

From Terroir to Trust: Generation Z, English for Specific Purposes, and Croatian Food Heritage—Part Two

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Abstract

Part II of “From Terroir to Trust” presents results on Gen Z’s knowledge of EU-protected Croatian traditional products. The study joins ESP terminology and digital heritage marketing. As Part I specifies, it further interprets an English questionnaire administered concurrently to BIO/FABSO first-year English-course students at J. J. Strossmayer University. Overall, PGI functions as a legal infrastructure of authenticity and local values. In digital narration, students are and will be cultural mediators and global translators of food/drink heritage. It asks what Gen Z knows and where multimedia ESP teaching is limited: conceptual assent exists, but English terminological precision is moderate.

Keywords: Generation Z, Croatian traditional products, Protected Geographical Indication, English for Specific Purposes terminology, digital heritage marketing

Introduction

Anchored Definitions (Q8 and Q9) and Purpose (Q11) in the Questionnaire Instrument

This second part of the article “From Terroir to Trust: Generation Z, English for Specific Purposes, and Croatian Food Heritage” continues the presentation of research findings concerning Generation Z (Gen Z) respondents’ knowledge of Croatian traditional products protected within the European Union (EU). The study positions itself at the intersection of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) terminology and digital marketing communication of heritage, especially where legally protected food-and-drink designations require both linguistic precision and cultural mediation (Hughes, 2006; cf. Rački Marinković, 2013). As specified in the first part of the article, the research is based on, and interpretively organized around, an English-language



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questionnaire administered simultaneously on 8 February 2026 to first-year students enrolled in English language courses at the Department of Biology (BIO) and the Faculty of Agrobiotechnical Sciences (FABSO), Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek¹. Viewed comprehensively, the inquiry is significant because it identifies Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) as a legal infrastructure of authenticity and as a vehicle for locally embedded values whose communicative force now depends upon competent translation into global digital narratives. In this context, students are, and will increasingly become, mediators of culture and international interpreters of heritage, particularly heritage associated with food and beverages. The research therefore asks how much Generation Z already knows about this domain (Tidwell & Lamm, 2020; see also Pavlić, 2024) and where the limits of contemporary multimedia ESP instruction become visible. Its results indicate that conceptual assent is present, yet students' terminological precision in English remains only moderately successful.

It is worth noting, however, that PGI-protected designations are frequently treated as food-designation terms, including, in the Croatian context, Baranja kulen, Istrian prosciutto, Lika potato, the meat of the Black Slavonian pig, Pag Island cheese, Poljica flatbread, and Slavonian sausage, to name but a few, and this is useful for the present topic because it distinguishes among geographic terms that denote origin, product characteristics, and trademark-style evocative value. Moreover, it is precisely this linguistic and legal ambiguity that necessitates mediation in the case of protected food-and-drink names.

Still, the central concern is conceptual and terminological precision: geographical indications and trademarks are compared, categories of geographical designations are defined, and internationally accepted standards of protection are analyzed. Because protected designations for agricultural and food products, wine, and spirits are also directly treated, the discussion is especially useful for "cultural mediation": terroir is thus presented as a Francophone concept without a literal Croatian or English equivalent and is linked to geology, topography, microclimate, flora, human factors, reputation, and regional product identity.

Globally (see Kristia et al., 2024), and especially in the US context, Generation Z is explicitly analyzed alongside other generational cohorts, with particular attention to how its members perceive and engage with local food systems, including the purchase of local foods, participation in local food markets and events, and consumption of local food media (Tidwell & Lamm, 2020). Croatian research likewise examines Generation Z (Pavlić, 2024), particularly its purchase intentions toward domestic Croatian products as opposed to foreign alternatives and its interest in traditional food consumption; the principal limitation of these analyses, however, is that they tend to address domestic products rather than "traditional products" specifically, whereas the present study treats traditional products as culturally marked domestic products.

Materials and Methods

Methodological Clarification

The aggregated study used a convergent exploratory mixed-methods design: for methodological transparency, closed questionnaire items were analyzed quantitatively as cohort-level distributions, valid N values, means, and top-two-box percentages, while open-ended responses were

1 FAZOS, the Croatian institutional abbreviation used in the figures, corresponds to FABSO, the English-language abbreviation used in the text.

interpreted qualitatively through thematic analysis. In Part One, this design clarified how BIO and FABSO students differed in English-language self-efficacy, prior familiarity with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) schemes, and the mediation of Croatian food heritage through authenticity, traceability, quality, locality, packaging, and ethical representation. In Part Two, the same design was directed more specifically toward PGI literacy, ESP terminology, digital heritage marketing, genre control, influencer credibility and skepticism, QR-linked traceability², and the relation among terroir, production know-how, reputation, and legal protection. The questionnaire was validated through content and construct alignment: its sections corresponded to the study's principal domains—respondent profile, GI literacy³, product recognition, ESP terminology, and digital/ethical heritage communication—while criterion-keyed items tested legal and terminological knowledge and short-answer items tested applied, public-facing discourse. Coding proceeded in two stages: closed items were tabulated by response option, whereas open-ended responses were coded by thematic response unit through a deductive-inductive codebook covering authenticity, trust, traceability, regionality, terminology, genre, packaging, platform logic, ethics, commodification, and terroir. Reliability was strengthened through identical administration, anonymity, standardized item formats, fixed Likert anchors, explicit treatment of nonresponse, consistent codebook application across both cohorts, coder comparison of ambiguous cases, and triangulation among quantitative distributions, qualitative responses, and cross-cohort comparison.

Corpus and Approaches

As stated in Part One, the study comprised the BIO (N = 45) and FABSO (N = 64) student cohorts, and the data consisted of aggregated survey exports (Q1–Q28) and verbatim responses to open-ended items (Q12, Q16, Q24, Q26, Q29, and Q30). A mixed-methods interpretive framework was applied, integrating the analysis of distributional patterns with thematic analysis; accordingly, the study's scientific and thematic patterns remain analytically consequential, notwithstanding the acknowledged limitations of aggregation. PDO required production, processing, and preparation to occur within the defined region, with the product's qualities essentially linked to that place, whereas PGI required at least one production step to be linked to the region—that is, the product's reputation or quality had to be attributable to that area. PGI protection thereby reduces misuse and misleading market signals while supporting traceability and product esteem.

Figure 1 depicts students' prior familiarity with PDO and PGI, and FAZOS, the Croatian institutional abbreviation used in the figure, corresponds to FABSO. The higher FABSO values in the chart are attributable to these students' disciplinary exposure to food-system terminology and labeling regimes. Nevertheless, the methodological discussion of PGI is grounded in lived consumer practice rather than in abstract theory (fig. 2).

2 QR traceability refers to the use of a Quick Response (QR) code on product packaging or related promotional material to connect consumers directly to digital provenance information, including the product's place of origin, producer identity, production method, certification status, supply-chain pathway, and other verifiable data relevant to authenticity, transparency, and consumer trust.

3 Geographical indication (GI) literacy denotes the capacity to recognize, interpret, and communicate the legal, geographical, cultural, and market significance of geographical indications, especially their role in linking product identity, place-based provenance, specification compliance, traceability, and consumer trust.

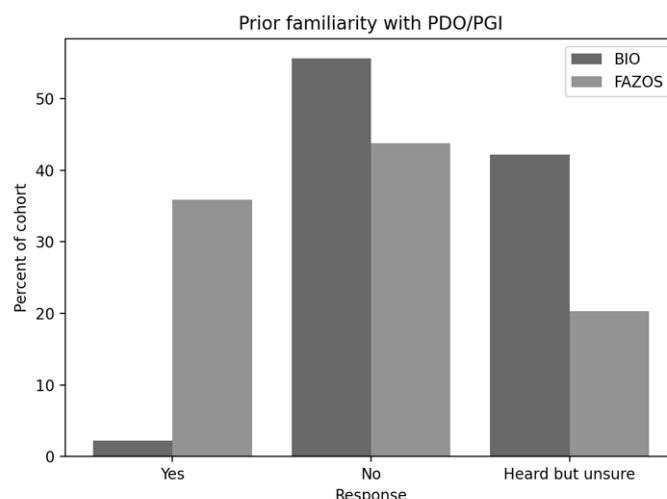


Fig. 1. Respondents' prior familiarity with PDO and PGI.

Statistical Testing

Statistical testing further confirmed the principal cohort differences, although not all descriptive contrasts reached statistical significance. Because the spreadsheet exports were aggregated rather than respondent-level, analyses were restricted to tests reconstructible from frequency distributions. Welch independent-samples t-tests were used for ordinal or scale-like items, whereas categorical items were tested by chi-square. BIO students reported significantly higher CEFR-based English proficiency⁴ than FABSOS students when CEFR levels were ordinally recoded from A1 = 1 to C2 = 6, BIO: $M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.17$, $n = 45$; FABSOS: $M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.07$, $n = 64$; $t(89.18) = 2.92$, $p = .004$, Hedges $g = 0.57$. By contrast, FABSOS students showed significantly greater prior familiarity with PDO/PGI schemes, $\chi^2(2, N = 109) = 18.72$, $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .414$; when dichotomized as "yes" versus "not yes," the difference remained significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 109) = 17.49$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .401$. The remaining Likert-based cohort contrasts were directionally consistent with the interpretation but did not reach statistical significance: PDO/PGI trust and willingness to pay, $t(96.68) = -1.30$, $p = .197$; ability to explain kulen to a non-Croatian audience, $t(100.95) = 1.51$, $p = .133$; confidence in selecting English GI terminology, $t(96.25) = 0.40$, $p = .687$; and ethical representation of heritage practices, $t(79.91) = -0.11$, $p = .913$. Accordingly, the statistically robust cohort differences concern BIO students' higher English-language self-assessment and FABSOS students' greater prior PDO/PGI familiarity, while the other contrasts are best described as interpretively meaningful descriptive tendencies rather than inferentially significant differences.

⁴ The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a standardized international framework for describing language proficiency across six ascending levels, from A1 to C2.

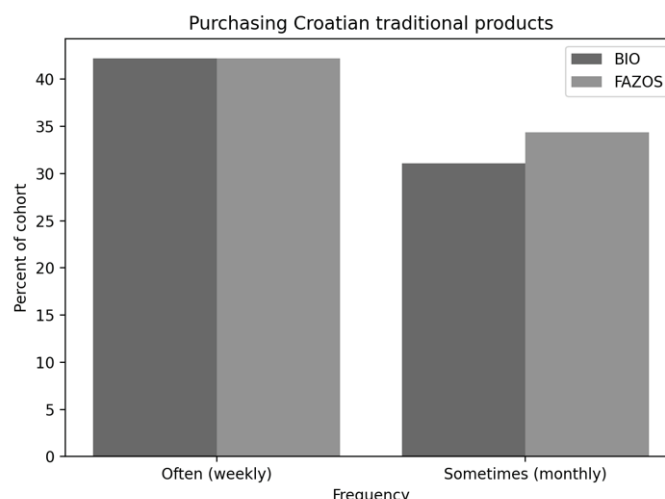


Fig. 2. Respondents' everyday engagement with the purchase of Croatian traditional products.

With respect to the international significance of PGI—addressed thematically in Q12 of the questionnaire—it is encouraging that both student cohorts recognize several salient dimensions of EU-protected Croatian traditional products:

- authenticity, insofar as the product is understood to originate genuinely in the designated geographical area
- quality assurance, since codified specifications and monitoring procedures imply controlled production standards
- trust and safety, as legal protection reduces the possibility of misleading labeling
- cultural value, since the protection of traditional production can mitigate the gradual erosion of its significance over time
- market visibility, as PGI status can enhance price positioning and strengthen the product's international recognition

Interpretively, however, it bears noting that the BIO and FABSIO frameworks diverge: BIO is situated primarily within a paradigm of travel and intercultural encounter, whereas FABSIO is situated within a paradigm of market rights. At this point, the analysis shifts to qualitative reasoning, since students' questionnaire responses disclose the interpretive templates, perceived risks, and prospective opportunities with which they are familiar (fig. 3)⁵.

5 The results obtained through the referenced five-point scale, defined and elaborated by Rensis Likert in 1932, are interpreted by means of arithmetic means. For a robust methodological justification of Likert-based results, see the dedicated section in Schrum and colleagues (2023: 4–11, 16–17), which discusses interpretation and analysis, including the ordinal character of individual Likert items, the limitations of means and standard deviations for single items, and the more defensible use of parametric procedures for properly aggregated Likert-scale data when the relevant assumptions are satisfied. For a more empirical perspective, see Seleš and colleagues (2023: 97, 99–104).

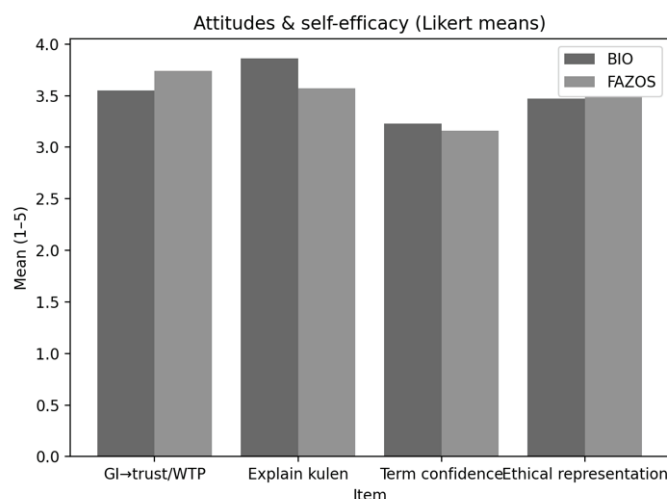


Fig. 3. Respondents' attitudes and self-efficacy, expressed as Likert-scale means.

Ultimately, within a genre-control framework, label microcopy is sharply differentiated from the Web narrative, with evidentiality and specificity operating as a parallel opposition. English-language product descriptors (Q24)—marked by recurrent epithets such as “authentic,” “traditional,” “premium,” and “quality” and by the attendant risk that promotional diction may displace verifiable specification claims—therefore instantiate a recurrent rhetorical pattern:

1. regional identification;
2. sensory attributes;
3. authenticity claims; and
4. credibility signals, namely PDO or PGI traceability.

Credibility, Influence, and Skepticism

Part Two advances Part One by converting the article's broader account of Generation Z heritage mediation into a more specific contribution to PGI literacy, ESP terminology, and digital heritage communication. Whereas Part One establishes that BIO and FABSIO students possess an experiential vocabulary of authenticity, origin, quality, locality, and traceability but require more precise English-language mediation, Part Two demonstrates how that vocabulary operates within the legal, terminological, and digital conditions of EU-protected Croatian traditional products. Its principal contribution is the definition of PGI literacy as an applied ESP competence in which law, language, provenance, genre, platform logic, and ethical representation intersect. It thereby advances existing scholarship by treating traditional products not merely as domestic goods but as culturally marked and legally protected heritage objects whose international value depends on traceability, warranted authenticity, and competent digital narration.

The sample is moderately sized but internally coherent, since BIO and FABSIO students occupy contrastive yet complementary positions: BIO respondents show stronger English-language self-efficacy, whereas FABSIO respondents show greater proximity to food-system terminology, agri-food labeling, and certification discourse. The findings are further strengthened by convergence across closed-item distributions, Likert-scale tendencies, and open-ended thematic responses.

Accordingly, they do not constitute overgeneralized claims; rather, they are justifiably extendable as empirically grounded indicators—not universal claims about all Generation Z respondents—of how a defined Croatian Generation Z university population conceptualizes, evaluates, and digitally mediates EU-protected traditional food heritage.

Concerning digital promotion and platform logic (Q27 and Q29), genre awareness apparently emerges even where respondents' command of the relevant discourse remains uneven (fig. 4), as assessed according to the CEFR, which was discussed in Part One (Council of Europe, 2021): Generation Z students think multimodally and display a marked proclivity for short-form video, influencer collaboration, and producer-led documentary clips (Flecha-Ortiz et al., 2023; cf. Berk et al., 2024: 548–52, 558–60; Jurišić et al., 2024: 379–82, 387–91, 393–97). Packaging, by contrast, is construed as a semiotic hub, with the underlying assumption that modernized design enhances the legibility of claims of origin. A further tendency is evident in the preference for QR-coded maps and traceability mechanisms linking products, producers, and processes. With respect to ethical and qualitative heritage representation (Q28), however, ethical confidence remains comparatively cautious, stabilizing near the midpoint in both respondent cohorts; it is therefore significant that respondents register the risks of exoticization and trivialization in digital promotion, while an explicit dissenting position interrogates proprietary claims to tradition and their potentially exclusionary effects. It may thus be argued that Generation Z sustains a measured equilibrium, acknowledging the benefits of PGI while also recognizing its normative contestability.

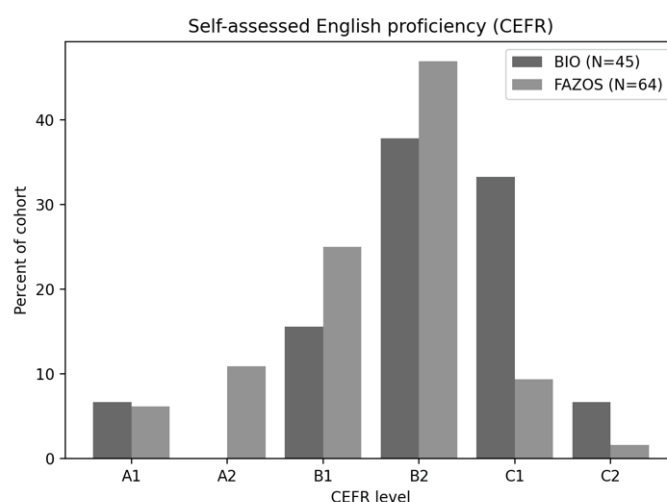


Fig. 4 Fig. 4. Respondents' CEFR-based self-assessment of English-language proficiency.

Members of Generation Z are therefore appropriately approached through analytical frameworks centered on gratifications, active and passive use, user-generated content, and parasocial relationships with influencers, who publish content, shape attitudes, and knowingly assist companies in the promotion of products and services. In the digital age, Generation Z clearly recognizes both the importance of influencers and the data-rich context of social media as popular platforms used by younger users, including the American Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as the Chinese TikTok; nevertheless, it would be erroneous to assume that Generation Z merely consumes online content, since its members also produce it, making these social networks a principal channel of their consumer activities. It should be emphasized that respondents in

the present study likewise confirmed that they select influencers according to the content that interests them, and, consequently, the influence of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on the intention to follow influencers merits more detailed investigation. Although Instagram is similarly favored by Generation Z almost everywhere, analysis of the present findings, together with evidence from the relevant recent literature, indicates that Croatian respondents nevertheless tend to favor blogs, the more conventional Facebook, and TikTok.

The study of social media, together with the perception, development, and active participation of influencers within them as new marketing communicators and public opinion leaders, is therefore particularly useful in countries such as Croatia, which, in domains such as digital tourism, heritage branding, food-origin promotion, agri-food communication, and destination marketing, has compelling reasons to examine the transition from traditional media to digital platforms. Brands now collaborate extensively with influencers, since influencer credibility, the typology of their promotional posts and video content, and direct calls for user engagement may all function as determinants of the efficacy of covert digital advertising.

It would nevertheless be excessive to claim that respondents regard influencers as unqualified role models, since Generation Z does not fully credit the veracity of such content, and sponsored posts elicit distrust among many respondents. It may therefore be concluded that Croatian members of Generation Z, unlike their peers elsewhere, are not especially inclined to modify their personal attitudes or to purchase exclusively those products and services promoted by influencers.

Conclusions

Curricular Implications for ESP-Oriented Practice

What the artifacts jointly indicate is that respondents possess substantial everyday knowledge of heritage and establish positive associations between PGI status and trust, while also proposing plausible digital strategies, including short-form videos and traceability mechanisms. By contrast, the principal bottleneck appears to lie in English-language mediation: respondents' terminological imprecision and limited capacity to formulate evidentiary claims emerge as the main constraints. Cohort differences, moreover, align with disciplinary orientation: FABSO respondents demonstrate greater familiarity with PGI, whereas BIO respondents report higher English-language self-efficacy.

Thus, with respect to concrete classroom activities, PGI communication should be restructured, and questionnaire item Q24 should be reformulated so as to incorporate explicit evidentiary constraints. In a follow-up phase, PGI communication should be taught as a constellation of genres—for example, the QR-coded landing page, label microcopy, the Web product page, the press release, the short-video script, and related forms. Terminology should correspondingly be treated as a controlled lexicon governed by specific conditions of use, encompassing labeling, traceability, geographic origin, and production know-how. Finally, rhetorical templates should be introduced that balance sensory appeal with verifiable PGI claims, while ethical reflection should be integrated through case-based analysis of commodification, proprietary claims to tradition, and representation without exoticization.

The conclusions, however, remain valid as bounded, aggregated Generation Z opinion indicators because the study does not claim national representativeness. Rather, it offers a locally situated mixed-methods interpretation of two analytically relevant first-year cohorts: 109 respondents, all aged 18–19, surveyed through the same anonymous instrument at a single university. The interpretation is thus not a merely speculative or empirically unsupported extrapolation but an evidence-responsive and methodologically circumscribed synthesis bounded by the aggregated quantitative distributions, thematically analyzed open-ended responses, and cross-cohort patterns documented in the study.

By making its research instruments and proposed teaching templates openly accessible, this study constitutes an invitation to expert discussion. Its findings indicate that Generation Z students are prepared to mediate heritage both conceptually and strategically by promoting EU-protected Croatian traditional products, such as Baranja's dry-fermented pork sausage, within an ESP-oriented global digital narrative. Accordingly, the principal developmental objective should be linguistic precision, encompassing terminological control, genre awareness, and ethical reflexivity, since ESP-based PGI literacy is most effective when it integrates law, language, and digital practice.

Ethics Statement

The study involved adult first-year BIO and FABSO students who participated on the basis of informed consent and voluntary approval to take part in the research. The questionnaire was administered anonymously: respondents were instructed not to enter their names or student identification numbers, and the resulting data were processed and reported only in aggregated or non-identifiable form. Accordingly, the study preserved respondent anonymity, minimized ethical risk, and used the students' answers exclusively for the scholarly analysis of Generation Z's GI literacy, ESP terminology, and digital heritage communication.

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Od terroira do povjerenja: naraštaj Z, engleski jezik struke i hrvatska prehrambena baština — drugi dio

Sažetak

Drugi dio rada „Od terroira do povjerenja” iznosi rezultate o znanju naraštaja Z o hrvatskim tradicijskim proizvodima zaštićenima na razini EU-a. Istraživanje povezuje nazivlje engleskoga jezika struke i digitalni marketing baštine. Kako je navedeno u prvome dijelu, ono dodatno interpretira upitnik na engleskome jeziku, primijenjen istodobno među studentima Sveučilišta J. J. Strossmayera koji na prvoj godini pohađaju kolegij Engleski jezik na BIOS-u/ FAZOS-u. U cjelini, oznake zemljopisnoga podrijetla funkcioniraju kao pravna infrastruktura autentičnosti i lokalnih vrijednosti. U digitalnoj naraciji studenti jesu i bit će kulturni posrednici te globalni prenositelji baštine hrane i pića. Istraživanje pita što naraštaj Z zna i gdje su granice multimedijske nastave strukovnoga engleskog jezika: konceptualno prihvaćanje postoji, ali je engleska terminološka preciznost umjerena.

Ključne riječi: naraštaj Z, hrvatski tradicijski proizvodi, oznake zemljopisnoga podrijetla, terminologija engleskoga jezika struke, digitalni marketing baštine