care, and Domestic Affect; Pragmatic Kitchen Knowledge; Culinary Hybridity and Intercultural Play*, and *Metaphor, Visuality, and Sensory Intensification*, nevertheless carry significant translational stakes, as they encapsulate socially salient or ideologically charged aspects of Lawson's authorial persona. Together, these ecosystems map the textual habitats where affect, memory, cultural identity, and sensory imagination converge.

From a translational perspective, the study demonstrates that ecologic translation cannot be reduced to a general principle of preserving cultural references or sensory imagery; rather, it demands register-sensitive, ecosystem-aware strategies. Narrative passages require culturally attentive, ecologically grounded translation solutions that maintain stance, affect, and identity cues without erasing cultural alterity. Ingredients and instructions, though lexically sparser, pose their own ecological risks – terminological accuracy, measurement conventions, and culturally loaded ingredients require careful handling to avoid domestication, distortion, or loss of culturally specific food semantics. The ecosystem-based translation framework proposed here provides a principled, empirically anchored set of strategies tailored to the semiotic functions of each ecological habitat.

Beyond its immediate findings, this study offers a methodological contribution to ecologic translation research. By combining Corpus Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Eco-translation, it provides a replicable analytical model for identifying the ecological core of culturally rich texts. It also illustrates how translation can be reconceptualised as a form of ecological mediation: a practice that safeguards linguistic diversity, narrative habitats, and embodied sources of cultural knowledge. The approach demonstrates that ecological concerns are not peripheral to translation, but central to understanding how texts encode and transmit culture, memory, and affect. Considering that several cookbooks by Lawson have been translated into Italian, future research would also include a comparative study examining the actual translation choices adopted by translators of the Italian editions. Or it could extend the model to other authors, languages, and genres, and explore reader reception or translator decision-making.

Overall, the study shows that Lawson's cookbook discourse exemplifies how culinary writing can function as an eco-semiotic environment in which food becomes a medium of cultural memory, identity formation, and sensory world-building. More importantly, it demonstrates that translation, when approached ecologically, has the potential to preserve these cultural ecosystems rather than flatten or erase them. In doing so, it affirms the central role of translators as stewards of cultural biodiversity in an increasingly homogenised global textual landscape.

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