

SPECIALISED AND PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE ACROSS MEDIA AND GENRES

Edited by

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Contents

Giuliana Garzone - Paola Catenaccio - Kim Grego, <i>Perspectives on specialised and professional communication in times of rapid sociotechnical evolutions: An introduction</i>	7
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General issues

1. Maurizio Gotti, <i>The cooperation between applied linguists and professional experts in the analysis of specialized discourse</i>	17
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Professional practices across domains and modes

2. Paola Catenaccio, <i>Negotiating discourses of healthcare across professional groups: a linguistic and discourse-analytical study of a multi-party interaction</i>	35
3. Anna Franca Plastina, <i>Professional discourse in video abstracts: Re-articulating the meaning of written research article abstracts</i>	57
4. Rosita Maglie, <i>Engaging with online communication-based medicine, reframing healthcare delivery to adolescents</i>	75
5. Patrizia Anesa, <i>A framework of analysis for the investigation of psycholinguistic constructs in online doctor-patient interaction</i>	93
6. Girolamo Tessuto - Miriam Bait, <i>Framing dietary patterns in professional sources of web genres: Verbal and visual modes of communication</i>	113
7. Cecilia Boggio - Elsa Fornero - Henriette Prast - José Sanders, <i>Seven ways to knit your portfolio: Is the language of investor communication gender neutral?</i>	137

Professionals in the public eye

8. Cinzia Giglioni, *Congressional hearings as privileged loci to display rhetorical strategies: Hillary Clinton on Benghazi* 161
9. Dermot Heaney, *Anatomy of an (un)professional apologizer: The case of former FIFA President Sepp Blatter* 177
10. Germana D'Acquisto, *The linguistic analysis of Samantha Cristoforetti's logbook: a succesful CoP example in the creation of new professional identities* 193

Teaching and disseminating knowledge

11. Mazeegha Ahmed Al-Tale, *Filling in the missing gaps: From study to application of EFL in KSA* 207
12. Chiara Degano - Maurizio Naldi - Sandra Petroni, *Fostering metalinguistic awareness through translation in LSP courses. A focus on needs analysis in the frame of the WALLeT project* 223
13. Mirella Agorni - Costanza Peverati, *Training language experts in translation in a transferability perspective* 251
14. Giuditta Caliendo - Antonio Compagnone, *From the university classroom to the TED stage: Exploring research promotion as professional practice* 263

Perspectives on specialised and professional communication in times of rapid sociotechnical evolutions: an introduction

Giuliana Garzone, Paola Catenaccio, Kim Grego

1. Introduction

This volume deals with discursive aspects of specialised communication, looking in particular at the role and scope of language and discourse in professional practice across a variety of fields and modes. Its chapters are loosely based on a selection of the papers presented at the ALAPP (Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice) Conference, held in Milan in November 2015, on the theme of “Language, discourse and action in professional practice”. Other papers presented at the Conference have been published in a special issue of the Journal *Lingue Culture Mediazioni / Languages Culture / Mediation* (Catenaccio, Garzone, and Sarangi 2017a) which focuses more specifically on the relevance of applied linguistic research to professional practice (cf. Catenaccio, Garzone, and Sarangi 2017b).

The chapters in this volume are diverse in their outlooks, analytical procedures, and object of enquiry, spanning across different specialised domains, settings, genres, and media (from face-to-face communication to television, from traditional websites to social networking sites). But, in broad terms, they are all set in a discourse-analytical framework and share the ultimate purpose of providing new insights into the evolution of discourse practices used by professionals in a variety of specialised genres at a time characterised by rapid scientific and technological advances accompanied by important societal, sociotechnical and cultural transformations.

Professional and workplace routines and procedures are embedded in a dense network of discursive practices, which both determine and reflect professional roles, knowledge, expertise, positions and tasks at any given moment in time. Some of the linkages between language and professional practice are broadly recognized and have become part of an established body of common knowledge. For instance, that professions are characterised, indeed defined, by recognisable linguistic usage is by now a universally accepted idea, if only for the fact that intra-professional communication can be almost entirely opaque to the layperson. Mastery of the language and jargon of a profession, and especially of its domain-specific expressions, is often taken to signify, indexically, the expertise of the speaker – his or her having rightfully conquered a place in the professional group of choice. Even when specialised lexicon does not feature extensively in professional inter-

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actions – as may be the case in expert-layperson communication – communicative exchanges in workplace settings are regulated by more or less tacit rules that are followed by professionals, often constraining allowable contributions. Thus, when experts communicate with the general public, a display of competence in the specialised register of the relevant domain is of the essence.

This need for discursive competence, in addition to professional expertise, is generally acknowledged also in education and training, where will-be-professionals are made aware of, and drilled in, the appropriate linguistic behaviour suitable for the relevant professions.

The claim that language use is a key constituent of professional practice is therefore hardly innovative. But the role of language in the professions is not confined to the interactional enactment of professional expertise – language also shapes and defines professions and professional identities *ex ante*, providing frameworks, boundaries and categorisations which in actual fact come to constitute the enabling conditions for the very existence and development of professional practices. In a recent book devoted to “discourse marginalia” in professional practice, Higgs and Trede (2016: 10) rightfully suggest that the discourse of professional practices “plays a number of key roles in reflecting, documenting, monitoring, critiquing, shaping and extending practice”, pointing out that “neither practice nor its discourse can exist in isolation of each other”, as they “symbiotically [...] feed off each other, growing in conjunction”. The essays gathered in this volume bear out this view, and collectively aim to contribute to the discursive study of professional practices by providing insights into the multiple ways in which discourse partakes of them.

2. Perspectives and approaches

The notions of discourse and professional practice are featured in this volume in the broader sense described above, thus covering multiple aspects, domains and perspectives. Professional practices are grounded in complex social networks, institutional environments and power relations, all of which exert powerful constraints on both the habitus and identity of professionals. Professional identities and work practice expertise are construed and acquired through discursively framed socialisation processes (Van Maanen and Barley 1984). The very notion of community of practice (cf. Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), which has played a key role in raising awareness about the way in which professional identity is built and expertise developed, revolves around communication as a central factor in professional development.

Equally deeply grounded in discourse is also the concept of professionalism, a “disciplinary logic” (Fournier 1999: 280) broadly based on the explicit or implicit codification of practices and behaviours aimed at building a professional’s ethos (and, at least ideally, at emancipating professionals from institutional or organisational constraints which are perceived as limiting and disempowering). Watson (2002), for instance, sees professionalism as a “discursive resource” which is

used for sense-making purposes, especially under uncertain or ambiguous circumstances, but also to serve the interests of the members of a given professional community. In a similar vein, Fournier (1999: 280) highlights the fact that “the discursive resources of professionalism [...] potentially act as disciplinary mechanism that serves to profess ‘appropriate’ work identities and conducts”, especially in new professional domains. Thus, professionalism – be it interpreted as normative value system or as ideology of control (Evet 2003) – exerts a powerful influence on workplace practices, constraining as well as legitimising them. It also plays a role in communication by experts and professionals to the general public, contributing to the construction of an image of competence, trustworthiness and reliability for the professional engaged in the effort of disseminating, indeed in some cases popularising, specialised knowledge.

3. Professional practices across domains and modes

The multifarious impact of discourse in and on professional practices is presented in this collection of essays in a manner which effectively highlights its broadness. In the opening chapter, Maurizio Gotti sets the tone for the whole volume, discussing the cooperation between applied linguists and professional experts in the analysis of specialised discourse. He relies on his own direct experience in specific interdisciplinary research projects. One of such projects, carried out with economists, concerns the language and method of John Maynard Keynes’ *General Theory*, while the other two projects, conducted in collaboration with arbitration practitioners, examined the discourse and practices of international commercial arbitration. The experience thus acquired and the results of the research conducted within this framework show that linguistic explanations can be of great help to disciplinary experts to attain a more correct interpretation of the texts and practices in which they are commonly involved, and to become more aware of the hidden implications of their activities in terms of professional values and institutional goals.

This introductory chapter is followed by a section collecting six studies that address discursive nodes and issues pertaining to professional and workplace practices, and exemplify various forms of communication and negotiation of professional knowledge.

The chapter opening the section, authored by Paola Catenaccio, focuses on a case of intra-professional communication based on a transcript of authentic inter-professional interactions, and it investigates the interplay and negotiations among different professional groups engaged in discussion over the adoption of standardized IT-driven clinical record-keeping in the US. The debate brings into play multiple issues that have been central to the provision of medical care for quite some time now, where an emphasis on multidisciplinary in clinical care has more recently been compounded with a heightened attention for electronic record keeping, frequently (though not exclusively) in the service of financial efficiency. Relying on the literature on socio-technical and organisational factors in medical discourse, Catenaccio discusses her case-study as an issue of meaning

and identity construction in inter-professional negotiation. The findings provide insights into professional ideologies, claims and challenges under pressures from encroaching expert systems.

In the following chapters of the section, attention shifts to forms of professional communication on the Internet, with a focus on expert-layman online interactions or on various forms of dissemination of knowledge by professionals.

The second chapter focuses on a recently emerged form of knowledge communication within a scientific community (that of medical scholars and practitioners) which takes advantage of the multimodality options offered by the new media. In the study, Anna Franca Plastina investigates how moves/steps in written RA abstracts are rendered in video abstracts, and how the RA abstract genre is multimodally re-articulated. Move and multimodal analyses are performed on a corpus of written and video abstracts selected from online medical journals. Results show that new constituent steps in video abstracts are key to greater genre flexibility, and that their linguistic realisations point to genre variation. Multimodal findings highlight different intersemiotic relations between the two abstract modes, and further reveal that the traditional RA abstract genre is contaminated by other professional speech genres, strengthening the spoken mode of abstracts.

In the following chapter, authored by Rosita Maglie, the focus is still on medical communication, but shifts to doctor-patient interaction in a non-institutional setting on the Web. The study investigates a health question-and-answer (Q&A) internet resource, *Go Ask Alice!*, designed to provide professional health information almost exclusively to adolescents. The analysis of messages posted by teenagers on *Go Ask Alice!* and the relative replies given by Alice, a virtual persona who speaks for a team of Columbia University healthcare providers, supplies a new source of insight into how people talk about health and illness as an online community of sufferers and healers. It demonstrates that this form of symmetrical online communication-based medicine can be considered an effective means of healthcare assistance for the younger generations.

In a similar vein, in her chapter Patrizia Anesa focuses on medical forums, investigating various specific sociological constructs in patient posts, and evaluating the extent to which they may have an impact on adherence to therapies. Posts are coded with the aim of identifying control orientation, agency, and attitude (plus their subsets) and their linguistic realisations in order to understand patient conceptualisation of adherence messages. The data show that these constructs also arise in spontaneous interaction and without the use of specifically designed interviews or questionnaires. Indeed, unprompted posts also display the manifestation of these constructs, with CR (control realisation) emerging particularly frequently, and both internal control realisation (ICR) and external control realisation (ECR) are present.

The two chapters that complete the section focus on a one-way form of communication, the informational website, where expert knowledge is disseminated to the benefit the general public. The chapters are very different in topic and purpose, but share the fact that the genres they investigate, providing information on specific specialised topics and offering advice and recommendations, are in

both cases part of a website characterised by commercial/promotional purposes, in one case promoting a large internationally renowned food company, in the other case promoting the sale of financial products to individual investors.

In the first of such chapters, Girolamo Tessuto and Miriam Bait focus on nutritional advice, and look at how dietary recommendations are linguistically and discursively constructed in the information and advice (*Nutrition and Well-being for Healthy Living*) published on the Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition Foundation's website. Informed by the methodological frameworks of Multimodal and Critical Discourse Analyses, the study examines elements of verbal communication that contribute to an understanding of the meanings and social significance of text alongside the role of visual communication. The results show that healthy eating and lifestyle patterns are ideologically (re)presented in visual and non-visual discourse. In particular they demonstrate that, by making recourse to visuals and striking a right balance between ordinary and non-ordinary lexis, the website helps lay readers/viewers to fully digest science-heavy information.

In the final chapter of this set, Cecilia Boggio, Elsa Fornero, Henriette Prast, and José Sanders use an interdisciplinary framework, combining insights from Behavioural Economics, Finance and Linguistics, to analyse metaphors deployed on websites that target beginning retail investors in three different languages: Dutch, Italian and English. Relying on the notion of conceptual metaphor analysis, they find that in all three language versions metaphors come from the same conceptual domains; namely, war, health, physical activity, game, farming and the five senses. As these domains refer to worlds that are predominantly and (stereo)typically masculine, the authors conclude that the language of investor communication may give rise to feelings of familiarity and belonging among men, while creating feelings of distance and non-belonging among women.

4. Professionals in the public eye

In the area of professional practice and specialised communication, one of the great developments brought about by progress in communications technologies in all of their more or less advanced forms, from radio and television to the most recent ICT applications, is the possibility for the general public to access communicative events and activities that had traditionally been occluded (Swales 1996). Indeed, this development is meaningful not only in terms of knowledge dissemination, providing accessibility to information that was previously unavailable to the layman, but also in terms of accountability, as exposure to the public eye puts professionals in the position of being under scrutiny. This is especially true for professionals that operate in domains that are of public concern, like politics and sports, but also in scientifically and technically advanced domains that may be of interest for the general public.

The domain where practitioners are most obviously made accountable is that of politics, where politicians have to explain and, in critical cases, justify their decisions and behaviour. This is the main focus in Cinzia Giglioni's chapter, which

illustrates the discursive and rhetorical strategies relied on in a specialised genre, U.S. congressional hearings, when investigations are conducted on policies and political decisions deserving scrutiny, and politicians responsible for them are called upon to account for their problematic lines of conduct. More specifically, the case study examines two of Hillary Clinton's congressional hearings held in 2013, when she was called upon to testify about the September 11 attack on a U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya, in an appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee. The analysis shows that in order to justify her decisions in the episode under investigation, Clinton made ample recourse to apologetic strategies, similar to those deployed by companies when reporting on poor financial performance.

In the following chapter the focus shifts to international sports governance, and looks at a similarly problematic situation where a top-level professional is called upon to account for allegedly objectionable behaviour and engages in ethos building and the promotion of personal, as well as group and/or disciplinary, interests. In his reflection on press conferences given by FIFA President Blatter, Dermot Heaney exemplifies this reliance on apologetic discourse for self-justification, as Giglioni does, but shows that in this case institutional roles are also called into question, with obvious political implications. Referring to an established taxonomy of the component parts of an apology, Heaney attempts to assess former FIFA President Sepp Blatter's performances as an apologist. He also conducts a qualitative analysis of two official apologies, examining them in light of specific evaluations of them given in the media. The findings of the analysis indicate divergences in evaluations of Blatter's performances as an apologist and invite reflections on the role this may have played in his survival at his post and his continuing unprofessional behaviour during his presidency.

The object of the last chapter in this section is an unprecedented communicative situation made possible by advanced technologies combined with the availability of social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. In the chapter, Germana D'Aquisto discusses astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti's logbook and examines the construction of a new professional identity in the virtual environment. The direct interaction between the astronaut and the general public made possible by space technologies and ICT affordances shows that today there are hardly any limits to the extent to which professionals can share their experiences, exchange views with their peers, or communicate their findings to the general public, and promote their disciplines and their role as practitioners, even if they are in the remotest of places, like outer space.

5. Teaching and dissemination of knowledge

The third and last section in the book is devoted to issues related to teaching and the dissemination of knowledge for educational purposes. In this respect it can be useful to rely on a distinction between professional discourses that are outer-directed – with discursively conveyed external pressures shaping professional

roles and practices ‘from the outside’ – and those that are inner-directed – resulting, amongst other things, from self-reflection on one’s practices and identities. The same professional group may be subject to both outer- and inner-directed discourses. For instance, outer-directed discourses of the teaching profession (discourses that prescribe competences, tasks and functions, and establish access requirements for the members of the professions) may be in conflict with inner-directed discourses whereby teaching professionals develop and define their own identity and role *vis-à-vis* institutional constraints. In inner-directed discourses of professional practice, reflexivity occupies a special place.

Reflective thought, as defined in general terms by Dewey as “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (1933: 9), is essential for professionals to be aware of the assumptions underlying their practice with a view to comparing them with actual practice by looking for contradictions and discrepancies, if any, and “closing the gap between what is espoused and what is enacted” (Fook and Gardner 2007: 24, 26). This is an essential starting point for practice evaluation and improvement for all professionals, not only for those formally involved in research, as it is for scholars engaged in researching professional practice.

Another useful distinction is proposed by Schön between “reflection-in-action”, which involves professionals’ “reflecting on practice while they are in the midst of it” (1983: 62), and “reflection-on-action”, in which a professional looks back “on action and on the knowing that is implicit in action” and “reflects on the understandings that have been implicit in his action”, also for the purpose of learning in order to improve future professional behaviour (cf. Schön 1983: 50, 54). Reflection on action may also focus on a situation that has led the professional to adopt a certain course of action, on the framing of a problem to be solved, or on his own role in a given context (cf. Schön 1983: 62).

In particular, reflection-on-action has been increasingly used in teacher education (cf. among others Goodson 2000; Stingu 2012; Ishikawa 2017) and therefore is popular with teachers who routinely reflect upon themselves and their teaching behaviour in the classroom as part of their professional commitment. More in general, self-critical reflection – self-imposed or other-prompted – can also contribute to raising professionals’ awareness of their role in shaping ideas, an aspect that is all the more interesting when they operate in a highly constrained professional environment, as illustrated in Mazeegha Ahmed Al-Tale’s study focusing on teaching EFL to Saudi female graduates in the workplace. In detail, the study investigates the gap between studying English as a foreign language in colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia and applying this knowledge professionally in the workplace. It also looks at the extent to which EFL graduates in the workplace are aware of the English language as a discipline and apply this awareness properly in their vocational practice, and the difficulties they face. The close analysis of the data obtained by means of a questionnaire and *ad hoc* interviews shows that there is a severe gap between the EFL graduates’ knowledge of English linguistics and their actual application of this theoretical knowledge. It is concluded that EFL Saudi graduates are not aware

of the importance of English Applied Linguistics as a source discipline that can enhance their working performance, and it is recommended that EFL graduates should be offered specific training courses to obviate this shortcoming.

If reflective practice is something that pertains to all professionals in the form of self-critical reflection that may make them aware of what they are doing vis-à-vis the theories they subscribe to and the objectives they set themselves, reflexivity is a *sine qua non* requisite for research on professional practice to ensure that results of investigations are free of what is often called “observer bias” or “observer effect”, in order to achieve an “observer free picture” of the object investigated (Gergen and Gergen 1991: 77).

A case in point is that of qualitative interviews (the research tool used in Al-Tale’s research and also in Degano, Naldi and Petroni’s study discussed below), where researchers need to apply a degree of reflexivity on the representations of the world generated by their interpretations of the data collected in order to make sure of the accuracy and impartiality of their findings, as far as possible. Interviews are commonly used on account of their potential to provide in depth information related to participants’ experiences and viewpoints, to understand their opinions (cf. Turner 2010: 754; cf. also Sarangi and Candlin 2003: 279) and provide “a unique access to the lived world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions” (Kvale 2008: 9). Mann (2016) insists that, in interviewing, a reflective approach should be adopted early and sustained throughout the task, and refers to Finlay to specify that “the process of reflection and reflexive analysis should start from the moment the research is conceived”, it cannot get “done at the end” (2002: 536). This requires that right from the beginning the investigator focuses on “the manner in which conventions of language and other social processes (negotiation, persuasion, power, etc.) influence the accounts rendered of the ‘objective’ world” (Gergen and Gergen 1991: 78). In particular, in their chapter, Chiara Degano, Maurizio Naldi and Sandra Petroni present the results of an ESP needs analysis focused on university students’ perception of ESP and translation as a fifth skill, carried out through a platform-based questionnaire and analysed using statistical methods. Results indicate little awareness of ESP peculiarities, associated with a preference for speaking and listening practice, but also suggest that traditional ESP activities, centred on isolated functions, be integrated with realistic multi-tasking communicative activities. At the same time, the results of their study seem to question the reliability of learners’ assessments of their needs in ESP, as the identification of needs is influenced by personal preferences.

The following chapter, authored by Mirella Agorni e Costanza Peverati, addresses yet another key dimension in foreign language teaching: translation. In recent years, there has been a reappraisal of the role of translation in Foreign Language Teaching based on the belief that languages are more easily learnt in association with one’s mother tongue. Hence, translation activities can be seen as having considerable import both within and outside of education: they can serve as a language-learning tool and as a vehicle for the development of multiple skills to be applied in real-world situations. The contribution focuses on translation

teaching in foreign-language curricula and discusses an approach based on the concept of ‘transferability’, encompassing a wide spectrum of workplace usability, going beyond a strictly vocational focus.

In the final chapter Giuditta Caliendo and Antonio Compagnone move out of the classroom and into the novel genre of TED talks, short conferences aimed at knowledge dissemination, education and entertainment that are very popular today, being also posted online. The study explores the ways in which in TED talks speakers represent themselves and promote their scientific achievements by looking at the use of pronoun *we* and its verb collocates. For this purpose, a contrastive analysis is carried out between a corpus of TED talks delivered by academics and one of university lectures drawn from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English. TED speakers’ tendency to use *we* with an ‘audience-exclusive’ value provides evidence of the fact that they present themselves as part of a community of experts. Findings also show that, on the other hand, academics tend to appropriate the TED talks’ new genre to achieve their own professional objectives.

6. Final observations

The field of specialised communication and professional practice has proven a highly interesting area of investigation for linguists and discourse analysts. Insights gained through studies conducted from within these disciplinary traditions have made significant contributions to our understanding of professional practices, and of the constraints, as well as the enabling conditions, to which they are subject.

At a time when professional profiles and practices are changing rapidly in many domains under the pressure of rampant globalization and the spread of the new media, with all the uncertainty and complexities they bring with them, research needs to keep up with, and account for, changes and issues as they come up. This is a painstaking task which demands that theory and reflection should be regularly updated so they can progress in parallel with ongoing evolutions, and at the same time requires that changes and developments be continuously described and accounted for, an objective for which both broad conceptualisations and methodological investigations, on the one hand, and more focalized case studies, on the other, can contribute, the latter providing snapshots of professional practices and relevant policies at any given point in time.

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The cooperation between applied linguists and professional experts in the analysis of specialized discourse

Maurizio Gotti

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the possibilities of cooperation between applied linguists and professional experts in the analysis of specialized discourse. This type of cooperation has often been underlined in the ESP literature in the last few decades. Many scholars have emphasized the importance of promoting interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration, highlighting the usefulness of the integration of methodological diversity, as well as the exploration of possible connections among procedures and knowledge in order to achieve more focused and purposeful action. This interdisciplinary collaboration is deemed essential to better understand how practitioners use language to achieve the objectives of their professions. Indeed, in specialized communication, conditions of production and reception are crucial. The use of linguistic and semiotic resources can help to better understand and clarify professional practices or actions in typical institutional and specialized contexts.

The positions expressed in this paper will be drawn from relevant literature as well as from the writer's direct experience in specific interdisciplinary research projects. The first case study refers to an interdisciplinary research project on the language and method of John Maynard Keynes' *General Theory*. This project was first suggested by various economists who had contacted some linguists jointly working on the analysis of economic discourse in order to reach a better interpretation of this text, and thus confront the problem of the various existing readings of the *General Theory*.

The second case study refers to two interdisciplinary research projects on the discourse and practices of international commercial arbitration. This research was promoted by a joint group of arbitration experts/practitioners and applied linguists jointly working on the problematic aspects of the formulation of arbitration texts in connection with recent changes in arbitration practices and with the process of increasing harmonization at an international level.

The issues identified show that linguistic explanations can be of great help to disciplinary experts – in this case economists and arbitration practitioners – to attain a more correct interpretation of the texts and practices in which they are

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commonly involved. Participation in interdisciplinary research with applied linguists has enabled practitioners to become more aware of the hidden implications of their practices and to discover how their own performances reflect their professional values and institutional goals in different contexts.

Keywords

Interdisciplinary cooperation, John Maynard Keynes, economic discourse, international commercial arbitration, legal discourse

1. Cooperation between applied linguists and professional experts

The cooperation between applied linguists and professional experts in the analysis of specialized discourse has often been underlined in the ESP literature in the last few decades. Many scholars have emphasized the importance of promoting interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration, highlighting the usefulness of the integration of methodological diversity, as well as the exploration of possible connections among procedures and knowledge in order to achieve more focused and purposeful action. Sarangi and Candlin (2010: 1-2) assert that such interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration matters in applied linguistics for three main reasons:

First, that the sheer complexity of seeking to describe, interpret and explain the institutional and interactional orders of *'what it is that is going on'* in crucial communicative sites and at critical moments in those sites, makes necessary the inter-relational harnessing of a range of perspectives beyond those traditionally associated with linguistic or semiotic analysis. [...] Second, and now driven by the exigencies imposed by the social and contextual complexity of those sites, is the need to draw inter-relationally upon the interdisciplinary research resources and expert gaze of cognate disciplines in the humanities and social sciences more widely in this process. Third, this interweaving of inter-disciplinary research trajectories makes indispensable, yet at times for applied linguists like ourselves, an uncomfortable acknowledgement of the challenges posed by that interpersonal and mediated inter-relationality, requiring an accommodation among diverse 'motivational relevancies' (Sarangi and Candlin 2001) which impel our research, both in terms of ourselves and those with whom we collaborate.

On deciding to work on an interdisciplinary project these are the differing goals of the two sets of members of the team: the specialists hope to attain a better interpretation of the discursive practices adopted by their professional community, while the linguists will see it as a chance to test the validity of the existing rules of register and discourse analysis and, possibly, integrate them with new perspectives or intuitions.

It is important to break down the division between the researcher and the community, and their degree of involvement. The emphasis of a collaborative enterprise should be less on ‘researching on’ rather than ‘researching with’ members of the other working communities (Marra 2013: 178). Practitioners should be a constitutive part of interdisciplinary research teams, who can thus profit from both the in-group’s expertise and the applied linguists’ skills and experience. This inside knowledge can only come from professionals operating in a specific specialized field. On the other hand, applied linguists will provide insights into the features of the discourse of a particular field, an aspect that practitioners tend to neglect because of their professional preparation.

The involvement of the two components – practitioners and applied linguists – should be carried out in all the steps of the research project: from the definition of the issue to be investigated to the identification of particular critical moments, from the selection of appropriate research tools to the selection and analysis of data, from the warranting of results to their exploitation and dissemination. As Roberts (2005: 132) claims:

If applied linguistics is to be practically relevant and to have some intervention status, then the design and implementation of the research needs to be negotiated from the start with those who may be affected by it. [...] Applied linguistics is a social linguistics but it is a social linguistics that is put to practical use.

In the past few years, privileged sites of investigations have been transactional and task-oriented interactions as well as on-topic talk in the workplace, focusing on fundamental issues such as how directives are enacted and interpreted (Vine 2009), the way meetings are run (Rogerson-Revell 2008), how consensus is negotiated (Svennevig 2008), how leadership is performed (Schnurr 2009), and how ethical and ideological aspects are dealt with (Sarangi 2007). This interdisciplinary approach has also had important consequences from a pedagogical point of view, as the collaboration between professionals and applied linguists has favoured the development of teaching materials meant to reflect authentic workplace discourse. In order to better assess the high value provided by an intense cooperation between applied linguists and professional experts in the analysis of specialized discourse, the following sections will present and discuss two specific interdisciplinary research projects in which the present writer has been involved.

2. Case study 1: Interdisciplinary analysis of an economist’s discourse

The first case study analysed here refers to an interdisciplinary research project²

² The interdisciplinary work referred to is a research project on the analysis of the interrelations between the method and language of John Maynard Keynes, which was financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research and which involved both economists

on the language and method of John Maynard Keynes' *General Theory*³. This project was first suggested by various economists who had contacted some linguists jointly working on the analysis of economic discourse in order to reach a better interpretation of this text, and thus confront the problem of the various existing readings of the *General Theory*.

John Maynard Keynes was certainly the single most influential economist of the twentieth century. He revolutionised economics with his classic book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936, henceforth GT), which is commonly regarded as the most influential economic treatise of the past century, in that it changed the way the world looked at the economy and the role of government in society. Indeed, with this book, he constructed the fundamental relationships and ideas behind what became known as 'macroeconomics'. The GT was immediately and widely successful and further confirmed Keynes' popularity and intellectual prominence. From the very start, the book caught the attention of economists and was generally accepted as a landmark in economic thought. As Keynes had hoped, the revolutionary significance of his work was soon acknowledged. Nevertheless, a few economists have found difficulties in understanding Keynes' discourse and have expressed criticism of its textual obscurity and ambiguity, which are considered the cause of both misunderstandings and divergent interpretations. In some cases the criticism has been very harsh indeed:

Keynes, likewise, hardly deserves credit for what he supposedly may have meant but did not know how to say. If, more than 50 years later, scholars are still disputing the central message of the *General Theory*, that very fact should count against rather than in favour of Keynes's claims to scientific stature. Whatever the *General Theory* was, it was not great science. It was largely a dressing-up of old fallacies. Worse, for many years it crowded better science off the intellectual scene. (Yeager 1986: 40)

What particularly suggested an interdisciplinary approach to our investigation was the difficulty economists encountered in understanding the true contents of that economic treatise. Such difficulties were mainly attributed to the obscurity and ambiguity of the text, which was said to have given rise to a number of misunderstandings and different interpretations. These criticisms of Keynes' style are rather perplexing, as in other comments Keynes has been highly praised for the elegance and clarity of the way in which he wrote. When examining the accusation by economists that the GT is badly written, one should also take into consideration the hypothesis that part of the blame could also be attributed to

and applied linguists. The results of the project were published in Marzola-Silva (1994).

3 The words 'General Theory' are here used to refer to Keynes' *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (Macmillan, London, 1936). All quotations throughout this text have been taken from *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, vol. VII, Macmillan, London, 1973. The various volumes of *The Collected Writings* are here quoted with the initials CW.

the economists themselves as they may not have been able to decode Keynes' text correctly. Therefore, the two hypotheses to be investigated in this interdisciplinary research project were that either Keynes had not adhered to the shared rules of discourse formation and economic register or that his readers had not applied the principles of discourse interpretation correctly.

The second hypothesis was tested first by examining some of the interpretations given of Keynes' text in order to find out why the author had not reached the perlocutionary effect he had aimed to achieve. On examining these critical readings of Keynes' work, we immediately realized that such criticism had often been caused by the non-comprehension of the novelty of Keynes' methodological approach. Many economists, in fact, in spite of the clear specification given by the author of his new method, interpreted his statements according to traditional views and were therefore bound to find his theory inconsistent. In this kind of interpretation of the text we could trace the attitude of several readers who approached the text incorrectly – that is, not in order to find out the actual position of the author, but to receive confirmation of their own opinions and expectations. In following their personal exegetical parameters, readers decoded the various elements of the text and assigned them to the categories they usually employed. For example, many economists tried to assign Keynes' method either to static or dynamic categories without understanding that it belonged to neither, as it was a very personal method which made use of both systems at different and very specific moments.

The complexity of Keynes' method, which aimed at the analysis of the interrelations and interdependencies among various economic variables in an integrated way, had important effects on the author's style, as the linearity of the linguistic instrument that he had at his disposal compelled him to adapt his method of exposition so as to alternate moments of atomistic analysis of single variables with parts examining the complex result of their interrelations in a systemic way. The surface level of the text betrays this great expository effort made by the author and presents continuous references to previous parts of the text or to elements to be examined more carefully later on in the book (for a detailed examination of this writing process cf. Gotti 2009). On several occasions, while dealing with a complex phenomenon, the author had to introduce new concepts or terms which might need several pages to define or deal with. He was therefore compelled to pause in his expository activity, and such pauses have often been perceived as harmful digressions by the reader. The latter, therefore, has often accused the author of organizing his book badly, and on several occasions has felt entitled to delete or readjust parts of the text. This attitude explains the various versions of the GT which exist and the consequent different interpretations attributed to this work.

2.1. The author's linguistic choices

The second hypothesis to be tested mainly concerned the accusation of obscurity

and ambiguity of the text. The common accusation that Keynes is cryptic and obscure is mainly due to his habit of taking ‘short cuts’ to eliminate the analytical presentation of the assumptions of the various statements of his argument. In doing so, Keynes thought that the explicit mention of such presuppositions was useless and would make his theory more complicated and redundant. What induced him to neglect the treatment of such assumptions was his conviction that they were common knowledge shared by his readers. As Keynes himself admits (CW VII: XXXI), the readers he was aiming at were mainly of his own environment, readers who were, of course, already aware of the evolution of his thought. Indeed, he did not take into consideration any ‘outside opinion’, that is, the opinion of those readers who needed a more detailed and explicit presentation of his ideas.

Moreover, the GT contains various exceptions to the criteria which are commonly followed in the use of domain-specific terminology. For example, it frequently violates the principle of “monoreferentiality” (Gotti 2011), as shown by the presence of many cases of ambiguity and polysemy. This appears to be the result of a deliberate decision, as Keynes clearly asserts that he disagrees with the use of monoreferential language because of its excessive rigidity and inability to describe complex phenomena in an adequate manner. He argues that:

(1) too large a proportion of recent ‘mathematical’ economics are merely concoctions, as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependencies of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols. (GT: 298)

According to Keynes, what makes formal economic language inappropriate for the discussion of theoretical issues is that the univocal reference of each lexical term to a specific concept does not take into account the need to give words different meanings in different contexts and at different points in the discourse. The complexity and interconnectedness of elements within his argumentation do not permit atomistic analysis. Translating thoughts into the precise, unequivocal terms of a symbolic-mathematical language is for Keynes an obstacle to their development, as the continuous conceptual changes of economic reasoning require a more flexible expressive system that allows for a constant redefinition of the terms’ referents. In his own words:

(2) It is a great fault of symbolic-mathematical methods of formalising a system of economic analysis [...] that they expressly assume strict independence between the factors involved and lose all their cogency and authority if this hypothesis is disallowed; whereas in ordinary discourse, where we are not blindly manipulating but know all the time what we are doing and what the words mean, we can keep ‘at the back of our heads’ the necessary reserves and qualifications and the adjustments which we shall have to make later on, in a way in which we cannot keep complicated partial differentials ‘at the back’ of several pages of algebra which assume that they all vanish. (GT: 297-8)

Another element which has caused ambiguity in Keynes' text is his rather peculiar use of economic terminology. Keynes is aware of his ambiguous use of terminology, yet he considers this an essential part of his methodological position:

(3) A definition can often be *vague* within fairly wide limits and capable of several interpretations differing slightly from one another, and still be perfectly serviceable and free from serious risks [...], provided that [...] it is used consistently within a given context. If an author tries to avoid all vagueness and to be perfectly precise, he will become [...] prolix and pedantic. (CW XXIX: 36, emphasis added)

Although he feels that new terms are often a necessity when writing an argumentative text, the defining process is perceived as a constraint to his creativeness and as a considerable limitation to the decoder's intuitive possibilities. In a letter to R. B. Bryce, Keynes confirms this belief:

(4) In my book I have deemed it necessary to go into [definitions] at disproportionate length, whilst feeling that this was in a sense a great pity and might divert the readers' minds from the real issues. It is, I think, a further illustration of the appalling state of scholasticism into which the minds of so many economists have got which allows them to take leave of their intuitions altogether. Yet in writing economics one is not writing either a mathematical proof or a legal document. One is trying to arouse and appeal to the reader's intuitions; and, if he has worked himself into a state when he has none, one is helpless. (quoted in Patinkin and Leith 1977: 128)

Restricting the meaning of words to certain specific aspects of the reality referred to greatly limits their expressive potential, making their interpretation incomplete and at times erroneous. Keynes thus endows his terms with interpretational subjectivity because the extreme variability of their referents is more appropriate for his dynamic view of the economic system.

2.2. The author's argumentative strategies

The GT points to a close link between the author's language and heuristic method, which surfaces especially in his drafting plan. Although he is willing to organise the text according to the theoretical foundations of economics, this relationship between method and composition seems at times to create major difficulties, especially whenever the drafting pattern clashes with the non-sequential nature of his theoretical argumentation. The conflict derives from the fact that Keynes' analytical model is based on the notion that there is an organic interdependence between economic variables that cannot be adequately accounted for by the atomistic approach that is typical of classical theory. Keynes explains the systematic nature of his new method at a point in the GT where the new methodology is introduced:

(5) The object of our analysis is, not to provide a machine, or method of blind manipulation, which will furnish an infallible answer, but to provide ourselves with an organised and orderly method of thinking out particular problems; and, after we have reached a provisional conclusion, by isolating the complicating factors one by one, we then have to go back on ourselves and allow, as well as we can, for the probable interactions of the factors amongst themselves. (GT: 297)

Keynes' heuristic method thus proposes to overcome the restricted confines of classical economics by dealing with two opposing needs: on the one hand, the need to examine economic variables as isolated elements; on the other, the need to draw on independent studies to show the close interrelations among the diverse variables examined. This alternation between linear atomistic analyses and complex systemic integration is reflected in the expository form of the book. At that level, there are recurrent cross-references to other parts of the book. By continually referring the reader to other parts of the GT, Keynes balances the complexity and systemic interdependence of the various parts of his analysis with the linear progression of his monograph. This is illustrated by several examples of how Keynes moves away from the text in order to help the reader to grasp the overall scheme of the book. In so doing he signals which aspects of a given economic problem deserve attention in later chapters:

(6) The theory of wages in relation to employment, to which we are here leading up, cannot be fully elucidated, however, until chapter 19 and its Appendix have been reached. (GT: 18)

(7) We shall return to the aggregate supply function in chapter 20, where we discuss its inverse under the name of the *employment function*. But in the main, it is the part played by the aggregate demand function which has been overlooked; and it is to the aggregate demand function that we shall devote Books III and IV. (GT: 89, emphasis in the original)

(8) It may be mentioned, in passing, that the effect of fiscal policy on the growth of wealth has been the subject of an important misunderstanding which, however, we cannot discuss adequately without the assistance of the theory of the rate of interest to be given in Book IV. (GT: 95)

In other parts of the book, before launching into the analysis of the various elements of a given theory, Keynes briefly outlines it even though he is aware that the reader may find it difficult to understand a new theory before it is presented in full and its terminology explained:

(9) A brief summary of the theory of employment to be worked out in the course of the following chapters may, perhaps, help the reader at this stage, even though it may not be fully intelligible. The terms involved will be more carefully defined in due course. (GT: 27)

On occasion Keynes interrupts the discussion of economic variables, leaving the exposition suspended, in order to introduce further explanations which the reader might consider as mere digressions:

(10) In this and the next three chapters we shall be occupied with an attempt to clear up certain perplexities which have no peculiar or exclusive relevance to the problems which it is our special purpose to examine. Thus these chapters are in the nature of a digression, which will prevent us for a time from pursuing our main theme. (GT: 37)

Occasionally Keynes finds himself unable to sustain the discussion of an issue and is forced to introduce certain aspects or terminology without being able to clarify them adequately:

(11) In some passages of this section we have tacitly anticipated ideas which will be introduced in Book IV. (GT: 112)

(12) It would seem (following Mr Kahn) that the following are likely in a modern community to be the factors which it is most important not to overlook (though the first two will not be fully intelligible until after Book IV has been reached. (GT: 119)

The act of writing itself is part of Keynes' heuristic activity which allows him to keep moving ahead, by means of chains of intuitions and deductions, in the uncovering and understanding of the facts of economic life. We can see the result of this process not only in what he has to say about the influence the act of writing has on him, but also in his claim that the object of his creative effort has its own separate existence independent of the person of the writer. As he says in the Preface:

(13) *This book*, on the other hand, *has evolved* into what is primarily a study of the forces which determine changes in the scale of output and employment as a whole; and whilst it is found that money enters into the economic scheme in an essential and peculiar way, technical monetary detail falls into the background. (GT: xxii, emphasis added)

Another feature of Keynes' argumentative style is that he explicitly engages his readers in a cooperative effort when interpreting his text. Keynes' own words seem to confirm this hypothesis:

(14) It is, I think, of the essential nature of economic exposition that it gives, not a complete statement, which even if it were possible, would be prolix and complicated to the point of obscurity but a sample statement, so to speak, out of all the things which would be said, intended to suggest to the reader the whole bundle of associated ideas, so that, if he catches the bundle, he will not in the least be confused or impeded by the technical incompleteness of the mere words which the author has

written down, taken by themselves. [...] An economic writer requires from his reader much goodwill and intelligence and a large measure of co-operation. (CW XIII: 470)

In this passage, Keynes interestingly describes the argumentation of economists as a succession of “sample statements” which work by suggesting to the reader a “whole bundle of associated ideas”. In this way the text provides readers with cues for personal associations, rather than unambiguous conclusions determined by an orderly set of premises and reasonings. Thus, we can clearly see that even the ambiguity of certain passages of the GT is not accidental but due to a deliberate choice on the author’s part. Keynes meant this to be an “open work” (Eco 1989), allowing readers to play an active role in interpreting his new theory by bringing the author’s creation to fruition. Its final form was meant to be flexible, capable of being read in a variety of ways and open to the critical, interpretative agency of the reader (Gotti 1994). A year after publication, Keynes offered the following comment:

(15) I am more attached to the comparatively simple fundamental ideas which underlie my theory than to the particular forms in which I have embodied them, and I have no desire that the latter should be crystallised at the present stage of the debate. If the simple basic ideas can become familiar and acceptable, time and experience and the collaboration of a number of minds will discover the best way of expressing them. (CW XIV: 111)

As Keynes himself admits, the reader is asked to offer not just the usual sort of cooperation, but a much higher level of intuitive involvement and goodwill. The GT is therefore one of the few non-literary texts whose author, willingly and knowingly, assigns readers not merely the role of decoders and recipients of his views but a far more demanding role as his collaborators in working out the final form and the exact meaning of a new economic theory.

The interdisciplinary investigation of some of the linguistic traits of the GT has thus shown the various and sometimes innovative strategies that Keynes has used to present his own views to engage with his readers and involve them in his argumentative plan. By focusing on contexts where major difficulties have arisen in the interpretation of the author’s claims by specialized experts, our analysis has been able to point out all those cases in which the author’s individual textual choices prevail over the accepted conventions of economic academic discourse, and to identify what is distinctive about the author’s choice of language as opposed to what is part of the collective norms of the disciplinary community he belonged to. We have thus demonstrated that, in order to reach his perlocutionary goal, the author often flouts the conventions of commonality practice and prefers instead to opt for the individuality of personal expository strategies.

3. Case study 2: Interdisciplinary analysis of international arbitration discourse and practice

The second case study analysed here refers to two interdisciplinary research projects on the discourse and practices of international commercial arbitration. This research was promoted by a joint group of arbitration experts/practitioners and applied linguists jointly working on the problematic aspects of the formulation of arbitration texts in connection with recent changes in arbitration practices and with the process of increasing harmonisation at an international level.

International arbitration is the most widely used alternative dispute resolution method to resolve commercial disputes between parties, commonly adopted when the latter fail to resolve their conflict on their own and want a third party to resolve their dispute. The parties' main objective is to avoid the time and expense of litigation, where they have absolutely no control over the decision-making process. The main advantage of arbitration is that it is like litigation in effect, in that it is decided by a neutral arbitrator or arbitration tribunal, but unlike litigation, it is informal, expedient, economical, private and confidential in nature, and at the same time, gives sufficient voice and freedom to disputing parties in the way it is actually conducted (Bernstein 2003; Berger 2006).

In order to facilitate a more homogeneous dealing with international commercial arbitration, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) proposed a model law on international commercial arbitration, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 21 June 1985, and was recommended for universal adoption⁴. Although the Model Law was not binding, the UN recommended its adoption and incorporation into the domestic law of individual member states. However, the adoption of this Model Law has not guaranteed complete uniformity among the various national legislations, as the different countries have used this model in different ways depending upon their national requirements, concerns, cultures, legal systems, languages, and other constraints. Indeed, in the process of adoption of this model, the English language text of UNCITRAL has often had to be translated into the local languages, a procedure which has implied not only the adaptation of the original discourse to the typical features and resources of the national tongues, but also its adjustment to the cultural needs and legal constraints of each specific country.

3.1. The first research project

The interdisciplinary work on the discourse and practices of international commercial arbitration was carried out within two subsequent research projects. The first one investigated the generic integrity of legal discourse in international com-

⁴ The UNCITRAL Model Law is available online at <http://www.uncitral.org/uncitral/en/uncitral_texts/arbitration/1985Model_arbitration.html>.

mercial arbitration in multilingual and multicultural contexts by providing discourse- and genre-based analyses of arbitration laws from various countries and jurisdictions⁵, by pooling research from a number of teams of specialists in discourse analysis drawn from thirteen countries: Brazil, The People's Republic of China, The Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, and Spain. The project was based on the understanding that although most national arbitration laws followed the spirit of the UNCITRAL Model Law (UML), they were nonetheless formulated and applied differently in different countries, and were often constrained by variations in the languages used, the specific legal systems they were grounded in, and, in addition, the socio-political factors that operated in specific contexts. In terms of outcomes, the project has disseminated its findings through several edited volumes (Bhatia *et al.* 2003a, 2003b, 2008a, 2008b, 2010) together with a special issue of an international journal (Bhatia/Engberg 2004), in addition to several international conferences organized by the project.

The project highlighted a three-part investigation of international arbitration laws:

1. Linguistic analyses of international arbitration laws from a number of countries addressing such issues as degree of qualification, specification of scope, issues of closed- versus open-endedness, and other matters concerned with complex contingency, and their comparison with the UML.
2. Documented accounts of drafting and interpretative practices within specific contexts, exploring the issues arising from such analyses by focusing on a set of critical and relevant cases incorporating relevant moments of application of the laws under investigation.
3. Explanation of issues identified and discussed under 1 and 2 above through reference to socio-cultural, economic and political, linguistic and legal factors based on the background studies of the legal systems of these countries, and also on the reactions of and commentaries by legal experts, both from academic circles and legal practice.

The research had a threefold orientation: a contribution to the basic knowledge of legal language seen from an international perspective, premises for international policy and commercial practice, and a grounding for legal practice and legal practitioner training. The project focused on the arbitration discourse in use in different countries written in distinct languages – or varieties of a language – each with its own distinctive legal culture and system. For each of these countries a comparison was carried out between the local arbitration law and the UML. The English language text of the UML was compared with the local language text of the arbitration law of each country and any discrepancies were investigated in order to identify any possible differences in the legal cultures underlying the two

⁵ This international research project (led by prof. Vijay Bhatia of the City University of Hong Kong) was entitled *Generic Integrity in Legislative Discourse in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts*. For further details cf. the webpage at <<http://gild.mmc.cityu.edu.hk/>>.

texts. Such a contrastive multilingual typology of key instances and key textualisations, supported by explanatory commentary, proved to be a very valuable aid to the translator, to the legislator and the lawyer, and, ultimately, to the parties entering into contracts of this nature, as well as to those involved in legal practitioner training.

3.2. The second research project

Relying on the degree of interest created in the overall theme, the international collaboration and the excellent research opportunities for interdisciplinary teamwork provided by the initial project, the research teams decided to carry this research forward with a second project by focusing on the actuality of arbitration practices in a grounded and contextualized manner across linguistic, socio-cultural, political, and legal boundaries. It has been observed that arbitration as a non-legal practice is being increasingly influenced by litigation practice, a development which seems to be contrary to the spirit of arbitration to resolve disputes outside of the courts (Nariman 2000). In order to investigate the extent to which the ‘integrity’ of arbitration principles is maintained in international commercial arbitration practice, a group of legal experts and discourse analysts led by Vijay Bhatia (City University of Hong Kong) designed an international research initiative, drawing on discourse-based data (narrative, documentary and interactional) to explore the motivations for such an interdiscursive process which appears to be leading to the increasing ‘colonisation’ of arbitration practices by litigative processes and procedures⁶.

By undertaking a textual, narratological and discourse-based analysis of primary and secondary data drawn from arbitration practice, this second research project investigated the general theme of the ‘colonisation’ of arbitration by litigation by addressing some main issues such as ambivalence of international arbitration, witness-examination, evidence, enforcement of awards across jurisdictions and territorial boundaries, language and power in arbitration proceedings, analysis of concurring and dissenting opinions, accountability and voices in arbitration awards, cross-national comparisons of arbitration with other forms of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, arbitrators’ neutrality in arbitration process, confidentiality and publicity in arbitration in the public sphere. Drawing on multiple methods including textual analysis, genre analysis, analysis of specialist accounts and ethnographic investigation, these studies have produced insightful observations and interpretations of arbitration practices in different contexts, which have enabled arbitrators and lawyers to see arbitration and their work in arbitration from a perspective they could not acquire otherwise.

In order to achieve these objectives, the project drew upon a multidimensional analytical framework to integrate analyses of data collected from at least three different sources:

⁶ The project was entitled *International Commercial Arbitration Practices: A Discourse Analytical Study*. For further details on this project cf. the webpage at <<http://enweb.cityu.edu.hk/arbitrationpractice/>>.

- Intertextual and interdiscursive relationships among discursive practices in arbitration;
- Narratives of experience of key practitioners as tested against those of other stakeholders;
- Analyses of “critical sites of engagement” (Scollon 1998) in the discourses of arbitration practice.

Some of the critical sites identified are the following: discovery procedures, written testimony, witness examination and writing of awards. As regards the latter, the research carried out shows that it appears as if the options available to arbitrators are considerably constrained by the fact that most of the arbitrators, by virtue of their also being members of the legal community, find it difficult to dissociate and distinguish themselves from their parent discipline, i.e., litigation. Hence, they continue to appropriate discursive resources that have been part of their professional armoury for a long time, which brings into arbitration discourse, and especially awards, a distinct identity which seems to be a reflection of their other identity related to litigation contexts. There is sufficient evidence in the corpus of awards from well-represented international resources that arbitrators, in general, are significantly influenced by what they are quite used to doing in their litigation practice. Their discursive products are not very different from what they write in litigation, except in that they are not as detailed as in their efforts in litigation and that their elaborate arguments and reasoning – extensively supported by references to relevant and applicable legislative sections as well as precedents in the form of references to earlier judgments, which are quite typical of legal judgments – are often not so elaborate in arbitration awards. In many respects, especially in the use of technical lexico-grammatical and formulaic expressions, impersonal style, and also in the use of expressions indicating power and authority, awards are very similar to what one may find in litigation judgments. For example, based on his study of Italian arbitration awards, Gotti (2012) claims that Italian awards in his corpus are characterized by excessively long sentences, binomial and multinomial expressions, predominant use of nominalisations, impersonal style, and many other rhetorical features typical of legal discourse, which clearly shows that there is considerable influence of legal discourse on Italian arbitration awards. The reason for this is primarily the involvement in arbitration of persons commonly working within the litigation community, the members of which are so deeply rooted in their individual legal culture and jurisdictional practices that they find it difficult to switch their hat, as it were, when they operate in arbitration. The essential consequence of this is that commercial arbitration practices are drawing increasingly closer to those of litigation in all respects, and as a consequence increasingly being viewed as sites of ‘contested identities’ whether in terms of discovery procedures, written testimony, witness examination, or even writing of awards.

This applied interdisciplinary research has thus been relevant for the understanding of globalisation of trade and commerce in three ways:

- The research findings⁷ have informed specialists of the increasing influence of litigative procedures on international commercial arbitration practices by offering evidence for such practices from textual and discourse-based studies, ethnographic observations, and narratives of experience on the part of experts in the field as well as on the part of some of the major corporate stakeholders drawn from commercial sectors.
- At the same time, it has provided a basis for raising public awareness about the implications of such influences, in particular their impact on the conduct of arbitration proceedings.
- Taken together, these outcomes have contributed significantly to the strengthening of international commercial arbitration as a non-litigative practice for handling commercial disputes, and have enhanced the satisfaction of the involved parties from different cultures, linguistic and socio-political backgrounds and legal systems.

Moreover, the project has provided insights into some of the crucial issues involved in matters of advocacy and training of arbitrators, particularly in the context of different cultural, linguistic, socio-political backgrounds of participants in international commercial arbitration practice.

4. Conclusion

The case studies analysed here are only two examples of the interesting linguistic insights that interdisciplinary research projects may suggest. The issues identified show that linguistic explanations can be of great help to disciplinary experts – in this case economists and arbitration practitioners – to attain a more correct interpretation of the texts and practices in which they are commonly involved. Participation in interdisciplinary research with applied linguists has enabled practitioners to become more aware of the hidden implications of their practices and to discover how their own performances reflect their professional values and institutional goals in different contexts.

Our analysis confirms the assumption that in carrying out more empirically grounded research and in building up stronger relationships with professional practitioners, applied linguists play a major role with greater social and institutional relevance. Indeed, their work can acquire a key inter-relational dimension facilitating the interpretation of research findings and their potential applicability with target audiences. This role, however, requires full cooperation from both parties: the practitioner and the linguist. The former should be ready to socialise the main practices and data concerning his/her work domain and respect the core tenets of applied linguistics, while the latter should be willing to turn his/her insights into understandable forms and respect the practitioner's opinion on

⁷ The main findings of this project have been reported in Bhatia (2011) and Bhatia *et al.* (2012a, 2012b).

what findings are relevant in professional terms and useful for the solution of the problem at hand.

With their work, applied linguists make visible key features and functions of professional practice that are invisible to the practitioners themselves. Indeed, applied linguists can make the workings of practice significantly accessible, at times even making the familiar strange once again as they introduce a new gaze. As Bartlett and Chen aptly remark (2012: 3, emphasis in the original), “[a]long with this question of *how* the workings of practice are made visible, further questions arise as to *what* is made visible, *to whom*, *along with whom* and *for what purpose*, including considerations of how the insights gained can be utilized to suit the purposes identified”.

This type of research may also prove useful to applied linguists themselves, as their discussions with practitioners and the analysis of realities of practice in context may induce them to re-examine some of the tenets and presuppositions commonly shared within their discipline. Indeed, besides highlighting interesting insights into professional practices that are extremely useful to both practitioners and experts, the analysis of specialised discourse also has a lot to offer the linguist, provided the text is approached with clear exegetic aims and within a sound theoretical framework. If carried out according to these principles, a linguist’s participation in an interdisciplinary project will not imply the ancillary position of merely helping the specialist’s interpretation of a text and therefore with the sole result of serving as a mere tool for the interpretation of specialized discourse. The linguist’s active involvement in such a type of investigation will, instead, represent another effective way of carrying out research in order to improve and better define the tenets of linguistic theory.

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Biosketch

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Negotiating discourses of healthcare across professional groups: clinicians' identities under threat in health IT

Paola Catenaccio

Abstract

This paper investigates the interplay and negotiations among different professional groups engaged in discussion over the adoption of standardized IT-driven clinical record-keeping in the US. The debate brings into play multiple issues that have been central to the provision of medical care for quite some time now, where an emphasis on multidisciplinary in clinical care has more recently been compounded with a heightened attention for electronic record keeping (Iedema 2003b), frequently (though not exclusively) in the service of financial efficiency, as a consequence of the new managerial turn in healthcare provision.

Bearing in mind the above, and in light of recent studies on the impact of organizational discourses on professional ones (cf. Iedema 2003a, 2007; Sorenesen and Iedema 2008), the study identifies signs of competing and converging discourses in the transcript under investigation. In particular, the investigation focuses on the discursive representation of professional practices and identities vis-à-vis institutional constraints, with special regard to issues of power and control over the disputed meaning of clinical documentation.

The method of analysis is discourse-analytical in focus and relies on literature on socio-technical and organizational factors in medical discourse (Iedema 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2007; Sarangi 2004, 2005, 2010) to frame the issue of meaning and identity construction in inter-professional negotiation. The findings provide insights into professional ideologies, claims and challenges under pressures from encroaching expert systems.

Keywords

Interprofessional communication, expert systems, discourse analysis.

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary world, the efficient organisation and delivery of healthcare has become one of the most pressing priorities for governments around the globe. Efficiency in healthcare means not only improving outcomes for the individual patient, but also reducing costs and devising models for the interpretation and management of epidemiological data, also for the purpose of disease prevention and control. Over the last twenty years the push towards improved standards of care has increasingly relied, amongst other things, on the digitalisation of medical information, leading to the creation of repositories of 'big data'. The vast majority of it is still 'dormant', i.e. has been only partially exploited primarily because of interoperability and coordination issues. Further difficulties are posed by the essentially multidisciplinary nature of health IT: as a field of engagement and collaboration involving professionals from different fields, it involves complex processes of negotiation and coordination. Although policy efforts are increasingly being made to improve the collection of data and to facilitate their investigation, the process is still far from being close to completion.

In the US, the government has launched a national programme which is specifically aimed at pursuing the above mentioned objectives (cf. Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology 2011, 2014). The US programme has been several years in the making now, and has involved, before its gradual implementation (currently underway), a thorough process of debate and consultation among different workgroups composed of professionals from a variety of backgrounds, resulting in a number of public hearings where other stakeholder groups (first and foremost patients) have been consulted. The transcripts of such hearings, as well as the audio files and the documentation referred to in the meetings, are publicly available on the HealthIT website (www.healthit.gov) in a dedicated archive section².

This paper analyses a hearing on the topic of clinical documentation which took place on February 13th, 2013. The study focuses on the discursive construction of professional identity claims in the face of changing institutional roles and self-perception resulting from the evolution of institutional practices. The debate brings into play multiple issues that have been central to the provision of medical care for quite some time now, multidisciplinary being not only a key aspect of Health IT, but having risen as a paradigm in both theory and practice in the medical profession, especially at the interface with institutional organisation. These developments are the direct consequence of a growingly interconnected world, where knowledge is ever more recognised as being mapped out in network-like models. Adapting to integrated approaches to theory and practices, however, has not been easy nor straightforward, especially for established profes-

² The hearing analysed in this chapter can be found at the following URL: https://www.healthit.gov/hitac/sites/faca/files/2013-02-13_policy_mu_hearing_final_transcript.pdf (last access: November 2, 2017).

sional communities traditionally operating on the basis of different (sometimes competing) paradigms. Moreover, if within the field of health care interprofessional approaches have been long advocated in the name of improved efficiency and higher quality of care (cf. West and Markiewicz 2004; Maslim-Prothero and Bennion 2010), growing reliance on technology to manage and coordinate care has given rise to the creation of highly complex socio-technical systems which have strongly impacted professional practices and identities.

The study therefore sets out to investigate the way in which professional expertise is negotiated and redefined at the interface with technological affordances and constraints in view of multiple separate but interconnected goals, the pursuit of which involves competing exigencies at times. Drawing on recent studies on the impact of organisational discourses on professional ones (cf. Iedema 2003a, 2007; Sorensen and Iedema 2008), it aims to detect evidence of competing and converging discourses. The focus is on the identification of nexuses of identity representation where professional expertise is rearticulated in the service of multiple institutional and inter-institutional purposes with a view to exploring how this emerging identity is negotiated *vis-à-vis* other expertises within the context of a socio-technical environment in which medium affordances and constraints affect communication options and requirements.

2. Materials and method

The analysis is based on the official transcript of a public hearing held on February 13th, 2013, which was organised by the HIT (Health IT) Policy Committee with the participation of three workgroups – the Meaningful Use Workgroup and the Certification and Adoption Workgroups. The meeting focused on four different aspects of clinical documentation collection and use: 1) the role of clinical documentation in everyday clinical practice; 2) the document as a way of coordinating care; 3) the secondary uses of clinical documentation; and 4) the legal implications of the medical record. The hearing featured presentations on these four topics, each followed by a discussion in which questions were answered and points of debate were raised.

Among the participants were several medical doctors, many of them involved with their institutions (hospital, clinics, practices) in managerial capacities; health IT professionals working on the development of clinical documentation software were also involved, as were legal experts (in the last part of the hearing); finally, the points of view of other stakeholders (nurses, social workers, patients) were included.

The hearing lasted the entire day, so the materials are quite substantial for a single event, amounting to over 60 thousand words. The method of analysis used in the investigation is discourse-analytical in focus and aims to identify key discursive traits in the process of negotiation at play. It has to be pointed out that although the meeting comprises dialogic exchanges, extensive “testimonies” (i.e. monologic presentations made by individual speakers) make up the majority of the hearing. As a result, interaction is minimal, with meaning negotiations oc-

curing over extensive stretches of speech rather than in the course of shorter exchanges amenable to interaction-based investigation. Thus, the focus of the analysis is not so much on local meaning negotiation, but on broader discursive constructions emerging from larger textual units, with conflict arising in the juxtaposition of competing views on medical documentation and its uses, and negotiation being achieved discursively through progressive approximations involving the discursive redefinition of professional identities and practices. For the analysis of the latter, reliance is made on literature on socio-technical and organisational factors in medical discourse (see Iedema 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2007; Sarangi 2004, 2005, 2010).

3. Biomedical informatics, electronic records, and the emergence of socio-technical expert systems in the healthcare sector

The design and implementation of an IT-based system for the management of healthcare services falls within the emerging field of biomedical informatics, “the interdisciplinary field that studies and pursues the effective uses of biomedical data, information, and knowledge for scientific inquiry, problem solving, and decision making, bridging basic and clinical research and practice and the healthcare enterprise” (Kulikowski *et al.* 2012: 933). Despite being often described as concerned primarily with technical constraints, biomedical informatics “recogniz[es] that people are the ultimate users of biomedical information” and “draws upon the social and behavioral sciences to inform the design and evaluation of technical solutions, policies, and the evolution of economic, ethical, social, educational, and organizational systems” (Kulikowski *et al.* 2012: 933).

The scientific paradigm at the heart of biomedical informatics is interdisciplinary in nature and based on collaboration. However, obstacles have been observed in the achievement of effective multidisciplinary cooperation. Some of them are eminently technical (lack of a common infrastructure, for instance); others are linked to cultural factors inherent to the field (high competitiveness of biomedical research, resulting in an unwillingness to share data); but others still have to do with specific aspects of professional practice and identity work, such as a documented “reluctan[ce] to trust unfamiliar tools which often results in lack of adoption of core technologies”, but also the fact that “the researchers involved typically possess a wide range of expertise from multiple disciplines with different cultures and social norms with no common ground to draw upon to seamlessly communicate” – a problem exacerbated by the lack of physical proximity, which hinders the informal communication needed to foster a collaborative environment (Lee *et al.* 2009: 11).

Biomedical informatics, therefore, goes well beyond the technological dimension of healthcare delivery to have a major impact on professional practice. Its extensive adoption in healthcare institutions gives rise to a “technology based expert system” which poses particular challenges to the medical profession, as “the mediator role of the professional expert is potentially under threat when

his/her activities are constrained by the kind of knowledge generated through available expert systems” (Sarangi 2010: 168). In a sense, Sarangi adds, “the very existence of an expert system undermines the expertise of the profession, individually and collectively” (Sarangi 2010: 169). By shaping institutional and organisational practices, “computerization and restructuring [...] serve to create new sites of identification and struggle, because they displace old ways of doing and saying and make possible, even *require*, new ones” (Iedema 2005: 247, quoting Rose 1999). In health care, these developments manifest themselves, amongst other things, “in policies that require clinicians to be more open and public about the details and outcomes of their care practices” (Iedema 2005: 247, quoting Rose 1999), thereby breaking down traditional gatekeeping barriers and exposing their professional identities to increasing scrutiny. Moreover, such professional identities are becoming ever more complex and stratified, as they are constantly being re-shaped in relation to the multiple types of expertise (Sarangi 2004, 2005) activated within the emerging organisational paradigm of knowledge work or “immaterial labour” (Hardt and Negri 2004) and which involve constant interplay with other professional identities and knowledges. This interplay is interaction- and communication based, and involves inter-professional and inter-organisation dimensions (Iedema 2006, 2007). These dimensions

are having important consequences for the enactment of clinical-professional identity (Halford and Leonard 1999), particularly because the contemporary hospital is an increasing ‘crowded space’ (Iedema *et al.* 2004) that frequently creates what Cicourel terms ‘cognitive overload’ for staff (Cicourel 2004). Hospital-clinical work is no longer a set of processes and practices predominantly concerned with individual patients’ bodies and diagnostic-prognostic consultations. Besides weaving increasingly technological capabilities into patients’ treatment trajectories (Måseide 2007), health care is now conducted in the context of guidelines, service comparisons and benchmarks of practice; resource decisions, restructurings and budget cuts; incident reporting/monitoring and ‘adverse event’ investigations; patient complaints, and health departmental performance surveillance and resource utilization audits (Iedema, Braithwaite *et al.* 2005). [...] [C]ontemporary professional discourse is a complex amalgam of clinical, managerial, policy and ‘consumer’ knowledges that increasingly bound the status and autonomy of clinicians’ expert authority (Flynn 1999) (Iedema 2005: 246).

This “complex amalgam of [...] knowledges” is enacted in the daily practices of health professionals, and is eventually codified in the plethora of artifacts which go under the umbrella term of ‘documentation’, and which represents the embodiment of institutionally codified expertise.

Documentation is therefore central to contemporary clinical practice, both enabling and constraining it. The multiple purposes it serves require that the data collected be codified in such a way as to enable their use by different expert communities, each with their needs, practices and culture. Because of its pervasive presence at every stage in the organising process, it crucially contributes to shap-

ing it, coming to represent a type of “organizing discourse [...] that mediates between specifying and dedifferentiating moments of representation, by interposing standardizing categories, inscriptions and material appearances [in order to] connect the specific and the personalized with the general, abstract, and depersonalized” (Iedema 2003b: 64). Thus, it represents not only a powerful mediating interface between professional expertise and organising institutional practices, but also a vehicle for inter-professional and inter-institutional communication, projecting the ‘local’ of everyday professional practices into the ‘general’ of managerial efficiency, scientific knowledge, and public policy.

Documentation constitutes a central organising principle at the institutional level, involving the participation of multiple actors who individually and cumulatively produce what Cicourel (1974) calls “socially distributed knowledge”. Socially distributed knowledge is “knowledge understood as organized sets of discourses with organic connections among each other that take shape as a function of how institutional processes are organized and how actors are involved in the production and circulation of resources” (Heller 2007: 635, summing up Cicourel). Actor involvement is crucial here, as the manner and extent of their contribution to the creation of knowledge – their professional role in the process of knowledge creation, its centrality (or otherwise) in it, and the way in which the role they are endowed with reflects their self-perceived professional expertise – has a profound effect on the definition and enactment of professional identities. As Heller points out, “discursive spaces have their histories and trajectories, as do the social actors who participate in them more or less centrally” (2007: 635). Thus,

what gets constructed as counting as knowledge in and across those spaces is not neutral; it reflects the interests of some participants more than others, and certainly more likely of those who have access to those spaces than of those who are excluded, directly or indirectly. Distributed knowledge, then, takes the shape it does because of interests surrounding both its form and its circulation, and because of the ability of participants to mobilize resources in those spaces in ways that have consequences for their own access to what goes on there (and what that might lead to) and, at least potentially, for the access of others.

In light of this, it is manifest that the debate over what counts as documentation in healthcare, who should collect it and how, who should have access to it, and for what purposes, is not only about the meaning of an artifact and its conditions of creation and fruition, but also about professional roles and identities, modes of knowledge creation, and power.

4. Clinical documentation as a site of engagement: a discourse-analytical approach to the debate

As mentioned above (Section 2), the hearing on electronic documentation brought together different experts and stakeholders involved in various capaci-

ties in the healthcare system and with competing needs and concepts about the ‘meaningful use’ of clinical documentation. The discussion was therefore ostensibly about the definition of clinical documentation, its nature and composition, the technological constraints and affordances surrounding its collection and use, and its functions and purposes. But because of the role of documentation in everyday professional practice, and its function as an organising principle in the institutional domain, discussing documentation also involved engaging in self-reflection on one’s roles, practices, and expertise.

In the next section the display of professional identities in the definition and construction of electronic documentation will be discussed, with particular attention paid to clinicians’ identities and to the way in which doctors negotiate them *vis-à-vis* emerging practices.

4.1. Identity work and the display of professional expertise/habitus/roles: focus on the clinician

4.1.1. Shifts in clinical documentation: from transition to revolution

The centrality of identity constructs in the debate about documentation is apparent right from the outset, when a representative of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology introduces the topic of the meeting. After thanking the participants, Farzad Mostashari proceeds to present the theme by means of a short narrative that may appear at first sight as little more than an ice-breaker, but which in fact sets the coordinates for the rest of the meeting by placing documentation firmly within the realm of professional practice, its evolving function matched by a parallel shift in self-perceived professional roles and identities.

(1) Thank you and thank you for all of the speakers and members of the Policy and Standards Committee and to the ONC staff who have helped organize today. This is I believe a really important discussion that we’re having. The medical record itself, the documentation of that medical record in recent years has assumed more and more roles, and I was speaking to a physician who said to me when I started practice 30 years ago my notes were just little reminders to myself about the patient so that the next time I saw the patient I could remember and I’d give myself a little nudge “all right, this is what I was thinking last time I saw the patient.” And, you know, you don’t have to say a lot if you’re writing a note to yourself. You share a lot of assumptions with yourself, you share a lot of knowledge, you know yourself.

Right from the outset the “medical record” and the “documentation of that medical record” – two institutional terms – are compared and contrasted with the “notes” that physicians would take as part of their every-day professional practice for purposes which were exclusively oriented to the exercise of their professional expertise. The shift from personal note to institutional record, with a progressive

layering of purposes, is described as being bound up with a heightened awareness of having another audience “in the back of [one’s] head”:

(2) And he said then that at some point it became as I was writing the note I had in the back of my head another audience. I was writing to someone who might audit my record for billing purposes or for legal, medical legal purposes I’m making sure to document.

This shift is presented as having occurred gradually, without dramatic changes. The time reference is vague (“at some point”), and the need to “document” appears to have arisen essentially in order to justify one’s actions for administrative and legal purposes. This way of documenting, although more explicit and therefore requiring greater introspective awareness, does not appear to challenge the integrity of the doctor’s professional expertise, with control remaining firmly in his/her hands.

It is at this point that the story takes a dramatic turn:

(3) And then he said...he’s part of an Independent Physician Association that is forming and Accountable Care Organization and they’re on an electronic health record and they had to decide whether they could open each other’s notes. The system was capable of doing it, it was flipping a switch to let the 50 or so physicians see each other’s notes and he said I remember with clarity sitting in that conference room where the board of our IPA was trying to make a decision about whether we could just open each other’s notes and it was hard for me because these are my notes, I wrote these and he said I all of a sudden realized these aren’t my notes anymore. These are the patient’s notes and we all take care of the patient and he talked about it as an Ah-ha moment for him that now the notes serve as a means of care coordination and communication among different providers and that’s a different audience that you’re writing for.

The turning point is preceded by parenthetical information which establishes the credentials of the embedded narrator, thereby heightening the significance of the story. If the previous stage in the evolution of medical documentation had been characterised by smooth transition, this new one is marked by what can only be described as an epiphany (“I remember with clarity”... “he talked about this as an Ah-ha moment”), a revolution which also involves a radical re-definition of professional identity (“these aren’t my notes anymore”). This shift is described as being technology-driven (“the system was capable of doing it”), but not in a deterministic way – in fact, the phrasing invites the inference that the decision to enable doctors to see each other’s notes was not easy to make (“the board of our IPA was trying to make a decision”, where the use of “try” presupposes that coming to a decision required an effort the outcome of which was uncertain).

The third stage in the evolution of medical documentation is then introduced. The speaker shifts from personalised narrative to de-personalised exposition:

(4) And as we have electronic health records move not just from documenting the information but the use of that information for population health management it's not enough for someone else to just be able to read your note, the system has to be able to understand some key elements within that note. It has to be structured in other words if you want to be able to make a list of patients who, if you want to be able to look at your quality measures being derived as a byproduct of your documentation instead of double or triple data entry. If you want to have decision support then certain key information now needs to be structured in certain ways and that creates another audience, the computer is now an audience member that you're writing for.

Not only is the computer a ratified participant in the communication process, but medical professionals have lost their centrality in it, having become part of a system which forces them to relinquish control over their professional expertise in the service of information production. This development amounts to a new, critical shift, in the course of which "information" becomes metaphorically endowed with a life of its own and professional identities disappear in the background:

(5) So, we are at a critical point in this transition as the demands of being able to have the information not just used as little reminders to ourselves or as artifacts for billing purposes now transition to the need for care coordination that is increasing, the need for bringing information to life through the use of computable information, structured data that can be analyzed and aggregated, and through the use of this information for patient engagement.

The passage is dense with nominalisations and passives, "information" and "data" being lifted from their professionally mediated and institutionally embedded contexts to become abstract data amenable to multiple investigations and uses.

The transition from personal note, to institutional record, to abstract data involves a momentous shift in the conceptualisation of what counts as information. Data collection is the result of professional practices which entextualise discursively mediated "facts" implicitly providing paradigms for their interpretation in an ongoing knowledge-building process. As Sarangi states, "clinical mentality points toward the cumulative consolidation of knowledge and expertise through personal experience" (2004: 5), language and discourse-in-context playing a key role in the mediation of such knowledge and experience. Context is crucial for this, as are personal involvement and situated sense-making. The medical note in its original form reflected and reproduced this epistemological approach because it was functional to professional goals. As other needs encroach upon these goals, resistance is bound to ensue, especially where new purposes are perceived as being potentially conflictual with them and threatening established practices of discursive codification.

4.1.2. *Negotiating the meaning of clinical documentation*

A first site of negotiation is the very meaning of clinical documentation. The first definition of documentation to be presented is put forth by a biomedical informatics expert, and focuses on documentation as a process (as opposed to a product), the primary aim of which is to improve patient care.

(6) Clinical documentation is the process of recording historical data, observations, assessments, interventions and care plans in an individual's health record. The purpose of documentation is to facilitate clinical reasoning and decision-making by clinicians and to promote communication and coordination of care among members of the care team.

The passage is textually structured as a classical definition, with no concessions made for negotiation. The declarative mood conveys epistemic certainty unmitigated by hedging or perspectivising, but it soon becomes apparent that not all participants share the same understanding of what documentation is, or should be. Later in the discussion another definition is provided, this time focusing on product, or rather products. Here the speaker is a clinician, explicitly presenting what is defined as a "clinical care perspective" on documentation:

(7) So, to the first question on how do you define clinical documentation our team defines that as two general forms of clinical communication notes and reports. Notes are authored about a patient in order to communicate the care to the care team the patient's status, the plan of care for the patient and the provider's rationale to support these assessments and we distinguish those from reports which are communicating interpretations of diagnostic or therapeutic interventions.

This definition acknowledges that the meaning of documentation may be variable ("*our team* defines it as..."). It links it to two different aspects of organisational activity, both of which focus on care delivery. Documentation is here defined as a set of genres with distinct communicative purposes, jointly contributing to the delivery of care.

As the discussion progresses, other definitional issues arise, with meaning instability increasing as "primary uses" of clinical documentation (care delivery and coordination) give way to "secondary uses" (anything that goes from the use of data for epidemiological studies, to billing, to legal issues). The alternation between process and product is particularly evident in example (8) below, while example (9) defines the electronic medical record (in previous turns used interchangeably with "documentation") neither in terms of product or process, but rather as a "tool":

(8) Clinical documentation is not just the notes it's everything that goes into the process and so we really do need tools like something to digest the information, synthesize the information and intelligently present it at the right time to the right person.

(9) The EHR in addition to being a tool to support documentation and care delivery is now a tool to support quality measurement and improvement. This paradigm shift from focusing on individual patient care to performance measurement forms the foundation for disconnects as well as opportunities to use EHR data for secondary uses.

Thus, the boundaries of clinical documentation become progressively blurred, multiple perspectives heightening indeterminacy. At one point one of the speakers laments this:

(10) *Speaker 1* So, actually, this is something that I also was also thinking as we talk about clinical documentation, maybe this is just that I wasn't thinking about it this way, are we talking strictly about the note or are we talking about all clinical documentation in the record, because we kind of...we're bouncing back and forth here and that's getting...it's getting hard to sort of dissect what...where we're talking about which here. I thought we're talking more about documentation throughout the whole EHR.

Speaker 2 I think we're talking about things broadly too. Although, I would suggest that there's not a really good consensus on exactly what clinical documentation...

Speaker 1 So, I think just as a committee we need to wrestle with this a little bit more because I think we're going to kind of ping pong back and forth between when we're talking about the clinical notes, you know, versus the EHR as whole as a clinical document tool.

This call for a clarification of the terms of the discussion, however, is not followed up. The next speaker provides a brief account of the practices which are in use at his institution, but this only clarifies the local, situated meaning of documentation, without addressing key definitional issues. The picture becomes even more complex when the discussion moves to clinical documentation for legal use. Here the meaning of the term becomes ever more vague and arbitrary:

(11) Today healthcare organizations have to define in their policy what comprises their medical record so that when requests come in they have to decide how to disclose it. Overtime with Health Information Exchange with new tools some of those issues get to be resolved but others do not, particularly some of the issues or some of the requests that facilities receive or organizations receive for their complete medical record. So in today's environment healthcare organizations have to cobble together the clinical documentation through reports, through screenshots, through logs from multiple different applications that...to individuals who don't have the ability to view it in an EHR environment [...].

Overall, the definitional issues appear to become progressively more problematic as the number of social actors involved becomes greater and their needs and goals more diverse. Indeed, the discussion highlights the intrinsic instability of the nature of electronic documentation, which at one point is defined as "ever changing" and subject to multiple influences, amongst which are

(12) technology, evolution, changing third-party administrative and legal requirements, healthcare provider and team expectations and the presence of a large number of clinical workflows.

Such ever-changing nature and multiple goal-orientedness hinder the development of an explicit definition of EHR (Häyrinen, Saranto and Nykänen 2008: 292). With reference to the case under investigation, despite the voiced need to set clear boundaries to the discussion, no univocal definition emerges. Rather, the different voices, with their separate goals and objectives, put forth different interpretations of what clinical documentation means *to them*, competing needs and goals vying for acknowledgement and recognition. Thus, the debate does not so much negotiate meanings and definitions as provide an arena for making claims which have far-reaching implications in terms of power and knowledge distribution, with new actors gaining recognition as ratified participants in the discursive production of forms of distributed knowledge and expertise which go well beyond professional and institutional boundaries.

In this process, professional identities come under increasing pressure, as they are forced to negotiate (or re-negotiate) their role within a system that accommodates multiple voices impinging on areas of expertise which used to be part of their professional prerogative. In particular, clinicians find themselves at the forefront of the debate, their traditional practices and modes of discourse challenged by new social actors demanding institutional recognition.

4.1.3. From medical notes to the electronic health record: encroaching discourses, professional practices, and genre integrity

In Paragraph § 4.1.2 the centrality of clinicians' experience in the changing medical documentation scenario has been briefly discussed. While the debate about what constitutes documentation testifies to the encroaching of other discourses over the discourse of medical care understood in its narrower, patient-centred sense, the creation of clinical documentation – whatever this is understood to mean – continues to be largely entrusted to medical doctors. In fact, information collection and organization is part and parcel of clinicians' professional practices. They have therefore to adapt to new institutional exigencies, accommodating data in their reports whose relevance to the trajectory of clinical care may not be immediately apparent to them.

These data are typically collected in the course of the clinical encounter, a discursively mediated communicative event in which professional and institutional identities are both displayed and co-constructed through recourse to multiple discourse modes realized in established sets of genres.

The notion of genre is particularly important here. As per Bhatia's definition, genres can be defined as "recognizable communicative event[s] characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which [they] regularly occur" (Bhatia 1993: 13). Genres are forms of situated cognition (Berkenkotter

and Huckins 1995), i.e. ways of organizing reality through contextually activated cognitive schemata which both enable and constrain knowledge construction. Because of the centrality of communicative purpose and cognitive structuring, changes to the communicative purpose of genres and to the discursive conventions around which they are organised challenge generic integrity (Bhatia 1999: 22), with far-reaching consequences on the professional identities which ‘own’ genres and manifest themselves through them.

The medical record is a key genre in clinical practice, as is the clinical consultation (and indeed the whole set of interactions) from which it ensues. They represent, respectively, the codification of clinically relevant information, and the interactional process (itself shaped by professional conventions) whereby such information is collected. The introduction of electronic clinical records with their attendant stratification of purposes has deeply affected both the structure of the clinical record as a genre, redefining “allowable [indeed, required] contributions”, and the process whereby information is collected, imposing technological constraints which deeply affect the interactional structuring of information gathering.

These two aspects are debated at length in the hearing. Example (13) below captures the key points of the discussion:

(13) Originally, the medical record was a log of the patient’s condition. It was a place where clinicians wrote to each other but the demands of fee-for-service coding requirements have moved the focus of progress notes and office notes towards getting paid at the expense of communicating. Notes are too often rich with data but poor in useful information. EHR documentation has unfortunately amplified this problem often facilitating the speedy creation of expansive notes that satisfy coding requirements rigorously but fail to tell the patient’s story.

In this excerpt, the shift from professional to institutional genre is described, and abstract data are contrasted with “the patient’s story”. The underlying assumption is that the latter is more important than raw data (it is in fact “useful information”, in a clinical perspective). By referring to this information as a “story” the speaker not only indicates a need for contextualisation, but also invokes explicit sense-making in narrative form. This mirrors findings of recent research which have highlighted “the importance of accommodating the dynamic narrative that occurs between a doctor and patient” in electronic medical records (EMRs):

Medical professionals must constantly cognitively process a patient’s story for relevant medical information throughout the exam. The strict, linear process of template based EMRs is based on the necessity of recording the outcomes of patient interactions but does not offer assistance in the recording or analysis of this dynamic information during a patient examination (Larkin and Kelliher 2011: 1611)

This is precisely the purpose of clinical notes as doctors think of them: accounts which “make sense” of data-in-context (Larkin and Kelliher 2011: 1611). As Weir

et al. (2011: xxx.e63) observe, narrative documentation is preferred by clinicians because “it can function more like regular face-to-face communication, where intentions are signalled and mutual goals are negotiated”, thereby reflecting actual professional practice in a way which is relevant to the professionals who has drafted them and the community they belong to. As one participant observes,

(14) When I look at most of the systems out there that we come across the information is presented in a way that’s counterintuitive to how a physician thinks, right? It’s medications, labs, PT, etcetera, which largely reflects the systems from which they were generated. You don’t present...typically see the information presented how physicians think. I’m treating your diabetes; I’m treating your congestive heart failure.

The “way a physician thinks” is a reference to a collective professional identity which is routinely enacted and reinforced in interaction with artifacts which reflect and reproduce the episteme of the community. Examples (15) and (16) reiterate this point:

(15) [...] we should focus on the effectiveness of documentation ensuring high quality care, because we trust the explicit and implicit meaning of word choice narrative text reveals what a clinician is thinking much more effectively than a quickly completed pre-populated form. It also reduces the temptation to revise the patient’s story to fit the structure of the EHR.

(16) Portals have allowed access to many parts of the medical record which contains a patient’s medical history, social history, allergies, diagnoses, vital signs, test results and procedure reports. Let me make the case about why notes are important to patients.

It is the clinician’s notes that identify interactions between these data points and pull them into a narrative. How has the patient changed since the last appointment? Are prescribed medications working? Are there new signs and symptoms? What does the doctor think is their underlying cause? Is the fact that the patient is still smoking making the heart failure more difficult to manage? This story is a bit of a window into the doctor’s thinking. And patients say reading these notes helps them to understand what is going on and why. Things like taking a particular medication or quitting smoking are important.

Excerpt (16) has recourse to evaluative language to assign polarised values to the two types of documentation, pre-populated forms being charged with lowering the quality of professional performance (“*temptation* to revise the patient’s story to fit the structure of the text”). Examples of this kind abound, narratives being credited with providing “valuable data” which is otherwise lost in standardised, de-personalised and de-contextualised data gathering. As another participant laments,

(17) Narrative information in our EMR is not reportable which restricts our ability to document and obtain valuable data about the patient for more complete understanding about what is needed and outcomes.

Possible solutions to the dilemma entail allowing clinicians to continue writing the narratives which they are familiar with, and invest in the development of data mining software capable of extracting data from narratives. In this way professional *habitus* is preserved. Example (18) provides one such proposal:

(18) Two observations, structured data is of course the joy of a researcher but the bane of the clinician and they're not mutually incompatible. I think it's important for Meaningful Use policy generation to recognize the opportunities in natural language processing where clinicians can dictate information arguably in a way that can be salvaged, if you want to think of it that way, and as many of you know there are now open source commodity level clinical natural language processing tools and resources, so this is not an exotic science or expensive one any longer. I think it's almost commodity and we should think about that as we think about the spectrum of data capture in addition of course to patient generated data and other modalities.

The perspective on what counts as “useful data” is here reversed: data expressed in narrative form can be “salvaged”, or restored to some kind of usefulness. The phrasing is revealing of the underlying ideology – what counts as relevant for the researcher is of little use to the clinician.

But the debate is not only between narratives and big data. Narratives also codify the interpretation of those who produce them; thus, they foreground information that is perceived *by the medical community* to be relevant and pushing to the margins (when not failing to report at all) all other types of information. No matter how sophisticated data mining software can become, it cannot retrieve what is not there. One speaker, thus, calls for more radical changes in the approach to medical documentation, challenging the centrality of the medical model:

(19) My team focuses on the psychosocial determinants of health that often get minimized as we talk about the patient narrative or story in most medical settings. I would like to say I think we need to continue to challenge the medical model.

This is possibly the most confrontational passage in the whole text. Despite being hardly representative of the debate as a whole, it is highly significant because it represents a rupture in the narrative of negotiation that frames the hearing. The comment is fairly inconsequential in the discussion, but exposes the underlying competition for power and control which is a key component of the debate.

Going back to the issue of *habitus* mentioned above, forms of resistance to institutional practices which are felt to impinge on professional integrity are mentioned in the debate. One speaker reports on the existence of a trend to ostensibly comply with institutional requirements while continuing to produce additional notes according to pre-existing norms:

(20) You know, I've actually seen that happen on a small-scale in that many times physicians don't want to put in their own shorthand reminders of what was most pertinent about what happened with that patient because it was idiosyncratic or they feel they can just shorthand to themselves. So, they kind of make like a second hand written notation about the patient and keep it off to the side and out of the institutional record for that reason and it's hitting the same purpose, you know, they're kind of just doing it from a grassroots, you know, bottom down this is better than putting it in the system for legal reasons.

This comment matches recent research findings which have highlighted “the continuing practice of supplementing or circumnavigating EMR systems with paper-based notes and notifications”, resorting to “transitional artifacts” in the form of “hand-written notes that practitioners use to keep track of summarized patient data and to minimize the duration of interaction with the EMR during patient examinations” (Larkin and Kelliher 2011: 1610-11).

The tendency to supplement institutional records with personal notes can be seen as a way of defending one's turf against the encroaching of other professional goals. Indeed, so strong is the need to defend this turf that on occasion the proposal is advanced to separate the medical record from other data, resorting to additional constructs to provide the required linkages:

(21) So, it seems to me that it would be difficult to require a single health record to be able to document in different ways then take the data in and be able to provide it out in different ways and I'm just wondering if what we're hearing is that we need some other piece of software that's outside of the medical record that is used particularly for care coordination so that it can remove what it needs from whatever you've documented and then present it in a way that you particularly need as your particular place on the team. I'm just wondering what you think about that?

Similarly, in excerpt (22) notes “meant to be read and not audited” are distinguished from other types of data for which forms of automatic retrieval are advocated:

(22) Documentation accuracy and efficiency could be improved by eliminating the need to document what the system can time and date stamp. Give providers credit for reviewing labs if they open them up during the visit. Don't make us state that we've reviewed the CT scan if we have scrolled through it for 60 seconds during the visit.

Let EHRs passively catalog, aggregate and present what was opened, reviewed or added during that entire episode of care from the patient's pre-work on the portal the night before to the annotations made in the lab results five days later. Then we can focus on writing notes meant to be read and not audited.

All these excerpts testify to a continuing tension between professional needs and institutional requirements. The “readability” of a note is linked up with familiar

rhetorical organisation – a key determinant, together with communicative purpose, of genre integrity. What clinicians are resisting here, therefore, is an attack on a genre they own (electronic health recording being perceived as violating customary medical notes; cf. Weir *et al.* 2011: xxx.e64) and for which they want to continue claiming authorship. This confirms Weir *et al.*'s observation that the expanded use of electronic documentation “may cause breaks in shared assumptions regarding the structure and functions of the narrative medical record” (Weir *et al.* 2011: xxx.e64), “creat[ing] tension in our collective view of the purpose and structure of clinical narrative” (Weir *et al.* 2011: xxx.e68), with an impact on the self-perceived – but also institutionally determined – role and position of different categories of professionals within the health care system.

5. Conclusions

The introduction of electronic clinical documentation represents a huge challenge to professional and institutional practices. As this analysis has shown, its implications are broad and multifarious, and include – amongst others – issues of professional identity, power and centrality, as well as changing patterns of knowledge construction in which different epistemic paradigms compete.

The public hearing analysed in this paper represents a rare instance of self-reflective discursive engagement with such issues. Faced with the task of negotiating emerging practices in a novel socio-technical environment, and, in the case of clinicians, under pressure to defend their own turf and maintain centrality in an environment increasingly subject to multiple influences, participants in the debate had to make their positions and priorities manifest, thereby providing cues to underlying ideologies and assumptions. The reflexive nature of the debate has made it possible to explore issues which shape social practices in pervasive ways, but which are typically present at a pre-theoretical level in the accomplishment of professional and institutional tasks.

In the domain of medical communication, the importance of these constructs has been recognized for some time now, and their impact on healthcare delivery explored from a mainly interactionist perspective. In particular, a growing body of literature has been studying the way in which professional identity is constructed and managed *vis-à-vis* institutional identity in the course of clinical encounters, focusing on the strategic use of different modes of talk in the service of multiple tasks and goals. In the course of clinical encounters (“structured activity[es]” (Agar 1985), organised around tasks (Drew and Heritage 1992), and characterised by an “interplay of institutional, professional and personal-experiential modes of talk” (Sarangi and Roberts 1999), professional identities are displayed and constructed locally – in interaction – on the basis of professional ideologies and mentalities (Sarangi 2004) which shape and channel discursive action in the pursuit of a “cumulative consolidation of knowledge and expertise” (Sarangi 2004: 191).

Research has recognised that these ideologies and mentalities play a crucial role in the identity work that is carried out interactionally in clinical encounters. Yet,

it has also acknowledged that they are not always easy to pin down and define, as they constitute a form of knowledge which shapes and epistemologically frames action in manners that are often implicit. As Sarangi (2010: 192) observes,

[I]nteraction in the professional setting is not a skill, but a knowledge system, laminated with expertise and authority that we as interaction analysts need to understand in order to navigate our analytical apparatus. The need for collaborative interpretation is paramount, given that interpretation of themes in professional contexts is not as straightforward as it might seem.

In other words, the analysis of clinical encounters – and more in general of professional and institutional interaction – requires that the assumptions and interpretations of the analyst be checked against those of the participants, knowledge being in this case as well co-constructed in progressive approximations through meaning negotiation and mediation.

The consultation process surrounding the introduction of health IT has been an ideal terrain for the exploration of (some of) the ideologies and mentalities underpinning the above-mentioned interpretation of themes. The definition of the nature, purpose and uses of electronic documentation has been shown to be a site of engagement for competing paradigms and ideologies. Forced to engage in self-reflexivity in order to negotiate their changing roles and functions *vis-à-vis* their established ones, the participants in the debate have made their ideological positioning manifest in discourse.

The findings that have emerged from the discourse-analytical study of the text of the debate can therefore provide a useful background for the identification of areas of potential professional identity conflict and discourse friction in the accomplishment of institutionally mediated professional tasks. Against this background, interactionally negotiated solutions to such conflicts can be better investigated, and their contribution to the discourse evolution and changing constructs of professional identities evaluated.

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Biosketch

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Professional discourse in video abstracts: re-articulating the meaning of written research article abstracts

Anna Franca Plastina

Abstract

The online practice of creating authored video abstracts to supplement written research article (RA) abstracts allows medical journals and their authors to gain major promotional advantages. This emerging practice is, however, pushing professional discourse towards an unprecedented digital intersemiotic shift, which may lead to a significant diachronic variation in the RA abstract genre and eventually affect expert-to-expert communication. The present paper investigates how moves/steps in written RA abstracts are rendered in video abstracts and how the RA abstract genre is meaningfully re-articulated at the multimodal level of discourse. Move and multimodal analyses are performed on a corpus of written and video abstracts selected from online medical journals overtly promoting this discourse practice. Results show that new constituent steps in video abstracts are key to greater genre flexibility and that their linguistic realisations point to genre variation. Multimodal findings highlight different intersemiotic relations between the two abstract modes, and further findings reveal that the traditional RA abstract genre is contaminated by other professional speech genres, which strengthen the spoken mode of abstracts.

Keywords

RA abstract genre, professional discourse, video abstracts, multimodality, online medical journals.

1. Introduction

Although abstracts have traditionally been considered as a “part-genre” of research articles (RA) (Swales 2004: 239), they differ “in their rhetoric structures and in their linguistic realisations” (Lorés 2004: 281), and also function as “stand-alone, *mini texts*” (Huckin 2001: 93; original emphasis). Nowadays, online journals are encouraging authors to supplement their written abstracts (WA) with video abstracts (VA) to gain major visibility, given that videos rank higher than written texts in search engine results. This emerging practice thus appears to value the “stand-alone” function of online RA abstracts, while also pointing to a wider structural difference between abstracts and their RAs.

Currently, online medical journals are particularly keen on adopting the practice of authoring VAs to further push the promotional potential of RA abstracts (cf. Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995). While it can be argued that the digital inter-semiotic shift from the monomodal to the multimodal format “is nothing new, nor is it exclusive to the Web” (Garzone 2007: 21), this publishing initiative is driving expert-to-expert communication towards unprecedented processes of “resemiotisation” (cf. Iedema 2003). This shift allows authors to achieve an unparalleled global reach, in terms of visibility, far beyond their traditional professional discourse communities.

Although extensive studies have been conducted on the rhetorical structures and linguistic features of abstracts across different disciplines and languages, only the traditional written format has received great attention. The practice of authoring VAs is still largely under-researched, also due to its current embryonic stage of development. Nevertheless, as this phenomenon may mark a significant diachronic variation in the RA abstract genre and affect the traditional professional discourse community at large, it deserves much closer attention from discourse and genre analysts. This study thus sets out to explore how the structuring moves/steps of *written-to-be-read* RA abstracts are rendered in *spoken-to-be-viewed* abstracts through authoring processes which may contribute to the genre variation of traditional WAs. In particular, the study investigates how meaning making is re-articulated in the transition from monomodal to multimodal texts by taking the case of medical RA abstracts where VAs are gaining momentum.

2. Professional discourse in written and video abstracts

In the field of scientific publishing, the practice of creating audio-visual recordings as authored VAs is purposed to better display authors' credibility, maximise their visibility, and thus promote their articles by directly addressing the wider professional community. On their side, recipients are given the choice of accessing abstracts in one or both formats: they can act as viewers who consume authored VAs as stand-alone multimodal texts, as readers consulting only the written version, or even engage in the dual viewer-reader role for comparative understanding.

In traditional abstracts, professional discourse is mediated only through the written mode, and monomodal abstracts generally tend to mirror the original content and form of RAs without adding any further information. In VAs, instead, authors can make other semiotic choices to better promote their research and claim major credibility. These new forms of professional discourse are thus likely to have different structural organisations based on the choice of different rhetorical *moves*, each of which has its own functional purpose (Swales 2004: 228), and *steps* as options in setting out moves (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 89). Choices may be related to move types, which can be classified according to their frequency as *obligatory* moves which always occur in texts, *conventional* moves occurring more frequently, and *optional* moves less frequently (Biber *et al.*

2007: 24). Choices may also regard the sequential order of moves, which affects the entire way in which the genre is organised (Samraj 2014: 388).

Move-step analysis makes a significant contribution to gaining understanding of the organisational nature of discourse, its linguistic functional features and their connection with the social context. One relevant model of move-step analysis which is specifically applicable to RA abstracts is the five-move model proposed by Hyland (2004: 67). The model is framed by the traditional IPMPPrC (Introduction, Purpose, Method, Product, Conclusion) structure as follows: the main function of the Introduction Move (M1) is to set the context of the RA and motivate the research through four main steps, namely, arguing for topic prominence (S1), making topic generalisations (S2), defining terms, objects, or processes (S3), and identifying a gap in current knowledge (S4); the Purpose Move (M2) outlines the intention behind the RA and includes the step of stating the purpose directly (S1); the Method Move (M3) provides information regarding procedures and approaches and entails the steps of describing participants (S1), instruments or equipment (S2), procedures and conditions (S3); the Product Move (M4) states the main findings by describing the main features (S1), whereas the Conclusion Move (M5) interprets and/or extends results beyond the RA by deducing conclusions from results (S1), evaluating the research value (S2) and presenting recommendations (S3).

In VAs, however, meaning making also takes place at the rhetorical multimodal level of discourse, where intersemiotic relations between WA and VA segments contribute to re-articulating original meanings. These relations may be categorized as *hypotactic*, i.e., “the relation between a dependent element and its dominant, the element on which it is dependent”, and *paratactic*, i.e., “the relation between two like elements of equal status, one initiating and the other continuing” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 373-375). As both rhetorical moves/steps and intersemiotic relations appear to play a key role in VA authoring processes, their analysis will help understand whether they contribute to the genre variation of traditional WAs.

3. Methodology

3.1. Aim and method

The study seeks to investigate the kind of variation occurring at the levels of rhetorical moves/steps and multimodal discourse by addressing the following two research questions:

RQ1 How are moves/steps in *written-to-be-read* abstracts ‘translated’ into *spoken-to-be-viewed* texts?

RQ2 How does multimodal meaning re-articulate the RA abstract genre?

The study is theoretically framed by move analysis theory (Swales 1990, 2004) and studies on abstracts (e.g. Huckin 2001; Hyland 2004; Lorés 2004), which account for the communicative purpose of texts associated with specific moves/

steps. A mixed-method research design is used to analyse the functional/communicative structures of RA abstracts (cf. Upton and Cohen 2009). Drawing also upon research on intersemiosis (e.g. O'Halloran 2008) and resemioticisation (e.g. Iedema 2003), the study further adopts a social semiotic approach to the analysis of rhetorical multimodality in VAs in order to focus on meaning making across all semiotic modes.

3.2. The RA abstract corpus

The corpus of texts used in the study is made up of a total of 60 RA abstracts published between November 2013 and October 2015 in one of three online medical journals, namely, *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM), *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* (CGH) and the *Journal of Neurologic Physical Therapy* (JNPT) (Appendix 1). These journals were sourced for their overt promotion of authored VAs, although CGH samples were retrievable only through YouTube. The 60 texts in the corpus include 30 WAs and 30 corresponding VAs, randomly selected from the three journals with an equal distribution of texts ($N=20$; 10 WAs and 10 VAs) for major data reliability.

3.3. Procedure

Sample written RA abstracts were saved as text files and audio-recordings of the videos were transcribed. Functional discourse structures were analysed and coded by applying Hyland's (2004) five-move model as the analytical framework. Move analysis was conducted through a top-down approach (cf. Biber *et al.* 2007) by first segmenting all sample texts into discourse units, and identifying moves and steps (cf. Upton and Cohen 2006). These were then classified and hand-coded, and possible innovative sequences in VAs were recorded. Linguistic analysis was performed on significant data yielded from the analysis of functional discourse structures. Syntactic and lexical features were analysed to pinpoint the linguistic choices made in the intersemiotic shift. As a final step, intersemiotic relations between VA multimodal segments and WA parts were identified and classified for the type of interdependency (paratactic or hypotactic), and for other features contributing to re-articulating original meanings.

4. Findings and discussion

The written subcorpus is made up of a total of 8,861 running words (CGH 2,868; NEJM 3,427; JNPT 2,566); the transcribed subcorpus, instead, amounts to 20,463 words (CGH 6,436; NEJM 7,135; JNPT 6,892) with a word percentage increase of +130.93%, justified by the speech mode. The findings reported in the following sections refer respectively to the functional, linguistic and multimodal levels at which professional discourse in RA abstracts was analysed across the two modes.

4.1. Translating RA abstract moves and steps

All sample VAs are found to preserve the IPMPrc structure governing the STs, thus replicating move types and order. VAs thus differ from other web-based genres as they “draw on those properties of genre central to its definition - particularly in relation to structure” (Bateman 2008: 209). Maintaining the conventional move structure seems to facilitate viewers’ recognition of the RA abstract genre as it is now mediated through the unconventional audio-visual mode. Genre recognition, however, also “usually limits interpretive flexibility” (Bazerman 1994: 90). This limitation appears to be counterbalanced by the use of five new constituent steps (S) in different move (M) types as highlighted in bold in Table 1. The five new steps are positioned within four move types out of the total of the five original WA moves. While these new steps do not appear to significantly alter the original move structure, they spell out “more specifically the rhetorical means of realizing the function” (Yang and Allison 2003: 370) of a move in terms of expanding content treatment for new rhetorical purposes.

*Table 1. Genre Flexibility of Video RA Abstracts:
New constituent steps (S) of move (M) types.*

Written RA Abstracts (based on Hyland 2004, 67)	Video Abstracts	Frequency of Use (%)
Introduction (M1)		
S1- arguing for topic prominence	S1 - stating professional identity	100%
S2 -identifying a gap in current knowledge	S2 - declaring professional organisation of belonging	100%
S3- defining research processes	S3 - arguing for topic prominence identifying a gap in current knowledge	73.4%
		26.6%
Purpose (M2)		
S1 - stating the purpose directly	S1 - defining research processes	100%
	S2 - stating the purpose directly	100%

Method (M3)		
S1- describing participants	S1 - describing methodological value	100%
S2- describing instruments or equipment	S2 - describing participants	93.4%
	describing instruments	96.7%
S3- describing procedures and conditions	describing procedures and conditions	96.7%
	S3 - Ø	100%
Product (M4)		
S1 - stating main findings	S1 - stating importance of research findings	100%
	S2 - stating main findings	100%
Conclusion (M5)		
S1 - deducing conclusions from results	S1 - deducing conclusions from results	100%
	S2 - evaluating the research value	96.7%
S2 - presenting recommendations	presenting recommendations	3.3%
S3 - evaluating the research value	S3 – addressing viewers	100%

In detail, the first two new steps of *stating professional identity* (S1) and *declaring professional organisation of belonging* (S2) serve the new rhetorical purposes of mediating information about the authors and their institutions. While these steps are not necessary in the written mode as readers gain this information from the headings lying outside the actual abstracts, they appear to be obligatory in VAs to fulfil the functional purposes of claiming authorship (S1) and community membership (S2) before presenting research content. The meaning of the Introduction section of WAs is therefore re-articulated as the original steps (SS1-2) are now combined in the final introductory step (S3) of VAs. Here authors significantly prefer *arguing for topic prominence* (73.4%) much more than *identifying a gap in current knowledge* (26.6%), which suggests their greater promotional interest. These choices also signal a typological shift from the two WA *conventional* steps to the *option* within the same VA step (S3).

The third new step of *describing methodological value* is introduced in the

Method Move (M3: S1) to allow authors to claim research credibility. This new meaning acquires importance as it precedes the three original WA steps, which are now merged into one VA step (M3: S2). This merged step appears to preserve the *conventional* nature of the original WA steps as shown by the high frequency of use of *describing participants* (93.4%), *instruments* (96.7%) and *procedures and conditions* (96.7%). This further suggests that all this research information is also considered salient in VAs, and thus needs to be preserved.

The fourth new step of *stating importance of research findings* in the Product Move (M4: S1) splits the one-step structure of WAs into two steps in VAs, where priority is given to the communicative function of affirming research relevance over *stating main findings*, again for promotional purposes.

The fifth and final new step of *addressing viewers* in the Conclusion Move (M5: S3) is as unique to VAs as the introductory steps (SS1-2). Here, authors interact directly with their global audience to promote their research and convince viewers to read their articles. More room is allowed to do this as the WA steps of *evaluating the research value* (S2) and *presenting recommendations* (S3) are merged into one VA step (S2). The optional choices made here show a clear preference for the step of *evaluating the research value* (96.7%) over *presenting recommendations* (3.3%). While this preference appears to lower the promotional effect of this step, authors can exploit the new step (S3) to better persuade their audience.

Overall, the VA structural pattern reveals that the “inherent flexibility of speech genres” (Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas 2005: 56) allows authors to interperse new steps within the conventional WA structure and to merge WA steps in order to re-articulate meaning for a stronger promotional effect. As results show that these five new steps are the most significant site of genre variation in RA abstracts, their linguistic realisations also deserve to be analysed.

4.2. Linguistic features of new steps in video abstracts

The communicative functions of claiming authorship and community membership in the first two new steps of the introductory move of VAs are grammaticalised through the categories of person and place deixes as shown in Example (1):

(1) Hi, my name is Sandra Beinhardt. I am MD at the Department of Internal Medicine III Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at the Medical University of Vienna, Austria. I will discuss our paper Long-term Outcomes of Patients with Wilson Disease in a Large Austrian Cohort published in this issue of the journal [CGH, # 6]

The person deictic markers *my* and *I* refer to contextual information about the author who is directly involved in the VA utterance; other grammatical persons involved are mentioned through the possessive adjective *our*, which also situates the author within a research team and gives her the status of co-author (*our* paper). The place deictic expressions *at the Department* and *at the Medical University* acquire extreme relevance in the utterance not in relation to the speaker's physical location, but rather in marking her *insider* status. The understanding

of the deictic *this (issue)*, instead, requires extralinguistic information about the journal in order to capture the connection between the actual video and its covert promotion of the RA (*our paper*).

In the third new step (M3: S1), there is a transition from the formal register of WAs to a more colloquial register in VAs as suggested in Example (2):

(2) WA: We performed a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial in which patients were randomly assigned to receive bridging anticoagulation therapy...

VA: A frequent practice is to bridge the patient temporarily with heparin around the time of surgery. But is that necessary? A large randomized bridge trial was designed as a non-inferiority study... [NEJM # 4]

In the WA, the person deictic *we* marks subjectivity, denoting how research is relativised, also through the action *performed*. In the VA, instead, the nominal phrase *a frequent practice* functions as a situational deictic marker to signal intersubjectivity, rendered overtly through the rhetorical question *but is that necessary?* This linguistic device contributes to framing a new *viewer-oriented* perspective to entice the audience into reading the full article. In this, the verbal phrase *a large randomized bridge trial was designed* stimulates professional interest in finding out more about the research. Syntactically, the shift from subjectivity to intersubjectivity is also marked by the substitution of the passive voice (*patients were randomly assigned*) with the active voice (*to bridge the patient*).

The fourth new step (M4: S1) is featured by a change in the way research findings are described as shown in Example (3):

(3) WA: Cigarettes with lower nicotine content, as compared with control cigarettes, reduced exposure to and dependence on nicotine, as well as craving during abstinence from smoking.

VA: The researchers focused on adults who smoked daily and who were not interested in smoking cessation [NEJM # 9]

The analytical description in the WA has a clear *issue-oriented* focus (*cigarettes, control cigarettes, nicotine*); whereas a more *person-oriented* perspective (*researchers, adults*) is taken in the VA. This new frame contributes to strengthening the relevance of the RA in relation to the author(s). Compared to the WA counterpart, the person-oriented perspective overtly boosts author visibility.

In the fifth and final step (M5: 3), conclusions are drawn, moving from a *data-centred* approach to a *research-centred* one as shown in Example (4):

(4) WA: These data will aid the effectiveness of interventions to improve gait speed in persons with Parkinson disease.

VA: We've spent a lot of time in my laboratory in our clinic evaluating Gait Performance in persons with Parkinson Disease. I invite you to read our paper. Thank you for listening [JNPT # 10]

Hence, the scientific value of *these data* in the WA is juxtaposed with *we've spent a lot of time in my laboratory in our clinic* for a more persuasive impact on viewers. In particular, the person deictic *we* marks the collective efforts made to achieve *these data*. Efforts are further conveyed through the temporal expression *a lot of time*, which denotes persistent research commitment, and through the person/place deictics *in my laboratory* and *in our clinic* which signal professional status, besides suggesting the high level of competence (*laboratory, clinic*) mastered by the professionals. These linguistic features thus converge to convince the professional audience of the noteworthiness of the research, and this persuasive effect is subsequently reinforced by the directness of the recommendation *I invite you to read our paper*, and by the politeness in the salutation *thank you for listening*. The key linguistic features and changes characterising the new VA steps are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Genre Variation in Video Abstracts: Key Linguistic Features and Changes

New Steps	Linguistic Features	Changes
M1: SS 1-2	Person and place deixes	Increased self-referentiality
M3: S1	Situational deictic markers Rhetorical questions Active voice of verbs	More colloquial register From subjectivity to intersubjectivity
M4: S1	Common person nouns	From issue-oriented to person-oriented perspective
M5: 3	Person and place deixis Temporal markers Politeness markers	From data-oriented to researcher-oriented approach

4.3. Making Rhetorical Multimodal Meaning of RA Abstracts

While authors are allowed more open choices in the verbalisation of their discourses thanks to the five new functional steps introduced, rhetorical multimodal choices vary according to the medical journal in which the VAs appear. For instance, a high degree of constraint is imposed by the NEJM in the introductory steps of *stating professional identity* (M1: S1) and *declaring professional organisa-*

tion of belonging (M1: S2) through the use of a same voice-over narrator in all sample videos. Although the two obligatory steps of the spoken genre are maintained, greater importance appears to be attributed to the narrator than to the authors of the original WAs. In this kind of interdependency between the visual sketch in VAs and the WA textual counterpart, the narrator overtly introduces himself, but makes no verbal mention of the names of the WA authors. Hence, the narrator's identity acquires *dominant* status and the authors' identities *dependent* status so that the two segments are seen to engage in a *hypotactic* relation of interdependency. This unequal status allows the narrator to obscure the authors' identities, and re-articulate the original meaning of authorship, thus making the hypotactic relation one of *contrast*.

This relation further contributes to strengthening the communicative effect of the narrator's professional organisation. In NEJM sample abstract # 10, for instance, the meaning of *the New England Journal of Medicine* is transferred from the written to the spoken mode without any changes in order to clearly emphasize the narrator's professional organisation. This suggests that the visual sketch acquires a strong promotional function, whereby the narrator is more interested in promoting the journal than the actual abstract. Meaning is further re-articulated in the following video frame, where both colours represent a semiotic resource of meaning (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 2002), and lexical choices play a key role in mediating the multimodal meaning of the RA abstract. The textual segment *Nuts and Death* stands out against a black background (prototypical colour for death), and draws the viewer's attention for its position in the upper section of the screen in large coloured characters. It thus serves the ideational function of denoting key concepts about the abstract, becoming the "ostensibly, most salient part" (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 193). Moreover, the lexical item *death* popularises the scientific term *mortality* and creates semantic ambiguity in the association between *Nuts and Death*. The original term *Abstract* is replaced with the expression *Key Points* framed by a slide layout, which suggests that the RA abstract genre has been contaminated by the oral presentation genre. Here, authorship engages in another hypotactic relation with the date of publication of the article. The lack of mention of all co-authors (*et al.*), the loss of the first author's full name, together with their representation in small font size, all contribute to creating a dependent status of authorship on the date of publication, which is written in large fonts (*NOVEMBER 21, 2013*). The capitalisation of the date thus appears to covertly promote the journal by signalling the specific time of publication.

Alongside these semantic relations of contrast, VAs also mediate multimodal meaning through the use of hypotactic relations of the *additive* type. In this kind of complex verbal-visual interdependency, different multimodal elements operate to add visual information to the original text. In the Method section of the same NEJM sample abstract, for instance, the keyword *survey* labelling the document in the background of the video frame depends on the original concept of *examined* in the written text. The visual representation serves the function of building on the methodological value of the research (M3: S1), and thus adds to

the authors' research credibility. The text-image representation of a *death certificate* in the foreground of the video frame depends on the original expression *cause-specific mortality*, and increases its emotional effect on viewers. The small image of a woman in the top right-hand corner depicts the original expression *76,464 women*, while also cohesively relating to the concepts of *examined* and *cause-specific mortality*. As all these multimodal elements can be seen to depend on the original text for meaning making, they are unable to create stand-alone meaning.

The use of infographics as a more appealing way of engaging viewers, instead, favours the creation of *paratactic* relations of interdependency between visual and text segments across the two semiotic modes of abstracts. The visual holds *equal* status with the original written text, which initiates the relation, and is thus seen as the *nucleus* containing the main scientific information; the infographic continues with additional information visualising the main concept of the textual segment, and thus functions as the *satellite* in the paratactic relation. In other words, the original meaning of the written abstract is supplemented through the multimodal choice of using an infographic, which holds equal status with the written text, but can also function as a stand-alone text.

Unlike NEJM VAs, samples from the other two journal sources (CGH and JNPT) do not rely as much on hypotactic and paratactic relations for meaning making, but rather operate through the direct participation of authors, who appear to mediate multimodal meaning by *contaminating* the RA abstract genre in different ways. In sample JNPT # 04, for instance, the author chooses to structure his VA through the virtual tour genre as announced in the introductory step (M1: S2): *I would like to tell you a bit more about the study we conducted in our centre at Maastricht University*. The images depicting the centre and the university in the following video frames help contextualise the research coherently with the use of person and place deixes characterising the linguistic features of M1(SS 1-2) for increased self-referentiality (cf. Table 2).

Besides being contaminated by this display genre, the multimodal meaning of the RA abstract is also found to be governed by the videoconference presentation genre. In sample JNPT # 05, for instance, the author is positioned at a remote distance in a frontal plane and at an eye-level angle to signal intersubjectivity in the Method Move (M3: S1) (cf. Table 2). Eye-level angle, in fact, evokes the interpersonal meaning of inclusion and suggests a sense of equality, rather than any power position (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). The author's end goal here is to be on equal grounds with his viewers so as to persuade them more effectively of the methodological value of his research. The caption at the bottom of all video frames also contributes to this persuasive effect, as it constantly reminds viewers of the author's identity and professional status, and thus seems to consolidate his research credibility. In the frame where the author is stating the importance of research findings (M4: S1), the representation of a healthcare provider engaged in the treatment of a patient mediates the multimodal meaning of the achieved research results. The image thus provides visual evidence of the *person-oriented* perspective rendered through linguistic features (cf. Table 2).

A more complex case of genre contamination occurs where the conventional boundaries of the WA genre are blurred by the presence of other spoken genres. For example, the two co-authors in sample CGH # 09 are represented in a conference context, where they blend the interview and the conference presentation genres into their VA. The typical question-answer structure of the interview genre characterises the new step of *addressing viewers* (M5: S3) as the ultimate recipients of the message. The question-answer exchange between the co-authors (*how would you use this information in your clinical practice? I think it'll help patients better understand the risk of postoperative mortality*) determines a shift from the data-oriented conclusion move in the WA to the *researcher-oriented* one in the VA (cf. Table 2). Moreover, the slide with its bullet-point note (*IBD patients who undergo elective surgery...*) depicted in the background is a clear multimodal indicator of the conference presentation genre. This genre appears to weaken the written mode of the RA abstract, as it solicits VA viewers to act as members of a conference audience, who are mainly expected to listen to speakers and decode visual aids, rather than reading texts alone.

On the whole, a significant pattern of multimodal meaning making was found in the corpus samples, denoting how WAs are re-articulated through the occurrence of different tokens of multimodal relations ($N=152$), and instances of genre contamination ($N=30$). Results show that multimodal elements of VAs mainly engage in paratactic relations (*nucleus-satellite*) with their written counterparts (52.6%). The primary scope of multimodal meaning in VAs is therefore to supplement monomodal meaning in WAs while holding equal status. Hypotactic relations are also established more to add visual information to the written texts (39.5%) rather than to contrast them (7.9%). In this case, however, multimodal meaning is dependent on the original meaning, and thus holds unequal status. The pattern of multimodal re-articulation of WA meanings is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Corpus Pattern of Multimodal Re-articulation of Written RA Abstract Meaning.

Multimodal Rhetorical Relation Types	N° of instances (N= 152)	Percentage
Paratactic relation (<i>nucleus-satellite</i>)	80	52.6%
Hypotactic relation: additive	60	39.5%
Hypotactic relation: contrast	12	7.9%

Genre contamination	N° of instances (N=30)	Percentage
Conference presentation genre	23	76.6%
Interview genre (in the case of co-authors)	5	16.6%
Display genre (e.g. virtual tour)	2	6.8%

Finally, the authors' direct participation in video abstracts favours the contamination of the RA abstract genre by blending it primarily with the conference presentation genre (76.6%), and significantly less with the interview genre (16.6%) and the display genre (6.8%).

5. Concluding remarks

New professional discourse practices surge from the continuous exploitation of Web dynamics as investigated in previous studies (e.g. Plastina 2016). The current study has highlighted how the RA abstract genre is undergoing a revolutionary diachronic change as the Web is increasingly harnessed by online medical journals to boost their promotion. VAs extend the previous possible reach by providing authors with a platform to communicate their research in ways that would have been impossible in the print environment. Operating in the unconventional audio-visual mode, VAs were found to rely on conventional moves for genre recognition, but more importantly, on new defining steps for increased genre flexibility leading to variation as highlighted by the analysed linguistic features and changes. In addition, the analysis of multimodal segments revealed that rhetorical paratactic relations were mainly used to re-articulate original meanings for greater conceptual clarity in WA texts. This predominant type of interdependent relation ensured VAs the same status of stand-alone texts as their WA counterparts. Multimodal results also pointed out that the viewing experience was mediated through processes of genre contamination which privilege the conference presentation genre, thus reinforcing the use of the spoken mode.

VAs can easily be retrieved through computerised searches, and thus make authors' research much more accessible and visible to the wider professional discourse community. Their structural flexibility is, however, undermining the integrity of the RA abstract genre and may eventually affect the traditional professional discourse community. Although the findings in this study are limited to a small sample corpus, no VAs were found prior to the year 2013, thus highlighting that it is far too early to draw any definite conclusions. Ongoing research stemming from the current study will investigate whether the practice of VAs is extended to other disciplinary communities, with a particular focus on processes of genre hybridisation afforded by advanced Web dynamics that distance the abstract even more from its traditional classification as a "part-genre" of research articles.

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Appendix 1 – corpus of written and video ra abstracts

I. New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) (<http://www.nejm.org/>)

1. Perioperative Bridging Anticoagulation in Patients with Atrial Fibrillation
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1501035
2. A Randomized Trial of Intraarterial Treatment for Acute Ischemic Stroke
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1411587
3. Twelve or 30 Months of Dual Antiplatelet Therapy after Drug-Eluting Stents
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1409312
4. Cytisine versus Nicotine for Smoking Cessation
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1407764
5. Angiotensin–Neprilysin Inhibition versus Enalapril in Heart Failure
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1409077
6. Global Sodium Consumption and Death from Cardiovascular Causes
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1304127
7. Association of Urinary Sodium and Potassium Excretion with Blood Pressure
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1311989
8. Beyond Malaria - Causes of Fever in Outpatient Tanzanian Children
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1214482
9. Distracted Driving and Risk of Road Crashes among Novice and Experienced Drivers, www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1204142
10. Association of Nut Consumption with Total and Cause-Specific Mortality
www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1307352

II. Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology (CGH) (www.cghjournal.org)

1. Psychoactive Medications Increase the Risk of Falls and Fall-related Injuries in Hospitalized Patients with Cirrhosis. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(15\)00305-5/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(15)00305-5/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jo4-766F1A
2. Psychological Stress Increases Risk for Peptic Ulcer, Regardless of Helicobacter pylori infection or Use of Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(14\)01136-7/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(14)01136-7/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkkHePOqhmMs

3. Effects of Clostridium difficile Infection in Patients with Alcoholic Hepatitis. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(14\)00446-7/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(14)00446-7/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhTY-7fjmoY

4. Risks of Serious Infection or Lymphoma with Anti-Tumor Necrosis Factor Therapy for Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease: A Systematic Review. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(14\)00109-8/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(14)00109-8/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=RY-YI7rVyoc

5. Postoperative Therapy with Infliximab Prevents Long-term Crohn's Disease Recurrence. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(14\)00053-6/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(14)00053-6/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuBFLMF7N6k

6. Long-term Outcomes of Patients with Wilson Disease in a Large Austrian Cohort. [http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(13\)01430-4/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(13)01430-4/abstract); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sI-LRYjiU4o>

7. Subsquamous Extension of Intestinal Metaplasia Is Detected in 98% of Cases of Neoplastic Barrett's Esophagus. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(13\)01053-7/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(13)01053-7/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4OMQqHkjTQ

8. Guidance on Preparing an Investigational New Drug Application for Fecal Microbiota Transplantation Studies. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(13\)01508-5/abstract](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(13)01508-5/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ma_vYXHbGB0

9. Postoperative Mortality Among Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Diseases: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Population-Based Studies. [www.gastrojournal.org/article/S0016-5085\(15\)00785-4/abstract](http://www.gastrojournal.org/article/S0016-5085(15)00785-4/abstract); www.youtube.com/watch?v=6koa-4IoDGY

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III. Journal of Neurologic Physical Therapy (JNPT) (<http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/pages/default.aspx>)

1. Effects of Group, Individual, and Home Exercise in Persons with Parkinson Disease: A Randomized Clinical Trial, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/pages/video-gallery.aspx?videoId=113&autoplay=true>

2. A Cognitive-Balance Control Training Paradigm Using Wii Fit to Reduce Fall Risk in Chronic Stroke Survivors, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/video-gallery.aspx?videoId=100&autoplay=true>

3. Defining the Clinically Meaningful Difference in Gait Speed in Persons with Parkinson Disease

<http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/video-gallery.aspx?videoId=98&autoplay=true>

4. Efficacy of Feedback-Controlled Robotics-Assisted Treadmill Exercise to Improve Cardiovascular Fitness Early After Stroke: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/video-gallery.aspx?videoId=105&autoplay=true>

5. Postural Alignment Is Altered in People with Chronic Stroke and Related to

Motor and Functional Performance, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/videogallery.aspx?videoId=97&autoplay=true>

6. Rasch Analysis of the Wrist and Hand Fugl-Meyer: Dimensionality and Item-Level Characteristics, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/videogallery.aspx?videoId=102&autoplay=true>

7. Exercise and Medication Effects on Persons with Parkinson Disease Across the Domains of Disability: A Randomized Clinical Trial, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/videogallery.aspx?videoId=95&autoplay=true>

8. Dual-Task Training on a Treadmill to Improve Gait and Cognitive Function in Elderly Idiopathic Fallers, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/videogallery.aspx?videoId=96&autoplay=true>

9. Effects of Amplitude Cueing on Postural Responses and Preparatory Cortical Activity of People with Parkinson Disease, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/videogallery.aspx?videoId=101&autoplay=true>

10. Neurorehabilitation Strategies that focus on the Ankle May Improve the Mobility and Posture of Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis, <http://journals.lww.com/jnpt/Pages/videogallery.aspx?videoId=111&autoplay=true>

Biosketch

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Engaging with online communication-based medicine, reframing healthcare delivery to adolescents: Online healthcare delivery to adolescents

Rosita Maglie

Abstract

This study examines an expanding form of text-based interaction between healthcare professionals and patients that occurs via computer-mediated formats instead of traditional face-to-face consultations in order to explore a new kind of health provision specifically for adolescents. In particular, it addresses a health question and answer (Q&A) internet resource, i.e. *Go Ask Alice!*, designed to provide professional health information almost exclusively to adolescents. The analysis of messages posted by adolescents to *Go Ask Alice!* and relative answers provided by Alice, a virtual persona who speaks for a team of Columbia University healthcare providers, supplies a new source of insight into how we talk about health and illness as an online community of sufferers and healers.

Through corpus and discourse procedures, the study (a) shows that the discursive practices of giving information are symmetrical to those employed by the young post writer seeking information; (b) demonstrates how this symmetrical online communication-based medicine can be considered an effective means of healthcare assistance for the younger generation, and (c) paves the way for the development of theories in both linguistics and healthcare provision.

Keywords

Computer-mediated communication, online health service website, question-posts from advice/information seekers, answer-posts from healthcare providers.

1. Introduction

Health domains have begun to offer virtual spaces where health information, advice and counseling may be sought and obtained. Such sites establish zones of contact between those interested in accessing online health resources and who might benefit from them, and those specialized in providing health assistance. In particular, the internet for young people – those who were “born digital” (Palfrey and Gasser 2008) – is an electronic gateway to confidential advice and information on health issues. In this regard, *Go Ask Alice!* offers a unique and novel vantage point from which to survey both how young people talk about their own health standards and concerns and ask for information and advice, and how

healthcare professionals respond to these concerns and requests. In fact, *Go Ask Alice!*¹ is a health question and answer (Q&A) internet resource which administers online medical advice in response to explicit requests submitted to the service by the public, most of whom are adolescents. Originally, it was intended for use only by Columbia University students, but due to its immediate success on campus, coupled with the growth of the worldwide web, *Go Ask Alice!* has become a global internet resource. Now the site receives over 1,000 inquiries weekly from college and high-school students on every conceivable health topic, and over 4 million readers visit the site each month².

This specialist internet health service arranges Q&As into the following six archives for better user-friendliness: alcohol and other drugs; emotional health; fitness and nutrition; general health; relationships; and sexual and reproductive health. For the purpose of the present analysis, the data (Q&As) were taken from one of the six archives, namely “Alcohol and other drugs”. The specific health issues found in the archive and addressed in this study are particularly relevant to adolescents and to their understanding of behavior and attitudes as well as of psychological and physical health conditions. As discussed below, questions about alcohol and drugs are an important part of young people’s requests for online healthcare provision. In corroboration of this, the global status report on alcohol and health (World Health Organization 2014) confirms alcohol is one of the key health problems among young people. It states: “the WHO European Region and WHO Region of the Americas have the highest proportions of current drinkers among adolescents and the WHO South-East Asia Region and WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region the lowest” (World Health Organization 2014: 36). Moreover, the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Health (last updated in June 2015) states that “in 2013, an estimated 24.6 million Americans aged 12 or older – 9.4 percent of the population – had used an illicit drug in the past month”. If we consider Europe, the situation is even more alarming: “recent studies among 15- and 16-year-olds suggest that use of marijuana varies from under 10% to over 40%, with the highest rates reported by teens in the Czech Republic (44%), followed by Ireland (39%), the UK (38%) and France (38%).”

In order to deal with the problem of alcohol and drug use among adolescents, this paper asserts, studies on healthcare communication should help educational interventions and policy initiatives to take some aspects into consideration (Aynsley-Green *et al.* 2000 in Harvey, 2013: 3). Firstly, as Harvey (2013: 3) and McPherson (2005 in Harvey, 2013: 3) affirm, young people are not small adults. They are a unique client group at a specific stage of their emotional, neurological, physical and social development. Accordingly, researchers in a healthcare setting should consider the significance of discourse and adolescents’ perspectives, i.e. what adolescents think health is and how they take care of it, and thus they

1 *Go Ask Alice!* (goaskalice.columbia.edu) (last access: July 2016)

2 From: <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/basic-page/all-about-alice> (last access: July 2016)

should be aimed at spurring young people to take responsibility for and promote their health (Harvey 2013: 3). Moreover, initiatives should set out from their own narratives and not from researchers' agenda. Approaches generated by researchers' questions indeed marginalize or simply overlook the value of the insider's perspective by investigating recurring (or exceptional) patterns of communication in a healthcare setting. Some studies have found evidence that official educational health messages are not taken as such by adolescents but are misinterpreted and adapted to their own lifestyles and their own personal ideas of health and wellbeing (Helman 2007). In this connection, Harvey agrees with what Jackson (2005, in Harvey 2013: 31) argues, namely, that the analysis of material that adopts the insider's perspective may contribute to our understanding of how young people think and talk about health and illness. Since the insider's perspective presupposes that young people discuss health concerns among themselves, taking their perspective into consideration should provide researchers with a report on the kinds of issues that deeply worry young people (Harvey 2013).

The present analysis thus adopts an insider's perspective to achieve a twofold purpose. Q&A included in the archive "Alcohol and other drugs" from *Go Ask Alice!* are examined – using a corpus and discourse analysis approach – to assess the potential for such virtual encounters to affect both medical communication and healthcare provision for the younger generation. On one hand, investigating this health website offers fresh linguistic data for the growing field of research into computer-mediated communication (CMC). On the other, it could also prove meaningful to health professionals and policymakers insofar as it can delineate new aspects of the relationships young people have with the adults who should take care of them (Harvey 2013). In other words, by adopting a more direct approach to and comprehension of young people's language behavior through the use of their preferred channel of communication, i.e. online posting, not only may data and theory on healthcare communication develop, but educational and policy actions could also be developed in agreement with young adults and in accordance with their beliefs and understanding of health and their consequent health-seeking behavior.

2. CMC approaches to healthcare websites and the online disinhibition effect

The emergence of CMC on health is a growing field of research (Crawford & Brown 2010: 19) where many studies have combined discourse and corpus approaches in the analysis of healthcare websites. Adolphs *et al.* (2004), for instance, provide a thorough illustration of how the integration of corpus linguistics methods with existing frameworks in discourse analysis in the study of healthcare communication "seems to offer new possibilities of data and theory building, as well as becoming a resource for practitioners themselves in clinical field settings" (Adolphs *et al.* 2004: 9).

Where CMC research focuses on laypeople seeking information and advice via the internet, Kevin Harvey and his colleagues have made major contributions (Atkins and Harvey 2010; Smith *et al.* 2014; Harvey and Koteyko 2013; Harvey 2012, 2013, Crawford *et al.* 2014). Specifically, Harvey's study *Investigating Adolescent Health Communication* (2013) provides a contemporary snapshot of sexual and mental health problems experienced and freely communicated by UK adolescents on an online forum. The young information and advice seekers, the study found, tend to adopt a medico-technical register in their online requests for sexual and emotional health advice that is always embedded and framed within the uniqueness of the writer's biographical details.

While CMC research shifts to consider the healthcare professionals who provide information and advice on the internet, we notice that the internet has altered, and is altering, the patient-doctor relationship. Nowadays, medical interaction which traditionally took place in an office, face-to-face, ever more frequently occurs in virtual places (e.g. through ask-the-expert health websites, social media, blogs and health forums) (Prasad and Kumar 2012; Plastina 2015; Pounds 2016). Medical professionals communicate through tweets (Chaudhry *et al.* 2012; Neiger *et al.* 2013; Myers 2015; Tereszkievicz 2015), self-care library websites (Tessuto 2015), healthcare websites (Turnbull 2013, 2015), medical weblogs (Shema *et al.* 2015; Luzón 2015; Stermieri 2015), and governmental websites (Bait 2015)³.

Generally speaking, online interaction through email (Crystal 2006; Baron 2003; Harvey 2013), and in this particular case through Q&A posts, is asynchronous, as the participants involved in the communication are not required to be present online contemporarily. *Go Ask Alice!* can take days or months to answer questions submitted to the website, as it is not – as specified on the webpage – an instant reply service. This online asynchronous communication, Suler argues (2004: 323)⁴, causes a disinhibition effect which accelerates self-disclosure and behavioral expression, as people “loosen up, feel less restrained, and express themselves more openly” (Suler 2004: 321).

Moreover, to post a health question on *Go Ask Alice!*, the advice seeker does not use a personal email address, nor does the writer provide his or her name, gender or age. All the writer is explicitly asked to do is to use the interactive facility ‘Ask your question’. By so doing, the writer may dissociate his or her offline, real-life identity from his or her online actions and, according to Suler, the writer then feels “less vulnerable to self-disclosing and acting out” (2004: 322), as whatever s/he writes cannot be connected to the actual author. Eye-contact and face-to-face

3 Most of these studies are included in Maurizio Gotti, Stefania Maci, and Michele Sala (eds.) *Insights into Medical Communication* (2015).

4 According to Suler (2004: 321-324), asynchronicity is one of the six factors which contribute to the online disinhibition effect. The other five are dissociative anonymity, invisibility, solipsistic introjection, dissociative imagination, and the minimization of status and authority.

interaction, it is important to note, can inhibit what people are about to say (Suler 2004: 322) out of fear of the listener's reaction (e.g. judgment, blame, boredom etc.). Hence in complete invisibility and anonymity, the writer to a website like *Go Ask Alice!* types freely without worrying "about how they look or sound" (Suler 2004: 322). On the other hand, the A-posts written by the virtual professional persona known as Alice, as clarified online when describing the mission of *Go Ask Alice!*, offer "reliable, accurate, accessible, culturally competent information and a range of thoughtful perspectives so that they [*i.e. information and advice seekers*] can make responsible decisions concerning their health and well-being"⁵. Healthcare professionals, through specialist internet health services, such as that investigated in this study, seem to make every effort to adjust their ordinary mode of communication (face-to-face interaction in a medical context) to the age of the inquirer and to the new context of interaction (anonymous and physically distant).

3. Materials and Methodology

The present study examines the Q&As separately in order to collect accurate and specific data in relation to the two categories under investigation: the communication styles of young post writers on one hand, and those of health professionals on the other. Specifically, the corpus is made up of 538 posts divided into 269 Qs (20,410 words) and the corresponding 269 As (138,689 words). The investigation focuses on the specific health problems voiced in the writers' posts that are included in the corpus, detected by examining wordlists compiled by order of frequency in both the Q- and A-posts. As may be expected, not only do alcohol and drugs give the title to the *Go Ask Alice!* archive section, but they are also the most frequent words in both the Q- and A-post parts: both the post-writers and the healthcare professionals base their discourse on alcohol intake and drug abuse. This almost obvious correspondence of topics, rendered linguistically in terms of symmetry of lexis and terminology used to speak about general and specific disorders, can be seen as a useful language device for reducing potential conflict between the two parties. The fact that laypeople are those who choose the language (as we shall see, between the professional and the semi-professional) to be used in this online medical interaction and that the healthcare professional welcomes this choice and continues to adopt it can be viewed as a new communication strategy in healthcare settings. By speaking the same language of young Q-post writers and using their favorite channel of communication (internet) to deliver health information, the healthcare professional (like Alice), despite differences in age, knowledge, needs and concerns, shows that her role is complimentary to that of the advice-seeker, insofar as they stand united in their goal of finding successful treatments.

In order to pave the way for a more communication-based and youth-tailored health service and to devise new educational and political strategies to fight alco-

⁵ From: <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/faq/faq>

holism and drug addiction among young people, the study addresses the following three main questions:

1. How do young people describe their health complaints and ask for advice/information?
2. How does Alice respond to and counsel the young Q-post writer?
3. Are there similarities and differences in seeking and in providing advice and information between those who talk about alcohol intake and drug abuse and other service users who communicate different health issues included in the General Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Emotional Health archives?

In order to answer the third question, the present study draws on a previous study (Maglie 2015) which uses a corpus composed by the aforementioned three archives found on *Go Ask Alice!*. The quantitative data in Maglie (2015) also showed that both the post writer and the health professional use the same language items, occurring with the same frequency in the Q- and A-posts, to refer to the health complaints found in General Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Emotional Health.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Q-posts on Alcohol and Other Drugs

Alcohol occurs 68 times. According to what emerges from the questions, alcohol abuse either affects the person writing the post or a relative of his/hers. The topics emerging from the contexts where alcohol is used are diverse: the problem of alcohol poisoning, reluctance to confirm in public s/he is an alcoholic or to go to the doctor, confidence in solving the dependence alone, excuses for their alcohol abuse (i.e. staying in a bar or club, they can't stop drinking), the correlation between alcohol and obesity and between ADHD/diabetes and alcohol abuse, unsuccessful attempts to give up drinking and unpleasant symptoms after alcohol withdrawal, cocktails of alcohol and drugs and bad effects on the body, alcohol tolerance, different kinds of drunkenness and light-headedness and the consequences of alcohol on the liver.

The verb pattern 'drink alcohol' is used neutrally; it occurs in contexts which do not indicate the person who drinks. For example, one questioner asks impersonally but informally whether "it is ok to *drink alcohol* while taking xanax." When 'I' occurs as a subject, it is not followed by the verb pattern 'drink alcohol' which is always present in the subordinate clause and rendered in the gerund form, but it is followed by a conjugated form of the verb 'to be' plus an adjective, such as 'curious' or 'confused'. In both cases, they definitely want to know whether "it is more dangerous to drink alcohol or to smoke cigarettes," and the correlation between alcohol intake and antibiotic assumption.

- (1) *I was curious on which is more dangerous drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes?*
 (2) *I am confused!! What are the effects of drinking alcohol while taking antibiotics?*

This reluctance to mention the issue of alcohol intake in personal terms is also visible in detached questions such as: “what is, overall, safer for your body: alcohol or marijuana?”, “How does the use of alcohol damage the liver?”. However, in the post below, we witness gradual disclosure. The message opens introducing a piece of news the inquirer has heard. Then s/he phrases the first question impersonally (i.e. the presence of ‘a person’), whereas in the second question, s/he relates to him-/herself. The message closes with the signature that further confirms that s/he is the “drinker with hay fever”.

Dear Alice,

I've heard that combining antihistamines and alcohol is a bad thing to do. Can you tell me why this is and what effects it has on a person? Also, how long after consuming one should I avoid the other? [...]

A drinker with hayfever

Along with this unwillingness to link inquiries into alcohol use to their own personal life and experience, Q-post writers explicitly reveal embarrassing and taboo topics articulated without any apparent inhibition, attributing the issue of alcoholism to other people (friends, daughter, sister, and father) or to themselves. Like the post analyzed above, the young inquirer continues to show his/her ignorance as well as misconceptions of alcohol intake and prove that what s/he knows on the topic is mainly based on what s/he has heard or on what friends have told him/her.

- (1) *my friends told me that when they had blacked out or even just gotten sick from alcohol, they did not want to drink again for weeks or months.*
 (2) *Is alcoholism a habitual addiction or can it also be a chemical one? I have heard that it is not chemical, but have lived with people who needed the alcohol every night.*

When the lemma ‘drink alcohol’ is preceded by ‘I’, it is only to state that s/he rarely drinks. The post below portrays the profile of modern youth: the use of colloquial slang (when describing the pipe), self-diagnosis of good health followed some lines on by a statement which displays his/her doubts about the health risks of his/her behavior, the search for a relaxing atmosphere, which is a sort of justification behind his/her use of tobacco, superficial knowledge that relies on what people say and on what they read on the tobacco packet, his/her attention to fashionable behavior among young people, and the ultimate realization that professional advice is needed, leading to subsequent recourse to the internet, in this case an online healthcare provider, Alice, and a closing sentence that is consistent with his/her studies: as s/he is a law student, s/he asks for Alice’s verdict.

Hi Alice,

My friends and I occasionally [...] like to smoke the "Hookah" or sometimes referred to in Arabic as an "argeelay." The tobacco that it comes with smells really good and comes in all kinds of flavors, [...]. Anyway, I consider myself to be pretty healthy in that I have never experimented with drugs, never smoked cigarettes, and rarely drink alcohol. My question is about the health effects of smoking a hookah. The rewards are mostly relaxation after a long day of studying for law school. [...] However, I don't know what the health risks are. [...] People say that it's much safer than cigarettes... and according to the packaging that comes with the tobacco, there are far fewer harmful ingredients... in fact, it's mostly tobacco & molasses. It's a very popular trend these days. It's time we get a good source of information. So what's the verdict?

The following and final example concerns a Q-post writer who is eager to help a friend who has drunk too much. S/he starts by affirming s/he is going to ask two questions but the questions in fact total nine, which in turn include other questions. S/he paints a picture of the possible situations where his/her friend tends to get drunk and asks frantically for advice on the correspondent best practices s/he can adopt to help the friend. S/he even considers the possibility that s/he is also drunk but still eager to sober up and deal with an aggressive atmosphere.

Dear Alice,

Two questions on alcohol:

A friend has had a lot to drink, [...], but what about what I should do physically? Should they lie down, sit upon the floor, sit in a chair? Should they drink water? Should I get them to eat something? Should I take their wrists and make them wave their arms to keep blood rushing? Should I get them to walk? Should they be outside in the fresh air, or in the warmth? Where should I be, sitting side by side with them, sitting on the floor with my chest to their back?

Secondly, if I'm also drunk [...], how can I accelerate sobering up to retain the role of a coordinator and get people sorted out?

Instances of Q-posts which correlate alcohol with drug habits introduce the second word chosen to be investigated in the present study: drug (68 occurrences). In the context, it is used in its double meaning of a chemical taken to treat and prevent an illness or disease (21 cases) and of an illegal substance taken for its pleasant effects (47 cases).

When it refers to a medicine, the Q-post writer asks Alice for further information about some drug side effects (the case of Benadryl, Drug DES), and benefits (aspirin). However, even 'legal' medicines are used in combination to produce particular effects (the combination of Progesterex with Rohypnol, and of Ritalin with Adderall). When it refers to an illegal substance, the Q-post writers want to know whether an effect can be considered 'normal' (as in the case of marijuana), how to quit (again the case of weed), where and whether there is a correlation between HIV/STD and substance abuse (other than IDU). All Q-posts, however, show a competent use of technical vocabulary (use of acronyms, chemical substances)

and a simultaneous knowledge of popular language (e.g. ‘to do drugs’, ‘pot’ to indicate hashish or ‘weed’ for marijuana). In addition, when writing about illegal drugs or the incorrect use of legal drugs, they want to expand their knowledge of possible new drug cocktails and about new drugs (as is the case with a synthetic club drug ‘foxy’), but, on the other hand, they are afraid of the consequences on their health and of testing positive on a drug screening.

On the internet, they speak plainly about their drug consumption but, as the posts below show, the post writers are afraid of being criticized for their habit.

(1) *Dear Alice,*

[...] How much do you know about what the asthma medication called Clenbuteral does to a normal healthy male in regards to body building? [...] I don't need to be preached to about why I should take it or not. I just want the basic gist of what it does. [...]

(2) *Dear Alice,*

I've recently dropped acid about 5 times a week for oh... about 3 months now. [...] my friends tell me I am in a false reality now; [...]. In your opinion, has acid hurt me or helped bring my level of consciousness to a higher level? [...] Please answer this question... I haven't the gall to ask anyone else.

(3) *Alice,*

[...] I have an addiction to a certain drug that has turned my life upside down. [...] The worst part about it is that nobody knows this but me. Nobody knows that right now, my life is on the brink. How do you express this problem to people who don't even have a clue as to what you are dealing with? How do you reach out to the people who you love and trust when you are so ashamed of the truth? One thing that I do know is that I'd better do something fast because if I don't, I will lose my fight with life. HELP!!

The first message above projects the idea that the post writer has, and that many young people may also have, about a healthcare provider: the healthcare provider as someone who dishes out moralist sermons. In fact, s/he explicitly invites Alice not to preach to him/her but to provide him/her with an answer. The second message presents two final questions that weigh two opposite consequences against each other: the negative and positive effect of assuming acid on his/her health. S/he asks Alice these questions because s/he does not have the courage to ask anyone else. The third message shows yet another post writer alone with his/her big problem and great fear (recurrence of ‘nobody’, ‘help’ written in capital letters to show his/her despair and the repetition of ‘life’). His/her reluctance to inform ‘people’ s/he loves is due to his/her conviction that they cannot understand his/her ‘problem’.

When Q-post writers write on someone else’s behalf (of a brother or friend) they use ‘this drug’ as a sort of distance-taking from and criticism of the addict’s behavior.

- (1) *...heroin addict. He has taken his whole family for a roller coaster ride with this drug. WE all want off the ride - he uses the family when he needs us...*
- (2) *I am worried that extended use of this drug will lead to serious problems, emotional and physical. I have told him about...*

The Q-post writer's ability to use technical discourse despite describing his/her subjective experiences of illness within the sociocultural context of his/her everyday life and relationships that emerged in the investigation of drink and drug issues reconfirms what had already been found in Maglie (2015). Furthermore, the way in which young inquirers speak about drink and drug issues and seek information and advice recalls what was found in Maglie (2015) with regard to the debate on HIV. In fact, Q-posts on HIV show a continuum from no online disinhibition effect to an evident online disinhibition effect (Suler 2004) as they contain a crescendo of questions and statements from various perspectives (from hypothetical second or third person to first person), to which a spectrum of feelings correspond towards people with the illness and towards the syndrome itself, ranging from no emotional interest to various degrees of fear of contracting HIV. Q-post writers also reflect unfamiliarity with HIV transmission paths and the consequent urgent need to be tested, but also a sense of responsibility towards their own health. The issue of the online disinhibition effect (Suler 2004) is discussed again in Maglie (2015) when reporting cases of posts about suicidal thoughts and self-harming behavior, and of posts written on behalf of others. There again we cannot be certain whether they are sincere requests for someone else's help or a disguised presentation of the writer's own emotional concerns. These inquiries about drink and drugs, HIV and suicide in the third person appear to support the socially prescribed notion that these are diseases/habits/behaviors to be ashamed of. In such circumstances, as Leap (1995 in Harvey 2013: 128) affirms, people use "code words and disguised subject references" as defense mechanisms against shameful subjects. However, in this study it seems that the inhibition effect seldom occurs or fails to last long, as sooner or later the inquirer uses language devices which disclose personal facts related to drink and drugs.

Misinformation and the ignorance of young people who often rely on rumors (i.e. what friends say) to take care of their own health is another aspect which already emerged in Maglie (2015), particularly when investigating sexual and reproductive health matters and mental concerns like depression, which are not acknowledged among young people or only out of ignorance. To gain further information on how Alice interacts when dealing with drink and drug Q-posts, we now address how she advises young people, how she also warns against popular myths, rumors and *mixed messages* – in other words, misinformation – that may circulate among young adults which it is her task to dispel and prove groundless.

4.2. A-posts on Alcohol and other drugs

Alcohol occurs 851 times in the A-posts. When analyzed in context, the noun is used to give scientific information about alcohol (ab)use, combination with

other substances (i.e. drugs) and consequences on health, and to indicate ad-hoc places where they could be informed, supported and treated. When the focus is on the discourse patterns Alice uses to interact with young people, as the following examples show, she never uses technical expertise, professional reasoning and judgement, or what Mishler refers to as “the voice of medicine” (1984). Instead, when Alice answers the post of a young man/woman whose sister suffers from alcoholism, she suggests the questions s/he may use when conversing with him/her on whether she drank at a party, but always without hurting her.

(1) *You could start by saying, “So, what was the scene like at the party last night?” or, “Did you have fun?” or, “Were there any hot people there?”*

When dealing with the consequences of heavy drinking, she clearly explains what happens inside your body and all the factors which lead to cirrhosis. We can note some of the devices used in order to popularize medical discourse: the new information “to become fatty” develops into the given information in the following sentence “fat deposit”; the recurring idea of death and life (“killing”, “die”, and “vital”, “live”) establishes links to the general previous knowledge of the advice seeker and facilitates his/her understanding; the reference to what “the name implies” (liver contains the word ‘live’) and to its vital importance for the functioning of the body.

(2) *Chronic heavy drinking can cause the liver to become fatty. Fat deposits in the liver block the liver cells from their blood supply, [...], eventually killing them. As the name implies, the liver performs so many vital functions that we cannot live without it.[...] When liver cells die from lack of fresh blood, they are replaced with scar tissue, which can't perform the functions of a liver cell –a condition called cirrhosis.*

Alice warns young people against media communication on alcohol intake and provides them with comprehensible explanation of the risks associated with it. She uses expressions which typically occur in expository texts, such as verbal expressions and adverbs to order the whole discourse (e.g. ‘Let’s start’, ‘then’, ‘first of all’, ‘as a result’ etc.), but adopting an informal style (e.g. verb contractions), employing arrows to facilitate understanding, and speaking in general in order not to offend the Q-post writer:

(3) *Messages in the media about alcohol can be quite confusing. Let’s start with an explanation about how alcohol influences your nutritional status, and then about how it impacts your risk for other diseases. First of all, alcohol affects the hormones [...]. As a result, it causes drinkers to urinate frequently, [...]. When thirsty drinkers have another alcoholic beverage, the vicious cycle of urination --> dehydration --> thirst continues.*

Alice always finds a word of encouragement to support the Q-post writer. In the first instance below she avoids judging him/her for his/her alcohol habits but

takes advantage of his/her post to instruct others, for instance using definitions (not included for space reasons), and reference to alcoholic in the third person (someone). In the second example she tries to normalize the situation and provides him/her with a full range of ways (again not included for space reasons) to have fun at parties:

(4) It's good that you've taken time to think about your drinking, *but before you diagnose yourself as an alcoholic, it might be helpful to think through these [...] definitions:*

*Someone abusing a substance uses *alcohol and/or other drugs* [...]

(5) Feeling drowsy after three or four drinks close to midnight is completely normal *-alcohol is a depressant that reduces alertness and increases sleepiness.[...]. Fortunately, there are ways to maximize the fun of partying [...].*

On the other hand, when she advises, she directly refers to the Q-post writer using the question device that spurs him/her to reflect and be conscious of his/her alcohol behavior so that s/he can balance alcohol use.

(6) *When you go out drinking, are you with the same people? Do they also drink too much? Do you only go out when you're stressed out or upset about something? If you can identify the circumstances around your excessive drinking, you may be able to avoid them in the future [...]*

Alice mixes advertising expressions with scientific literature, which might be a good stratagem to firstly catch the reader's attention (i.e. making reference to what they know) and then citing studies reporting their findings in ways that are accessible to everybody in order to dispel the Q-post writer's worries and empower him/her in taking care of his/her own health.

(7) *that 1950's style "ad" for coffee that reads: "Drink Coffee: Do Stupid Things Faster and With More Energy." Well, this saying applies in the case of the energy drink and alcohol combo. Numerous studies have found that people either buzzed or drunk on energy drinks and alcohol are more likely to take risks than people drunk on alcohol alone. [...]. Other studies cite increased levels of aggression and decreased ability to judge [...].*

Drug is present in the A-part 479 times. As the Q-posts deal with legal and illegal drugs indistinctly, the A-posts use the noun with its two meanings. Its double meaning can be disambiguated only if it is addressed in context. Two examples are (a) when indicating authorized medicines, 'drug' is used as a collocate of the noun phrase 'Food and Drug Administration (FDA)' and occurs many times, as it indicates an official reference for detailed information on public health, and (b) when indicating unauthorized drugs, 'drug' is used as a collocate of the noun phrase 'National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA)' and occurs similarly many

times, as it has the same function as the abovementioned US organ.

However, even though Alice shows a ‘technical’ interest and expresses a ‘scientific’ attitude, this serves neither to establish a distant professional relationship with the young post-writer nor to de-contextualize episodes of ill health. She succeeds in embedding scientific knowledge (crack cocaine effects) with the specific life and situation of the Q-post writer, so that when addressing him/her she even uses expressions (such as “on the brink”) previously used in the Q-post:

(8) Crack cocaine, [...], *often leaves the user unable to control or recognize his or her own actions and reactions. If your life is “on the brink,” as you write, people in your life have probably noticed.*

Alice does not preach to the adolescent who uses illegal drugs, but invites him or her to take some precautions into consideration. In the next example we may also note that she uses impersonal expressions (“a user”, “one”, and the generic “you”) to avoid being too direct or offensive.

(9) *If a user experiences anxiety or fear during a trip [...], the body’s reactions to these feelings may be difficult to endure. [...], it’s important to consider where and with whom one might try this drug. When experimenting with any drug, it is essential to be in a safe environment with people you trust, [...].*

Alice uses technical terms as well as the same jargon as the young adult to name the drug and then goes on to explain its effects on the body in association with alcohol (first example). In the second example, Alice uses American slang again when she refers to the fact that even with a low budget (“less dough”), help is always guaranteed in healthcare centers. In the same example we can see how she uses sympathetic language in order to create rapport with the writer (“it may be more difficult”);

(10) *You may be referring to a drug called Rohypnol (flunitrazepam), street-named “roofies,” “roachies,” “rophies,” “ruffies,” “roofenol,” “roche,” “La Rocha,” “rope,” and “the forget pill.” [...]. This hypnotic sedative enhances the effects of alcohol: decreased inhibition, sleepiness, and memory loss.*

(11) *It may be more difficult for a person with less dough to access drug rehabilitation centers. Nevertheless, help is available, even with a limited budget.*

Alice’s sympathetic understanding of the post writers’ drug troubles becomes evident in how she attempts to see things from the post writer’s perspective even though she is not physically present (she provides the language to use). When answering the post of a young man/woman who wants to be supportive to his/her friend who uses drink and drugs, she in fact creates different possible situations (*drug use* and *their friendship* below), and for each of them she suggests the best words to use:

Drug Use:[...]you might say, "I've noticed you're smoking again and doing other drugs lately. I'm worried about you. Is everything okay?" [...]

Their Friendship: You might say, "The fact that you talk about drugs all the time worries me, especially since you don't seem to be interested in anything I am doing [...] we used to talk all the time."

While the manner in which Alice answers a post writer varies, every A-post addresses the reason behind the post writer's choice to write to her. There is a strong impersonal focus, sometimes to such an extent that it seems both Alice and the Q-post inquirer speak the same language (informal devices such as the recurrence of 'you', verb contractions). Alice's attention is mostly devoted to giving clear and user-friendly advice (she uses specialized references but they are always rendered through easy-to-grasp sentences), to supporting the information and recommendations she offers on authoritative sources, and to relieving the post writer of worry and uncertainty. The discursive practices of giving information or advice are symmetrical to those employed by the post writer. Establishing continuity with the Q-post by using the language of the post writer, Alice expresses sympathy for the post writer and creates an opportunity to build a bridge of solidarity between the two so that she can easily help him/her and also be sure that he or she will follow her advice on the way to recovery. They are informal and sometimes it seems that the advice and recommendations are coming from an old friend, someone with experience in healthcare, and not from an anonymous, indifferent specialist who simply responds to the post writer by rote. In the corpora General Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Emotional Health (Maglie 2015), like in this study, this use of affective resources signals a personalized emotional discourse between Alice and the Q-post writers who interact informally as equals.

5. Concluding Remarks

This study gives priority and voice to an age group whose subjective experiences of health and illness have often been marginalized or simply overlooked in favor of the concerns of older age groups. This study also sheds new light on the category of healthcare providers, insofar as it helps us think about what is often called the 'bedside manner' in new ways. In the virtual space provided by websites like *Go Ask Alice!*, the patient's lifeworld narrative is valued in making a diagnosis, and the doctor's expertise, which is conveyed and shared through language appropriate to the Q-post writer, is framed within the personal stories and experiences of the advice-seeker. In its consideration of a paradigm that replaces the reductionist and disease-oriented 'biomedical model' with a more holistic, individual-centered perspective, this study should also prove useful to those working in the healthcare sector. As some misunderstandings, misconceptions and prejudices on alcohol and drug use can be ascribed to popular myths and rumors, much of this lack of knowledge should be ascribed to a scarcity of successful ed-

educational interventions and policy initiatives. For this reason, investigating how healthcare providers interact with adolescents online can lead us to new ways of thinking about successful relationships between patients and healthcare providers, and helps us prepare future educational models that incorporate online communication and consider how young people think about and participate in these language communities.

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Biosketch

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A framework of analysis for the investigation of psycholinguistic constructs in online doctor-patient interaction

Patrizia Anesa

Abstract

Among the several technological tools available, medical forums are widely used by e-patients. The objective of this study is to investigate some specific sociological constructs and their linguistic realisations in patient posts, and to observe if they may have an impact on adherence to therapies, in line with studies conducted in offline settings.

Indeed, the relationship between adherence and the type of adherence message has been lengthily investigated. Some of the psycholinguistic constructs which have been used to understand adherence are *control orientation*, *agency* and *affect* (Bartlett Ellis, Connor & Marshall 2014). A similar model is suggested in this study, including the broader notion of *attitude* derived from appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005). Thus, patient posts have been coded with the aim of identifying control orientation, agency, and attitude (plus their subsets) and their linguistic realisations in order to understand patient conceptualisation of adherence messages.

The data show that these constructs even arise in spontaneous interaction and without the use of specifically designed interviews or questionnaires. Indeed, unprompted posts also display the manifestation of these constructs, with control realisation (CR) emerging particularly frequently. Both internal control realisation (ICR) and external control realisation (ECR) are present. Drawing on studies focusing on offline settings, it is possible to assume that patients displaying ECR are more likely to fail to adhere to a therapy and thus need particular attention and encouragement in managing their disease.

Keywords

Psycholinguistic constructs, health forum, expert-lay interaction, control realisation, adherence.

Introduction

With the ubiquity of connectivity and the development of web 2.0, patients are changing their behaviour when seeking information online, thanks, for example, to the retrieval of information from peers and experts in online Q&A environments. A myriad of health-related websites are now used by patients and profes-

sionals all over the world, and this has inevitably led to substantial modifications of patient-doctor relationships (Truog 2012). This study has two main focal points: a theoretical one, which involves the definition of a framework of analysis for the investigation of patient linguistic behaviour on online health forums, and an analytical one, which aims at exploring an oncology forum in order to identify patient types and to observe patient behaviour in relation to adherence messages.

This paper starts with a description of the characteristics and functions of online platforms and a presentation of the main interactional dynamics taking place. The following section presents a framework of analysis for online health forums, followed by a preliminary analysis focusing on a collection of threads drawn from an oncology forum. The concluding part presents considerations on the use of a specific model of analysis to be applied to online interactions and discusses the need to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to investigate doctor patient-interaction in both online and offline settings.

1. Communicating on online health platforms

The Health 2.0 paradigm is now well established in research and professional settings, and the term Medicine 2.0 (Hughes, Joshi & Wareham 2008; van de Belt *et al.* 2010) is also frequently used. The two expressions are generally considered fundamentally synonymic. Eysenbach (2008) embraces this view but also points out that Medicine 2.0 may be conceived as an umbrella term including Health 2.0. This paper will refer primarily to the concept of Health 2.0, intended broadly as the application of web 2.0 technologies to the health field. In particular, one of its defining characteristics is active and collaborative participation amongst those involved, in line with the web 2.0 model.

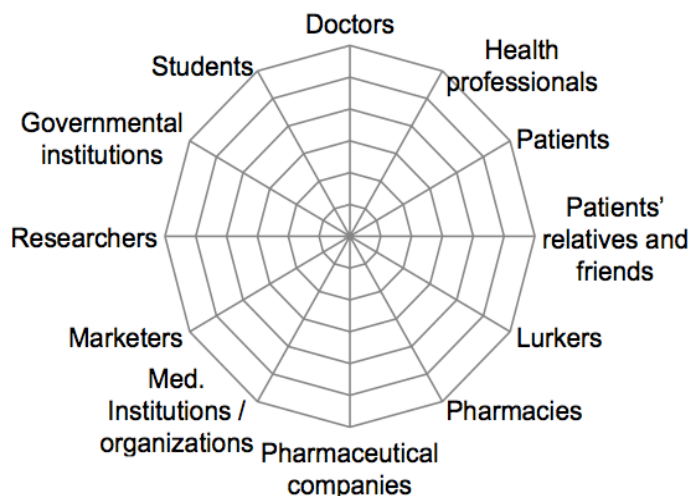
Active and collaborative participation takes place with different levels of directedness, intensity and continuity. Even in apparently dyadic interactions (e.g. doctor-patient), the potentially involved groups and types of participants are many, especially in the case of platforms which are publicly accessible.

The participants involved in Health 2.0 platforms are potentially infinite, but the following main categories are clearly identifiable:

- Doctors;
- Health professionals;
- Patients;
- Relatives and friends of patients;
- ‘Lurkers’;
- Pharmacies;
- Pharmaceutical companies;
- Medical institutions/organizations;
- Marketers;
- Researchers;
- Governmental institutions.

Figure 1 aims at visually illustrating the complex web which links some of the potential participants and stakeholders involved either directly or indirectly in the interactions of a public Q&A site. Some are simply observers who nevertheless have an interest in the dynamics taking place on a specific platform:

Figure 1: Potential participants



Kordzadeh and Warren (2013: 43) present a typology of Health 2.0 Collaboration Platforms. The notion of Health 2.0 implies a collaborative nature, where users take an active role in creating content, sharing information and co-constructing knowledge. These platforms are intended as tools where their collaborative purpose is made manifest. The authors list the following:

- Health Blog: a site consisting of posts by one or more individuals on health-related topics with varying degrees of specificity. Typically, posts are in reverse chronological order and the collaborative nature of the site lies in the fact that other users may comment on each entry;
- Physician-Rating: a platform where users can post their opinions about health professionals, as well as rate them (such as HealthGrades or RateMyMD);
- Medicine-Rating: a platform where people evaluate different types of medicine;
- Online Health Social Network: websites through which people can create profiles and share a vast range of materials;
- Health Discussion Board/Forum: platforms which promote open discussions on specific health-related topics;
- Ask-a-Doctor: a collaboration platform where patients can ask questions and receive responses from experts.

It should be noted that this classification has some limitations in that their purposes may overlap at times and it is impossible to contemplate all potential (often hybrid) forms of collaborative platforms. For example, on rating websites users not only rate health professionals or medications, but also hospitals, medical plans, etc.

A simplification of this typology may include:

- Health blogs (managed either by practitioners or patients);
- Rating sites;
- Social networks;
- Forums (including professional-professional, professional-patient, patient-patient);
- Chats.

However, several intertwined forms of Health 2.0 platforms exist. They may include, be based on, or refer to a series of tools such as newsfeeds, wikis, bookmarking, tagging, podcasts, instant messaging, etc. Indeed, different semiotic modes are often flexibly combined in web communication (Kress 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006), thus promoting the hybridisation of web genres (Garzone 2012). For instance, a blog may actually include forums or a series of podcasts, chats, etc., making the boundaries between web genres unavoidably blurred.

As regards Q&A sites, it may be argued that four main forms are identifiable (following Shah, Kitzie & Choi 2014: 13):

- Community-based Q&A, where questions and answers develop within a specific community of users;
- Expert-based Q&A, which is similar to the previous service, but it is generally an expert (either paid or voluntary) who provides the answers. The site *justanswer.com/oncology* falls within this category;
- Collaborative Q&A, which facilitates collaboration by many different users over time (e.g. WikiAnswers);
- Social Q&A, which is based on social networking sites.

This study is based on an Ask-a-Doctor platform, which broadly falls within the Expert-based Q&A category. More specifically, this kind of doctor-patient online service may be described according to a model consisting of four Is, where each element is seen from the patients' perspective:

1. Initiation;
2. Involvement;
3. Interaction;
4. Information.

Thus, the main aspects of these platforms may be summarised as follows.

Table 1: Features of Ask-a-Dr platforms

Initiation	Patient
Involvement	High
Interactivity	High
Information	Primary objective

Table 1 refers to the typical aspects of threads on Ask-a-Dr platforms, although variations are of course possible. By and large, it is typically a patient (or someone on his/her behalf) who initiates the thread. Given the nature of the conversation, patient involvement is generally high and so is the level of interactivity. The primary objective of user posts is frequently that of receiving informative answers, but it should be noted that a post may also have an expressive pragmatic function, and users may simply be seeking sympathy or general support.

Patient centeredness is also assumed to be a defining characteristic of Health 2.0 platforms and is often linked to the idea of patient empowerment in health communication and management. In particular, it has been argued that the Health 2.0 paradigm reduces the knowledge gap between patients and doctors, and patient empowerment often determines the basis for the communicative dynamics taking place. However, it is clear that the role played by patients in online interactions is subject to constant change, and the construction of patient identity is complex, polymorphic, fluid and dynamic (Fage-Butler & Anesa 2016).

2. Framework of analysis

Different frameworks of analysis, based for example on specific sociolinguistic constructs, have been used to identify patient types in recent studies (e.g. Bartlett Ellis, Connor & Marshall 2014). The point of departure of this study is the idea that similar frameworks can be successfully adopted in the investigation of patient types and patient behaviour starting from data based on online interaction.

Parrott (1995) suggests that in the area of health communication specific linguistic tactics can be used to draw the patient's attention to a particular message. In relation to self-management, the use of specific words may create a sense of psychological closeness between the message and the audience, so-called "verbal immediacy". Similarly, the notion of verbal immediacy can potentially be applied to online communication.

Investigating doctor-patient interaction can have an extensive number of applications, especially as regards how patients manage their health. For instance, as happens in face-to-face situations, the interaction between doctor and patient

can reveal precious information on how patients adhere to a therapy. This work focuses in particular on how the analysis of verbal constructs can be used to investigate a series of health-related behaviours, such as adherence. Similar expressions, such as compliance, self-care and therapy management have been used, but the term adherence will be used for the purpose of this study and is intended as the extent to which patients follow a prescribed treatment regimen. Some physicians prefer it to the nearly synonymic term ‘compliance’ in that the latter may imply a more passive attitude (Osterberg & Blaschke 2005).

The relationship between adherence and the type of adherence message has been extensively explored (e.g. Berry, Raynor & Knapp 2003; Bower & Taylor 2003). However, attempts to understand the factors which contribute to adherence in individuals have often led to elusive results (Vermeire *et al.* 2001). This is principally due to the complexity of the innumerable variables to be taken into account and the individual nature of response to messages. Moreover, research on adherence has often focused on the perspective of the practitioner rather than that of the patient, but the latter can also offer precious insights (van Dulmen *et al.* 2008).

Following Bartlett Ellis, Connor and Marshall (2014), some of the psycholinguistic constructs which may be employed to understand adherence are: *control orientation*, *agency*, and *affect*. This study suggests the use of a similar framework for the analysis of online interaction. The original model has been modified and the notion of affect has been extended to that of attitude, thus including affect as well as judgement and appreciation. The final framework may be summarised as follows.

1. Control realisation:

- a. Internal health locus of control (IHLC);
- b. External health locus of control (EHLC)¹.

2. Agency:

- a. High (positive/negative);
- b. Moderate (positive/negative);
- c. Low (positive/negative).

3. Attitude:

- a. Affect (positive/negative);
- b. Judgement (positive/negative);
- c. Appreciation (positive/negative).

¹ Health Locus of Control may be seen as a multidimensional compound, which consists of Internal Health Locus of Control (IHLC), Chance Health Locus of Control (CHLC) and Powerful others Health Locus of Control (PHLC) (Berglund, Lytsy & Westerling 2014; Wallston, Strudler Wallston & DeVellis 1978). However, for the purpose of this study CHLC and PHLC have been investigated as a macro-category of external factors (EHLC, External Health Locus of Control), as opposed to IHLC. Indeed, this investigation focuses primarily on the link between EHLC/IHLC as broad classes and potential adherence to therapy.

The linguistic operationalisation of these constructs as they emerge in online interactions can help to gain new insights into patient understanding of adherence messages, as well as the processes through which opinions are formed and subsequent behaviours are adopted.

2.1. Control realisation

Control realisation (CR) is here intended as embedded in the sociological construct of locus of control (LOC) and indicates the linguistic realisation of LOC as emerging from the analysis of the discursive elements which characterise an interaction.

Locus of control is significantly linked to other constructs such as agency, as will be shown in Section 3.2.1. According to Bandura, LOC “is concerned, not with perceived capability, but with belief about outcome contingencies” (2006: 2). The concept of locus of control has been extensively studied in social sciences (e.g. Wallston, Strudler Wallston & DeVellis 1978) and in the last few decades has often been applied to disease management (e.g. O’Hea *et al.* 2005). According to Rotter’s seminal work (1966), the concept of internal and external control of reinforcement is related to the degree to which the individual perceives the result of an action as determined by his/her own behaviour or attributes (in the case of internal control) or by external forces (external control) (Rotter 1966: 1). Along these lines, the notion of LOC orientation may be defined as “a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside our personal control (external control orientation)” (Zimbardo 1985: 275).

As regards its application to disease management, LOC has been linked to a series of health-related behaviours (Carlisle-Frank 1991). For instance, it has been demonstrated that internal and external expectance may determine different behaviours in disease management. Internal control orientation has been associated with a number of adaptive behaviours and a higher level of adherence to therapy. Conversely, it has been pointed out that a correlation exists between external control orientation and lower levels of adherence.

The investigation of locus of control in the health field has generally been based on specific health LOC scales developed for the identification of patient types (Wallston 2005; Wallston, Strudler Wallston & DeVellis 1978). However, scholars have also pointed out the emergence of inaccuracies and equivocal findings, which are sometimes related to the unspecific nature of the questions presented in the survey. Consequently, it has also been suggested that LOC may be investigated observing a patient’s linguistic behaviour in narratives, and not necessarily through scales (Bartlett Ellis, Connor & Marshall 2014). Naturally occurring speech may indeed offer valuable insights into control realisation displayed by patients. Similarly, online interactions may be investigated with the aim of analysing CR and evaluating patient opinions and behaviours related, for instance, to disease management.

2.2. Agency

Given its focus on social action, the concept of agency has often been used in health-related environments as a determining factor for successful or unsuccessful disease management (e.g. Hadjistavropoulous & Shymkiw 2007). Drawing on Emirbayer and Mische (1998), agency is intended here as a multi-dimensional concept which is temporally embedded and is thus iterational (informed by the past), practical-evaluative (focused on the present) and projective (oriented towards the future).

Particularly in the area of health care, the notion of agency is strictly related to the concept of self-efficacy, which is the individual's conviction to be able to successfully execute an action leading to a certain outcome (Bandura 1977). In other words, self-efficacy focuses on an individual's perceived assessment of abilities connected to specific actions and behaviours, and may be seen as a central mechanism of human agency (Bandura 1989).

As happens with control beliefs, agency is often evaluated from a sociological perspective by using ethnographic data based on surveys and adopting scales. However, some limitations inevitably emerge, such as the fact that responses may be biased (e.g. in the case of social desirability bias). Thus, this approach is to be integrated with the analysis of the discursive construction of individuals' experiences, which may provide useful insights for the interpretation and prediction of their behaviour.

2.3. Attitude

In their framework of analysis, Bartlett Ellis, Connor and Marshall (2014) use affect as a third construct to investigate adherence to treatment. In this study I will include the use of attitude as a wider concept including affect, based on appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005).

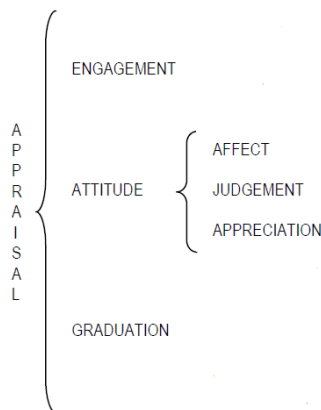
According to Adendorff (2004: 206), appraisal theory "seeks to provide an account of how language construes the interpersonal relationships of solidarity and power". Thanks to its comprehensiveness and its validation through empirical testing in other discourses (e.g. Hood & Forey 2008), Martin and White's theory may be successfully used to analyse a patient's words and related behaviour.

Martin and White (2005: 35) describe appraisal as a discourse semantic resource which is "regionalised as three interacting domains", namely:

1. Engagement;
2. Attitude;
3. Graduation.

For the purpose of this study, an outline of the main resources may be represented as follows:

Figure 2: Appraisal resources (based on Martin & White 2005: 38)



The model of analysis suggested here focuses particularly on the concept of attitude, which is related to “our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things” (Martin & White 2005: 35). It is usually intended as consisting of:

- Affect: resources expressing emotional states and responses;
- Judgement: resources expressing norms;
- Appreciation: resources expressing tastes.

Traditionally, affect is related specifically to the expression of positive or negative emotions (Martin & White 2005: 42). More specifically, its subcategories are: happiness/unhappiness, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, security/insecurity, inclination/disinclination. Judgement is given by those resources which imply an evaluation of a social or moral nature in relation to established social norms or goals. Appreciation has ramifications into ‘reaction’, ‘composition’, and ‘valuation’ (related respectively to affection, perception, and cognition).

3. Analysing constructs

As noted above, LOC, agency, and attitude may emerge through the analysis of ethnographic data collected, for instance, with the use of specifically designed interviews and questionnaires. However, the words of patients often allow us to observe the occurrence of these constructs even in situations where their discussion is not elicited.

In this study, threads drawn from the oncology section of an Ask-a-Doctor site were analysed. The corpus was coded using *QDA Miner Lite*. The coding methodology partially draws on Read, Hope and Carroll’s approach (2007). Two human annotators were asked to annotate the corpus independently according to the es-

tablished framework and to assign the following main codes: control realisation, agency, and attitude (plus its subsets affect, judgement, and appreciation). They also had to specify polarity (positive/negative) or a scaling for graduating items (high/medium/low). The level of intercoder agreement was used to evaluate the accuracy of the coding process, and in the case of ambiguity the researcher intervened to evaluate possible disambiguation processes.

In this investigation, the notion of LOC represents the privileged element of analysis. Its linguistic operationalization offers a vast series of insights to deepen our understanding of patient behaviour in the oncology field.

3.1. Locus of Control Realisation

Locus of control is the construct which emerges most frequently in the observed threads. This analysis will thus focus predominantly on internal and external control orientation towards the disease, its symptoms, and its management.

External LOC is often expressed in the analysed threads. For instance, in the following excerpt the patient sees his condition as an insurmountable obstacle and loses faith in the efficacy of a therapy:

1) it's really thick and doesn't want to drain. That's another reason I don't think this can work.

A pessimistic prediction is generally linked to ECO, as external factors prevent the patient from following the doctor's advice or trusting his judgement.

The linguistic operationalizing tool which expresses control orientation (be it internal or external) is defined here as control realisation and includes general categories (adapted from Bartlett Ellis, Connor & Marshall 2014) such as:

- Semantic role (active/passive);
- Positioning as an expert or a non-expert;
- Use of specific terminology or lack of it.

Table 2: Linguistic realisations LOC

	External control realisation	Internal control realisation
Semantic role	Passive	Active
Positioning of self	Non-expert	Expert ²
Specific terminology	Lack (or incorrect use) of specific terminology	Use of specific terminology

2 Or showing a desire to become more knowledgeable.

The notion of ‘semantic role’, according to Finegan (2008), is related to the relationship between the referent and the “state, action, or situation described by the sentence” (Finegan 2008: 198). In the case of doctor-patient interaction, the multifaceted role expressed by the referent may be broadly summarised into two main categories: active (characterising internal control orientation beliefs) and passive (characterising external control orientation beliefs). Clearly, these two macro-categories could be investigated focusing on different semantic roles, especially as regards external control. For instance, Bartlett Ellis, Connor and Marshall (2014) list ‘patient’, ‘recipient’, and ‘beneficiary’ as roles linked to external control, as opposed to ‘agent’ which is linked to internal control. However, some of these categories may be particularly problematic. For example, the role of ‘patient’ is generally considered an expression of external control but may also be intended as displaying internal control since it does not necessarily exclude an agentive role. Thus, the two macro-groups ‘passive’ and ‘active’ are used here for the identification of semantic roles. This broad typology is not exempt from criticism in that it apparently conceals the infinite nuances that roles may assume and, consequently, it may erroneously be seen as the expression of a dichotomistic view on the adoption of patient roles. Instead, such roles develop along a continuum and constantly need to be problematized.

The positioning of self as expert or non-expert is seen as a cause of ability/inability to manage the disease (internal/external control orientation) and is often related to the assumption (internal) or declination (external) of responsibility in following the doctor’s advice or in adhering to the therapy. However, it should be noticed that self-positioning on the part of patients is always very problematic (see Fage-Butler & Anesa 2016) and it has been shown that the level of medical expertise shown by the patient online is sometimes very high (Anesa & Fage-Butler 2015; Nisbeth Jensen & Fage-Butler 2013). Indeed, in several cases the distinction between experts and non-experts as expressions of ILC or ELC is not automatic and must be carefully contextualised and analysed in the light of the other constructs.

For example, in the next excerpt the patient is consulting the expert in order to acquire some specific information, thus assuming that the expert will be able to offer clarification. Nevertheless, this approach should not be automatically associated with ECO in that the patient is also formulating hypotheses and checking his/her understanding, which suggests an attempt to actively fathom the process in question.

2) you had said that individual cells are not very viable--are small clusters not very viable as well?

In the following passage, the patient has personally carried out some research in the field, thus trying to gather specific information and becoming a provider of information himself (even suggesting which part of the text the doctor should read). At the same time, however, the patient is also asking for the doctor’s opinion, confirming the fluid nature of self-positioning in terms of experts and non-experts.

3) They are thinking of using the hyperbaric chamber for me. I saw the hyperbaric doctor yesterday. But then I found this on the internet (*you only need to read the part entitled "Seroma Madness"*). <http://www.dslrf.org/breastcancer/content.asp?L2=7&L3=3&SID=233&CID=1471&PID=77&CATID=0>

The interpretation of self-positioning processes needs particular caution, in that the manifest awareness of lack of expertise may actually be associated with the intention to adhere meticulously to a therapy, specifically because of the impossibility of doing otherwise.

The positioning of self is also connected to the use of specialised language or lack of it. Those using highly specialised terminology generally display internal control opinion beliefs, while those reducing the medical jargon to generic, vague and sometimes inaccurate linguistic expressions are often characterised by external control.

The appropriate use of health-related acronyms is an instance of specific terminology. For example, in the following excerpt the acronym ITC, specifically used in oncology, is mentioned by the patient:

4) they were ITC's (*sic*).

The use of exact terminology is often a linguistic realisation of ICO, as the correct usage of specific medical words and expressions is frequently associated with a patient's ability to have control of events.

Conversely, the use of more generic terms may be linked with the inability or unwillingness to manage the disease and is typical of subjects displaying ECO. However, it can be argued that this approach does not necessarily determine lack of therapy adherence, as it may also be connected with complete trust in the oncologist and thus lead to unquestioning faith in the instructions given by the expert.

Figurative language is often used by patients to describe specific symptoms and conditions, for instance through tropes and idioms which allow the offering of descriptions through familiar images.

5) The feeling in my throat *does not feel like a lump. More like a hair or popcorn kernel*. Thankyou (*sic*) in advance.

6) I found a *small pea sized lymph node* in left groin. It's hard, but I can still "rolls" (*sic*) under my finger.

7) I do have a lump--but it is not on the skin (*like a giant zit*) but beneath the skin.

8) This seroma is really really big. Runs all the way up my right side, and across the top of my chest--*kind of in an upside down "L"*.

9) I don't know how squishy it really is, but it certainly is *NOT hard as a rock*.

Example 9 also shows that patients not only use comparisons with everyday images in order to provide information (*not as hard as a rock*), but also adjectives which do not display a high level of technicality, as in the case of *squishy*, which appears recurrently.

Other features which may be associated with lack of specific terminology are anthropomorphic descriptions:

10) If I do this too long will the hole become “lazy” about healing--and be impossible to heal?

Repetitions are common and are many a time employed for emphatic purposes:

11) I know cellulits is *very very* serious.

Taking into consideration the specificity of a case and the individual features of every patient, it may certainly be argued that the level of CR cannot be automatically inferred from a patient’s words, but should be integrated with specific questions to the patients themselves in order to verify the initial assumptions. Moreover, CR should not be investigated in isolation, but combined with other constructs such as agency and attitude in order to draw more thorough conclusions.

3.2. Agency and attitude

Although control realisation represents the focal point of this analysis, some brief considerations on the notions of agency and attitude will now be offered. This approach stresses the idea that the three elements should be integrated in the analytical process in order to circumscribe the limitations which are connected to the analysis of a single construct.

3.2.1. Agency

The notion of agency is sometimes used as opposed to social structure. The agency-structure debate goes beyond the scope of this paper and has often been overcome in sociological research, e.g. through the notion of ‘habitus’ (see Bourdieu 1977; 1990) or that of ‘structuration’ (see Giddens 1984). Many also affirm that the link between the idea of agency and structure is so strong and the two notions so interdependent that their clear distinction is often impossible (Archer 1988, 2000).

The analysis focuses on the linguistic realisation of high, moderate, and low agency. The three main types of subject agency were identified and for each a subcode (positive/negative) was assigned:

- High (positive or negative);
- Moderate (positive or negative);
- Low (positive or negative).

In medical discourse, high agency is related to those linguistic elements which express a high degree of action on the part of the patient. Thus, agency is often operationalized as patient actions which are in line with effective disease management and health recommendations. However, high agency is here divided into positive or negative, where the former relates to actions which advance therapy adherence, whereas the latter describes highly agentive actions which strongly thwart adherence. This approach is different from that adopted in other studies (e.g. Bartlett Ellis, Connor & Marshall 2014), where low agency is also attributed to individuals taking firm action which is detrimental to health recommendations. The interpretation suggested here aims at distinguishing between the level of individual social action and the aim towards which such action is canalised.

Thus, a high level of agency is not necessarily associable to ICO as a patient's words may express a highly agentive behaviour detrimental to therapy adherence. In this case agency is coded as negative and is interpreted as a realisation of ELC, as happens in the following passage:

12) I went to the onc yesterday and he told me my labs were fine. But I just looked at them on the computer, and 2 are worse than October.

This is considered a case of high agency, with the patient actively trying to understand and interpret the results while disregarding the interpretation offered by the doctor. Although high agency is generally related to ICO, in this case high negative agency is to be framed within the notion of ECO, in that this agentive behaviour is potentially detrimental to adherence.

Similarly, the following example is also an instance of high negative agency related to the patient's intention:

13) I really really don't want to do the surgery, because the radiated areas won't heal.

14) Negative agency emerges frequently in the users' words:

15) I need to stop being scared. But, I can't.

16) I had really hoped that in time it would heal itself.

17) I also don't know if I can stand the pain if it isn't drained 1/2 weeks.

Indeed, it may be argued that the presence of factors such as fear and pessimism often leads oncology patients to express negative agency.

3.2.2. *Attitude*

Within appraisal theory, the analysis of attitude proves functional for the investigation and evaluation of an individual's emotional response to people, objects and events. The linguistic resources employed by patients are useful in under-

standing their attitude towards important elements such as illnesses, symptoms, therapies, drugs and health care staff.

The attitudinal aspect which emerges most evidently in the threads is affect. As noted above (see Section 2.3), affect is inherently linked to emotional reactions and may be based on the emotional response of a patient towards people, objects or other phenomena. Some of the main categories which can be identified are: happiness / unhappiness; security / insecurity; satisfaction / dissatisfaction; desire / inclination (Connor & Lauten 2014; cf. Martin & White 2005). More generally, this study focuses on the positive/negative aspect of affect as a potential element to predict patient behaviour. Oncology patients frequently express negative emotions (e.g. confusion, fear, worry, panic, or fright) in their posts, and affect is often verbalised through attributive relational elements:

17) I'm *confused* by this;

18) I'm *afraid* this will never heal;

19) I am also *worried* because the internet says you can get sepsis or gangrene from this. *Scary*.

Affectual responses often have an inter-subjective meaning and are an expression of the solidarity connection established among participants. The creation of an empathetic relation provides the basis of an interaction where the participants will be more inclined to understand the other's ideological position. Thus, it is plausible to assume that the patient will then be more motivated to follow expert advice once he/she perceives the expert as an understanding and supportive subject.

Judgement is intended as an attitudinal evaluation of human behaviour where social norms or rules are used as a point of reference. Generally, oncology patients posting questions on a forum do not show a tendency to express positive or negative judgement about human behaviour in relation to normative principles. Indeed, patients often contact an expert online to ask for information or opinions, or simply to share their feelings, rather than to express judgement about people around them.

Appreciation deals with "resources for construing the value of things" (Martin & White 2005: 36) and includes both aesthetic and non-aesthetic elements, which may also be broadly categorised as positive or negative and be expressed through broad-spectrum adjectives such as good/bad. Appreciation of the illness, its symptoms or its manifestation can also be an indication of the patient's attitude towards the therapy.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Following the developments in web 2.0 technologies, interaction between experts and non-experts has changed profoundly in most professional fields over

recent years. The Internet, for example, has long been described as having great potential in transcending barriers between experts and laypeople (Hardey 1999). Consequently, new technologies have easily been hailed as forms of democracy able to remove social and professional boundaries. However, medical forums are often based on the existence of precise roles assumed by users and experts, which guarantee the specific development of an interaction and may even be seen as antithetical to the democratic values that forums aim to enhance. From this perspective, the notion of 'digital divide' is also in stark contrast to the idea of full democratisation in terms of access to medical information. Thus, it can be argued that on the one hand the discursive processes taking place on a forum may potentially enable the attainment of a more democratic understanding of medical information by lay users. However, on the other hand, with the rapid development of social media, the risk of oversimplification and distortion of medical concepts and principles is high.

In spite of the vast range of descriptive studies focusing on communicative dynamics in medical discourse, responsibility for the systematic development of relevant frameworks of analysis (related to online and offline settings) has often been left exclusively to medical practitioners. Nevertheless, inasmuch as adherence behaviours hinge (even infinitesimally) on the type of message that is delivered and the linguistic choices adopted by the participants, it is imperative that similar frameworks be developed more fully, adopting a more comprehensive approach which also includes linguistic and communicative considerations.

Constructs such as control realisation and agency have previously been used to investigate health communication (e.g. Zoffmann, Harder & Kirkevold 2008). In this paper, they have been combined with the notion of attitude taken from Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005) in order to carry out analyses which can be applied to both on- and offline interaction. Accordingly, from a theoretical and methodological perspective, this study suggests the use of a framework based on three psycho-linguistic constructs, namely control realisation, agency and attitude, as well as their subcomponents, to investigate expert-patient relationships.

Empirically, the data shows that these constructs may even emerge in spontaneous interaction and without the use of specifically designed interviews or questionnaires. Indeed, unprompted posts also display the presence of these constructs, with CR emerging particularly frequently. Both ICR and ECR are present and, in line with current literature, it is possible to assume that patients displaying ECR are more likely to fail to adhere to a therapy and thus need particular attention and encouragement in managing their diseases. Similarly, the linguistic realisation of agency can offer clues towards predicting potential difficulty in self-management and adherence to a recommended therapy. Agency should be described not only as high, medium or low, but more importantly according to the positive/negative parameter. CR and agency can be combined with the notion of attitude, where affect, judgement and appreciation can be employed to identify the characterisation of emotion, as well as to evaluate human and non-human behaviour.

Although answers to patients' questions follow clear medical protocols, the identification of a specific type of patient through the linguistic realisation of different constructs is particularly important for health care professionals in order to understand how patients deal with disease management. The anamnesis of the patient and his/her medical history can thus be integrated with qualitative data obtained from the analysis of patient narratives, and this approach may prove particularly useful both in face-to-face and online interactions.

The literature has long supported the use of Multidisciplinary intervention (MI) in healthcare, which refers to the combination of psychological, social, and/or occupational intervention (Guzmán *et al.* 2001) for treatment and rehabilitative purposes. From a more general point of view, this paper suggests adopting an even broader approach, namely a multi-perspectival approach to disease management (MPA), where text and discourse analyses may also play an important role in unveiling the complex dynamics which lie behind patient behaviour. Indeed, gaining a finer understanding of the role played by constructs such as locus of control, agency and attitude may provide guidance in determining how individuals perceive and structure experiences which enable them to perform social actions and realise social change. This is critical in health management, in that a wider knowledge of patient types allows for the implementation of more specifically targeted communication strategies.

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Biosketch

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Framing dietary patterns in professional sources of web genres: Verbal and visual modes of communication¹

Girolamo Tessuto, Miriam Bait

Abstract

With the fluid and fast-paced arena of Internet communication opening up new opportunities for online discourse, this study examines how dietary patterns are discursively constructed in professional sources of web genres. Using the methodological frameworks of Multimodal and Critical Discourse Analyses in a representative source of a web genre, we examine elements of verbal communication that contribute to an understanding of the meanings and social significance of text alongside elements of visual communication. Through the explication of different multimodal elements of communicative utterances, our analysis shows that healthy eating and lifestyle patterns are ideologically (re)presented in the specific context of the informational and advisory genre, where the knowledge gained about the interactions between nutrients and health-related issues is relevant to highlight how effective the value of health promotion is for an individual person/consumer.

Keywords

Multimodality, Internet genres, language and discourse, professional practice, health communication.

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, a number of sociologists have focused on understanding the important social factors that affect people's health around the world. Several studies have addressed the controlling and preventable issues of most diseases through a range of health care promoting practices and the larger context of changes in personal lifestyle patterns (e.g. Galvin 2002; Lawton 2002; Cock-erham 2005). The emphasis on 'individual responsibility' in health promotion has been relevant to these studies by encouraging people to lower the risk factors

¹ This paper is jointly authored, with each author focusing on a specific area of analysis. Girolamo Tessuto is responsible for section 3.2 Visual mode of communication: representational, interactive and compositional meanings. Miriam Bait is responsible for section 3.1 Linguistic mode of communication: textual analysis.

of most chronic non-communicable diseases (such as cardiovascular disorders, diabetes, obesity) and to seek out their own health practices. In conjunction with the rhetoric of self-responsibility for avoidance of risk factors originating from disease patterns, the socio-cultural phenomenon of “healthism” in the Western tradition has defined ideologies of self-regulated health practices (Lupton 2003; Crawford 1980, 2006; Rysst 2010) recurring periodically in editorials and opinion pieces. Understood as a form of medicalization (Crawford 1980, 2006), the value of healthism brought into the daily lives of individuals is one which emphasizes a “new health consciousness” model for personal responsibility (Crawford 1980, 2006) and for generalised well-being throughout the course of life.

Along with these concerns overshadowing public health discourse of the modern day, nutrition science in particular has been characterized by the attempt to understand foods and diets in terms of their nutrient and biochemical composition, and has provided room for a proper definition of nutrition landscape as “the growing expanse of nutrition knowledge, rationales and understandings about food in terms of scientific and medical concerns” (Coveney 2006: 95). In this realm, however, several studies have addressed concerns about food and health-related issues (e.g. Shepherd 1999; Bech-Larsen and Grunert 2003; Geeroms *et al.* 2008), and drawn attention to eating practices that are dynamic and influenced by many factors, including taste and food preferences, weight concerns, environment, economics, media/marketing, culture, and attitudes/beliefs (e.g. Ball *et al.* 2006; Scrinis 2013; Freeland-Graves and Nitzke 2013). While this medicalized approach to food has moved from the edges to the core of food discourses and consumption practices, it has also formed the subject of much professionally-endorsed consumer health information being extensively promoted via the fluid and fast-paced arena of Web-enabled communication (e.g. Lewis 2006; Smith 2008), where issues of popularization affect the micro-linguistic and rhetorical dimensions of specialised communication (Garzone 2006) as much as the textual aspects themselves such as layout, images, and so on (Miller 1998; Gotti 2013).

In addition to sociology and the science-based nutrition approaches to health in the literature cited thus far, other methods of thinking about ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ behaviours have gained currency in the field of health promotion, following important insights provided by applied linguistic research about health and risk communication in a variety of healthcare settings (Candlin and Candlin 2002; Sarangi and Roberts 1999; Sarangi and Clarke 2002; Sarangi and Candlin 2003). These approaches add to other invaluable insights gained from medical discourse in professional settings (Gotti and Salager-Meyer 2006), the popularization of medical science (Gotti 2014), and the issues of ideology in professional communication across institutional, professional and disciplinary settings, including health (Garzone and Sarangi 2007), to mention only a few.

Against this backdrop, this paper explores how individuals are invited to consider a healthy diet based on the relation between a food or nutrient on the one hand, and the rationale for a healthy lifestyle that lies in behavioural risk factors arising from disease patterns on the other. We therefore examine the formal di-

mension of ‘text’ in areas of language and imagery, elucidating the formation of social relations and social identities along with the ideological underpinnings of social practices shaped in the discourse of nutrition and lifestyle.

2. Material and Method

2.1. Data

The analytical data for this study came from a professional booklet genre, *Nutrition and Well-being for Healthy Living*, published on the Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition Foundation’s (BCFN Foundation) website.² The importance of this textual source for the present case study lies in its status as an accredited professional artefact that is disclosed by the mission and purpose of the BCFN Foundation itself, which acts as an “information resource and as a bridge between both science and research” (About Us). This Foundation collects knowledge and expertise in nutrition and health-related issues that form the subject of scientific publications, guidelines, recommendations and debates from multidisciplinary avenues.

Based on the “credibility” of the website (Appleby 1999) and the different documents published there and divided into topic areas, the booklet content is thus informed by a broad research interest in information, education, and advice on professional food and nutrition issues. As such, the booklet genre provides an important locus for understanding how BCFN’s insiders (producers of text) report those issues to the interested readership. After retrieval from that site, the booklet, consisting of 57 pages, was stored as a text file using AntConc for the current analysis, yielding a whole corpus of about 33,000 tokens.

2.2. Methodological framework

Depending on the type of material selected, and consistent with the calls for mixed methodologies (Sarangi and Candlin 2004), this study used a combined framework of theoretical approaches and perspectives in order to analyse the linguistic and visual modes of communication in the text.

To analyze linguistic data, a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992, 2001; van Leeuwen 2007) approach was taken in order to examine the micro-level textual elements that form a cornerstone of critical analysis and pragmatic interpretation of discourse. While a Discourse Analysis in the area of Text Evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2001) and Functional Grammar (Halliday 2004) was also brought together as an interrelated analytical whole, the linguistic analysis aimed to provide an understanding of the meanings and social significance of the text in communicating target social issues.

² <http://www.barillacfn.com> - accessed 20 May 2015.

To analyze visual data, a qualitative social semiotic method of visual communication grammar, as proposed in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodality framework, was used in order to examine how the most significant images from the booklet create representational, interactive and compositional meanings, as part of the "*transformative* dynamics of socially situated meaning-making processes" (Iedema 2003: 30, original italics) and the "social practices they recontextualize" (van Leeuwen 2008: vii). Visual images were thus seen as means for the articulation of social relations, identities and ideological position (Kress and Leeuwen 2006) in the material of interest, allowing for the CDA "analysis of the dialectical relationships between discourse (including [...] visual images) and other elements of social practices" (Fairclough 2003: 205) to be framed within the wider social context of discursive practices (Fairclough 1995a/b, 2001).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Linguistic mode of communication: textual analysis

In this part, we examine the most salient linguistic features of the chosen genre by focusing on the macro and micro-levels of organization of the text.

To begin with, the following statements taken from the 'About Us' and 'Mission' sections of the genre are relevant to show how text producers construct direct concern with readers:

- (1) While we cannot stop the continuing evolution of the planet, we have the moral duty to suggest orientations and make proposals so that we can interact in a responsible manner with it. (p. 95)
- (2) Barilla has decided to commit to contributing to the construction of a wellbeing that does not end today, but continues in the future affecting the company, the People, and the Planet. (p. 98)

This way of formulating the Foundation's commitment as a moral duty is one which meets the demands placed by contemporary society and promotes a continuous and open dialogue on a worldwide level. In particular, the emphasis placed on wellbeing in the statements above illustrates the essential role of the Foundation to provide qualified expertise in matters of food and nutritional data for all people, and this runs throughout the booklet under scrutiny.

In terms of the linguistic features used to give shape to the concepts of sound and proper nutrition, a quick look at the table below is relevant to show the types of words that appear more frequently in the text:

Figure 1. The frequency list obtained using AntConc

Word List Results 1

Word Types: 3141 Word Tokens: 17374 Search Hits: 0

Rank	Freq	Word	Lemmas Word Form(s)
1	209	diet	
2	191	health	
3	159	diseases	
4	145	disease	
5	143	food	
6	141	risk	
7	130	studies	
8	118	diabetes	
9	112	cancer	
10	110	prevention	
11	102	consumption	
12	100	cardiovascular	
13	100	high	
14	95	people	
15	91	life	
16	89	increase	
17	85	dietary	
18	82	population	
19	78	countries	
20	78	years	
21	76	foods	

We can see that *diet*, *health*, and *disease(s)* are the most frequent words used, together with *food*, *studies*, *consumption*, *prevention*, *population*, *people* and *risk*. This wordlist provides a good starting point for the analysis that follows, as it hints at the twin objective of publicly encouraging the use or consumption of recommendable foods, as well as those that are hardly recommendable to trigger a cause-effect relationship between the consumption of certain products and the onset of certain illnesses.

With these lexical choices at work, the opening section of the publication states the scope of action and objectives pursued by the Foundation more precisely. Thus, we read:

(3) “Extensive and rigorous scientific analysis” (p. 13) has enabled the research centre to identify guidelines that “contain and summarize what has been defined by the most important and authoritative scientific experts in the world” (p. 9).

As expert knowledge comes from the “most important and respected professionals in the field of medicine and prevention, at both the national and international levels” (p. 13), the Foundation’s paramount task is “to translate the scientific evidence, which can be very complex, into nutrition and behavior recommendations that are easily accessible, even to non-specialists” (p. 9). However, the

Foundation's claim about the need to create easily accessible recommendations is based on scientific concepts. Its informative and explanatory discourse, in fact, shows a heavy use of scientific terminology, as shown below:

(4) Folic acid is used in the methylation of homocysteine into methionine, and low concentrations of folate in the blood have been associated with high levels of homocysteine. It was demonstrated by Brouwner that additional doses of folate reduced its levels. (p. 43)

Within the domain of the so-called "Public Understanding of Science", scientific facts and information are thus transformed into social representations that are not limited to challenging one's own representation of the world, but involve the legitimization of an authoritative voice and provide concrete guide actions with the aim of creating visibility and consensus. In the case under analysis, legitimacy is stated explicitly by mentioning qualified institutions and experts' evaluations and recommendations. Legitimization through scientific reasoning (Van Leeuwen 2007), throughout the text, takes the form of 'verbal process clauses' or 'mental process clauses', as in:

(5) [...] another study by Ascherio, found that the risk of cardiovascular disease increased by 27% when people consumed foods high in trans-fats. [...] Research by Koletzko also came to the same conclusion. (p. 42)

The provision of 'hard scientific' evidence shown in (4) is not without a purpose since it is meant to encourage the reader to make an informed choice about preventive, therapeutic, or supportive self-care actions. In this case, the objective presentation of scientific results is also supported by more general indications from several international organizations such as the UN:

(6) According to the United Nations, by 2050 one-third of the population in industrialized nations and a fifth in developing countries will be aged 60 or over. [...] This phenomenon will have significant impacts on the economic, political and social structure of the world. [...] Because of global aging and the higher incidence of chronic diseases, the cost of care and medical equipment will increase. (p.18)

This emphasis on hard scientific evidence includes explanations about the use or consumption of vitamins, nutrients, and other nutri-biochemical profiles of food for a sound and proper diet throughout the course of one's life, but also includes simple suggestions (oriented to a better quality of life) expressed through neutral word choice (e.g. *diet*, *blood pressure*, *symptoms*):

(7) Behavior is at the core of any intervention aimed at correcting current trends [...] The changing trends need to go in the direction of the rediscovery and re-actualization of an idea of nutrition and lifestyle that are associated with the key concept of "quality" [...] (p. 98-99)

(8) [...] risk factors, including poor diet, that make people more susceptible to heart problems, can occur years before a patient is eventually diagnosed. This “delay effect” implies that the present mortality rate from cardiovascular disease is a result of dietary and behavioral habits that occurred long before the symptoms of the disease.

In order to bring the current discourse closer to the lay readers’ everyday experiences (Gotti 2011), text producers therefore attempt to find a compromise between technical and non-technical (ordinary) language registers. This strategy is aimed at ensuring that all readers have equal access to nutritional information and its interaction between diet and disease, therefore allying with some kind of ‘democratization’ of public discourse (Fairclough 1992: 100) through “a full and synergistic involvement – with diverse and specific responsibilities and opportunities – of [several] key players”, i.e. people, institutions doctors, media and private enterprises that are involved in similar matters. A reasonably common level of shared knowledge and values is thus established and values can be uncovered by means of an analysis of evaluative language (Hunston and Thompson 2001), with evaluations playing a key role in moral evaluation legitimation. Moral value is asserted by the conceptualization of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (which may be implicit or explicit) and similarly aligns with the Foundation’s moral value mentioned before. Readers’ attention is drawn to what is bad (and undesirable) about old nutrition habits and attitudes, and what is good (and desirable) about new recommendations, as illustrated in the set of examples below:

(9)

BAD	GOOD
[...] saturated fatty acids increase both the total amount of cholesterol and the amount of LDL cholesterol, which is commonly known as “bad” fat. (p. 41)	One of the most effective solutions for reducing the risk of coronary heart disease is to replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated), such as oleic acid. (p. 41)
A meta-analysis study conducted by Norat found that high consumption of preserved meat and a diet high in fat increase the risk of developing colorectal cancer. (p. 58)	Analysis by Giovannucci about the determinant factors of colorectal cancer found that high intakes of folate and vitamins reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. (p. 58)

Positively connoted adjectives are therefore used in order to invite readers to take control of risk factors arising from specific nutrients in ‘low-high’, ‘caloric content’ foods together with the need for weight loss, doing physical exercise, etc. The most recurring adjectives in the text are *healthy* (74), *important* (60), *good* (23), *correct* (22), and *effective* (21). They are used mainly to refer to changing

eating habits, in addition to physical well-being, and contribute to creating confidence in the ‘efficiency’ of healthy food choices. By showing the producer’s “way of judging” (Fairclough 2001: 99), adjectival forms therefore invite readers to enact similar judgmental responses.

In some cases, judgmental words and expressions are established as belonging to an outside voice, through clauses containing the so-called *anticipatory ‘it’* (Quirk *et al.* 1972: 955-956) aimed at creating impersonality, but also objectivity and universality on the knowledge delivered:

(10) [...] it is essential to be able to identify what tools are in our possession to ensure, throughout a person’s entire lifetime, the attainment of longevity in good health. (p. 33)

In other cases, however, it is worth noting that reported predications are used to hedge statements, i.e. restrict their validity and universal applicability:

(11) It is widely accepted that low calorie diets are able to produce significant weight loss and reduce blood sugar and blood lipid levels. (p. 44)

This seems to confirm the complexity of scientific argumentation that tends to rely on a subtle interplay between the apparent weakening and the actual reinforcement of the propositions set forth (Garzone 2006: 77). Moreover, epistemic or evidential adjectives and adverbs, such as *potential / potentially, probable / probably*, are used to make less categorical utterances:

(12) Although these patients are cancer-free, they will *potentially* suffer physical, psychological or social consequences of their treatments. (p. 23)

(13) ... about 60% of cancer of the oral cavity is *probably* related to micronutrient deficiencies as a result of diets that lack fruits and vegetables. (p. 53)

It is also not unusual to find occasional examples of adjectival items conveying negative evaluations, such as *bad, worrying, worrisome, negative* that are used to alert readers to the disease risk factors arising from specific dietary patterns. In this context, the text also indulges in the use of a specific term, *epidemic* (in relation with obesity and diabetes), which provides a good insight into the values and anxieties of a culture (Fairclough 1992). In other words, the term is suggestive of a condition that is akin to a disease and is regarded as being pathological or, at least, pathogenic in treatment.

(14) The causes of the diabetes epidemic can be found in four main factors. (p. 24)

(15) These numbers are bound to grow, in light of the epidemic of obesity and diabetes that is currently in progress, even among younger age groups of the population. (p. 81)

In fact, *epidemic* conveys strong connotations as it stimulates collective memory of devastating plagues that wiped out entire societies, but is used here to evoke a sense of helplessness deriving from something out of control. The purpose of the genre producers is clearly to avoid the opposite to societal tendency, which is apathy or, in other words, the fear that if obesity were not considered pathological, that might lead people to consider obesity and overweight normal (Moffat 2010). Therefore, throughout the guidelines section of the text, readers are invited to react consciously as if they were fighting an epidemic.

The Foundation repeatedly affirms its authoritativeness when achievements or future objectives are put forth, making use of the exclusive *we* (and *us*) pronouns:

(16) For some years now, *we* have been studying the relationship between health, eating habits and lifestyles. The elaboration of the studies conducted has led *us* to evaluate these relationships at every stage of life: from the growth of children and adolescents to the greater longevity of adults. Working on this updated and enhanced document, *we* have had further confirmation of how the relationships between nutrients, dietary behaviors and lifestyles have a preventive effect not only on the possible onset of major chronic diseases (including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer), but also on the development of neurodegenerative diseases and osteoporosis, which are more common because of the increased longevity of life. (p. 9)

However, in order to make the presentation more convincing and appropriate for the audience, 'sacred' scientific discourse is occasionally combined with a 'profane', more dialogic - as well as colloquial style (Johnstone 2008) - through the use of the inclusive *we* pronoun as a solidarity builder:

(17) What *we* need to do is make little effort every day. (p. 9)

or creating a more empathetic discourse through the activation of the interpersonal function (Halliday 2004) by means of slogans:

(18) Our knowledge at everyone's service. (p. 107)

(19) Eat well today to live better today, but to eat well today to live better and longer tomorrow. (p. 13)

and questions:

(20) Is it possible to act to reverse these tendencies? The answer is yes. (p. 35)

Another significant feature of lexis and grammar concerns verb moods and tenses. It is noteworthy that imperatives expressing advice and suggestions are not frequent (20 occ.) and are mainly used to summarize recommendations. They support the directive or instructive nature of the content of the texts and contribute to reinforcing the dialogic component, again emphasising the direct relationship with the reader:

(21) Adopt a balanced diet.

(22) Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables (up to 400g/day), especially favouring high-fiber foods (p. 71).

The text also contains a high incidence of present tense clauses (on average once every 30 words), sometimes with temporal specification: verbs in the simple present tense are used to claim generality with regard to the statement that is being made, but also to imply a categorical commitment of the producer to the truth of the proposition (Fairclough 1992) by conferring validity on statements and supporting a transparent view of the world where facts are reported as categorical truths:

(23) Most countries are experiencing an exponential growth of overweight conditions and obesity in people's diets *plays* an extremely important role in preventing diseases and helping individuals maintain good health throughout their lives. (p. 86)

The present tense, in combination with present perfect clauses (on average once every 50 words), contributes to framing the present situation as linked to or resulting from past actions:

(24) [...] obesity has experienced a substantial increase in its prevalence among the young. (p. 22)

As the examples show, the present tense portrays the desirable situation and helps to convey certainty by expressing positive thoughts and comments and showing benefits.

In terms of modal auxiliary verbs, *will* (75 occurrences) is used to project future expectations and highlight the strong desire to implement future new solutions to dietary problems (Halliday 2004):

(25) The results obtained from studies that have been carried out, and those still in progress, *will* help to identify foods and their key components for developing new strategies for prevention/protection against debilitating neurodegenerative diseases. (p. 61)

Moreover, the modal *can* has the highest frequency of occurrences (316), in theory eliciting a sense of promise, possibility and ability (Halliday 2004). In fact, as is evident in the example below, *can* is a strong modal verb, and therefore used to make strong and 'high' assertions, nullifying any form of uncertainty or even possibility, and emphatically presenting the propositions as factual and wholly true. The modalized actions take the form of general as well as specific statements with regard to the power exercised by the expert supplier of information over the lay audience of text receivers:

(26) Overweight conditions among the young *can* result in a higher probability of developing other serious illnesses in adulthood. (p. 23)

In other cases, the modal *can* conveys an empowering function, allowing the reader to make more informed health care decisions and implement self-care and behaviour-change actions:

(27) [...] people *can* get better health results by combining increased daily consumption of fruits and vegetables with a reduction of fat in the diet. (p. 44)

Moreover, the modal marker *should* (although with only 30 occurrences) follows a similar pattern (making informed decisions), and is therefore used to refer to general recommendations about eating well:

(28) There are many foods that *should* be consumed in greater quantities. (p. 77)

3.2. Visual mode of communication: representational, interactive and compositional meanings

Following visual communication grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), this section describes and interprets representational, interactive and compositional meanings of visual images in their social practices along with the capacity to articulate social relations and ideological position between the producer, the viewer and the subject/object depicted.

3.2.1. Representational meaning

As argued by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 42), representational meaning refers to the way in which the experience of reality is constructed visually and is realized by the configuration of processes (e.g. actions), participants (e.g. actors), and circumstances (e.g. locations). Drawing four different examples (Appendix) from the booklet format, representational meaning is shaped by two “narrative structure images” based on the “unfolding of actions and events, [as well as] processes of change” in line with the “vector”, as shown in Figures 1 and 4, and by two “conceptual structure images” based on the “generalised, stable timeless essence” of the image participants in the absence of an action/vector (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 45-113), as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

To illustrate these visual representations in detail, the image in Figure 1 portrays a ‘thirty-something’ wholesome-looking farmer and seller appearing in the locative circumstances of farming practices based on the cultivation of crops and goods, including fruits and vegetables, and with a chalkboard behind showing the price of his farm produce/sales. The farmer/seller is depicted with a contented smile on his face while looking at the viewer and in a close, cheerful relationship with his agricultural produce as nature’s richest and freshest food, helping the viewer establish symbolic connections with the fibre-rich properties of the products on display. On the one hand, the emphasis on these fibre-rich nutrients strongly suggests behavioural interventions to increase fruit and vegetable use in

a production-consumption chain. On the other, the representation of the “social construction” of nature comes about with the human participant in his social interaction with nature and the “green attributes” of the products (Corbett 2006: 2, 6, 150).

This way of visually depicting natural food products in terms of actor and goal provides a wider conceptual representation in Figure 2 where an objective, naturalistic type of image is available for visual “sign-making” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). As we see, a variety of farm food products, including fruits, vegetables, cereals and legumes, are displayed in what appears in all likelihood to be a traditionally Mediterranean market stall (such as Spain, Italy, or Greece), highlighting again how the use or consumption of those foods is a carrier of highly nutritional value. Just as this value is conveyed through a symbolic “attributive” meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 105) given to objects, because of the salience and size of food featuring within the visual frame as further elaborated below, so it is exposed with the verbal component of the image where the products are stated as preventing major chronic non-communicable diseases (such as obesity, stroke, hyperglycaemia) as well as neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease. In other words, evidence of the potential advantages of this food is based on adherence to scientifically recognised dietary criteria.

This way of capitalizing on the semiotic nature of food imagery at the heart of a seemingly Mediterranean nutritional model provides the scope for an even wider conceptual (objective) representation in Figure 3. Here, a Double Pyramid is placed in the foreground to identify several food product categories that are beneficial for a well-balanced (Mediterranean) diet, and consequently serves to provide the symbolic attributes that convey meaning to such a diet. More important still, this meaning comes from the beneficial consumption of a diet based mainly on foods of vegetable origin for individuals as it does from the effect that this dietary choice can have on the wider community.

Lastly, in Figure 4, a fishmonger’s shop appears representationally to cohere with a context in which a different pattern of the Mediterranean diet is taken up and characterized by its wealth of minerals, omega-3 fatty acids and phosphorus, resulting mainly from eating fish. While this dietary pattern is compared to the North American and Eastern Asian (Japanese) food styles and traditions appearing in the verbal and visual components alongside, the portrayal of a hard-working fish dealer, most possibly a Spanish native speaker, selling his daily load of fish and holding out his arm ‘to thank for tips’ in his language (*Gracias por su propina*), provides just another visual format of conveying a symbolic attributive meaning to the consumption of particular food.

3.2.2. Interactive meaning

The interactive meaning is realized by the patterns of interaction between the represented participants in the images and the viewer, contributing to design the social position of the viewer (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 43; Royce 2007: 70). In the visual samples, several resources identified primarily by contact (demand

or offer), social distance (framing) and modality (colour), as described in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006: 116-165) framework, are used to establish and maintain relationships between images and viewers as consumers.

In terms of contact, two of the 'glossy' images shown in Figures 1 and 4 are expressed through the direct gaze of two interactive people looking at the viewer as an interactive participant. Direct gaze, the "hallmark of a narrative visual 'proposition'" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 59), counts for a *demand* image (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 118) in the current case, in that the farmer/seller and fishmonger establish eye (as well as gesture) vector contact with the viewing consumer in a demand for something. In other words, they are asking that the viewer forms some kind of imaginary relationship with them. The Actors are therefore asking the viewer to pay attention to the desirable organic products (fresh produce vs. processed foods) on display and to ultimately purchase the products. What is more, asking the viewer to consume and purchase those products can be seen in the most striking locative circumstances of the fishmonger's shop and the chalkboard, with its indication of food price depicted in the fore and the background, respectively. Clearly, viewed outside the ongoing visual communication code, such 'demands' will clash with the consumers' preferences for one or another type of food on account of their cultural, ethnic and social differences. However, the 'demanding' features in the visual images provide some clue as to how the viewer is being encouraged to evaluate the person and object represented in the "image act" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 116), and hence what the image is actually being used to do. By contrast, the absence of any eye contact with the viewer in Figures 2 and 3 realizes *offer* images, which simply "offer the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 119). Considering that the current images only address the viewer indirectly, as proposed in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006: 119) taxonomy, 'offering' items of information for the viewers' contemplation provides the visual context in which viewers are simply encouraged to see and make sense of Mediterranean food consumption appearing on a stall (Figure 2), or to carefully examine the consumption of food in the Double Pyramid where the Mediterranean diet is placed side by side with the ecological footprint of each food, and consequently harmonize their own well-being with the environment by eating responsibly (Figure 3). By so doing, *offer* images here do seem to create a process of self-inspection and self-awareness about food in the same way as they provide comprehensive approaches to food control and individual actions. How effective these *offer* images may be in creating individual actions is hard to tell in that the quality and attributes of food choice cannot be checked straightforwardly by the viewers simply through visual displays. However, the rational process of consumer decision-making here, the reasoning goes, will be determined as yet by the evidence-based (i.e. verbally communicated) dietary messages behind those images, and not least by the social and cultural acceptability of food choice and other attitudinal/intentional variables within an intercultural communication framework (Hofstede 2001; de Mooij 2013).

In terms of social distance, whereby viewers respond to represented participants as a result of a “perspective” and “framing” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), human and non-human participants in the visual images are depicted on a straight (eye-level) angle facing the camera squarely, suggesting the social “involvement” of the viewer with the image (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 124-135) through a frontal point of view - horizontal camera angle. There is little doubt that this kind of mapping between framing and involvement encodes a level of intimacy as well as empathy between represented participants and viewers, helping the viewers adopt a particular stance with the image, as examined above. By the same token, this kind of mapping includes the visual element of friendly distance realized by the direct gaze of the farmer and fishmonger appearing in medium-shots (cut off at the knees) to create social relations. Based on real life situations, where modality (range of colour) is also involved, this mapping therefore reinforces the idea of an image producer ‘demanding’ a particular action in the visual frame, or ‘offering’ food choices for consumers to think about, and how they will affect their personal health in the real world, as examined above.

In terms of modality, the visual images are depicted in high modality by colour saturation and colour differentiation (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 160-163), as used to express a shared value of “truthfulness” or “credibility” between the producer and the viewer of the image (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 155; also Gradool 2005: 110, on ‘true and less true high modality’). The wide range of colours used in high modality gives the clue for “naturalistic coding orientations” of the visual images and comes close to representing what is “real” in the depicted circumstances (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 160, 165). The most immediate result is that realism is a fundamental feature of the meaning signified by those visual images and provides the context where all of the (human/non-human) participants are depicted as highly focused and involving the viewer’s personal diet and nutrition-related diseases to varying degrees.

3.2.3. *Compositional meaning*

To complete this stock of semiotic resources, the compositional meaning of images presents the ways in which representational and interactive meanings can be related to each other in the layout to create textual coherence (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 15). Based on this, and in the absence of “given” (left) or “new” (right) sides of information in the current images as identified in Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) taxonomy of compositional axes, interaction is mainly realized through such resources as size, focus, colour and distance, which account for “salience” in this visual code (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 177).

Without exception, salient features are consistent with all the Figures examined, where the images aesthetically appear in large-sized and variously coloured compositions to serve the attention-grabbing function of representing recognisable social settings. As part of this function, however, it is not unusual for the colours of food to be also relevant for aesthetically communicating meanings associated with the brand positioning, which can be viewed as a proxy for product-related

characteristics such as taste, quality, and origin (Maheswaran et al. 1992). While these features are also the result of framing, which allows the viewer to imaginatively come close to the depicted participants, as examined before, the “information value” that characterizes a picture as “centred” or “polarized” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 177) can equally be noticed in the visual cues. In this case, images in Figures 1 and 4 present the farmer and fishmonger in the centre of the scene as the nucleus of information, showing the viewer that specific food products (vegetables and fish) can be bought on account of the qualities and properties attributed to those products by the science-heavy language behind visual messages. More important still, this nucleus is further enhanced by the products appearing in the lower sections, which create more factual, real, or practically oriented information, what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 186) refer to the lower section of images as being “more informative and practical, showing us ‘what is’”.

3.2.4. Connecting visual meanings with the wider social context of discursive practices

Looking at images as resources for the ‘transformation’ of meaning-making processes (Iedema 2003), or the ‘recontextualization’ of social practices (van Leeuwen 2008) within the social analysis of discourse (Fairclough 1995a, 2001, 2003), an ideological construct emerges from the analysis of visual communication, where the overall social discourse about ‘what to eat’ for ‘being healthy’ is closely linked with the improvement of behavioural patterns/lifestyles that need to be sought after in real life. This ideological bias, constructed as best practice, runs through the visual as well as non-visual discourse of nutrition, where the use or consumption of healthy food products is promoted as a gateway for averting risks of diseases and encouraging viewers to value and enact similar lifestyles for the enhancement of personal health. In this vein, a real or imagined relationship is built up between producers of images and viewers in order to articulate nutritional levels of engagement with fruit and vegetable foods as important components of a healthy diet, implicitly supporting the idea that reduced fruit and vegetable consumption is linked to poor health and increased risk of diseases. This way of facilitating the meaningful use/consumption of nutri-biochemical level of food products is relevant to ideologically create an “image” of the products and to evoke a frame for a “modern lifestyle” (Fairclough 2001: 168-170), as part of health promotion activities developed and spread by the non-verbal facets of nutritional discourse.

There comes a point when the combination of representational, interactive and compositional meanings of the images and their recontextualized social practices not only impact upon “social change” (Scollon 1998; Fairclough 2003), and in particular discursive areas of social life where social practices (behavioural patterns/lifestyles) are articulated, but also significantly bear upon “what sorts of identities, what versions of ‘self’, they project” (Fairclough 1995b: 17), and contribute to building an identity model of ‘nutrition-responsive’ viewers who make choices about food along the ideology which health promotion attempts to activate in the imagery. Viewed as such, imagery will also equally enact and (re)

produce the ideological values of “healthism” discourse (Crawford 1980, 2006; Lupton 2003; Rich and Evans 2005; Rysst 2010), which puts the individual in the driving seat of their healthy lifestyles and risk prevention, and provides an opportunity for “an ever-expanding consumer culture of health products and services” (Crawford 2006: 416) that is informed by advertising (Featherstone 1991; Lupton 2003; Crawford 2006). It therefore stands to reason that healthy eating behaviours and practices promoted in the visual sign making become a central plank of how rational individuals/consumers take responsibility for their own health, and consequently help them develop self-control over different components of lifestyle such as healthy food choices, preventive diseases, and so on. Just how far the visual grammar can be a powerful communication resource of individual responsibility to health will depend on the viewer’s degree of knowledge and skills to assess health-related data of food and improve the quality of their life. However, it very much appears that without recourse to visuals and their modes of representation viewers would be hard-pressed to fully digest the science-heavy information conveyed there, so visual modes help the viewers synthesize meaning by creating a unified text or communicative event alongside language.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented a selection of data set utilized within the format and content of the professional booklet genre and sought to understand the ways in which linguistic and visual resources can influence the effectiveness of the genre in communicating professional dietary messages to potential readers/viewers.

Analysis of verbal and non-verbal signs has shown that a healthy discourse of nutrition is ideologically constructed and taken on board throughout the informational, educational and advisory genre. In addition to linguistic cues of ‘low-fat’, ‘caloric content’, ‘fresh’, ‘starchy’, or some other label used to qualify nutritional profiles of food products as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, data have shown the desire for the Foundation insiders as producers to engage readers/viewers with responsible levels of food and nutrition as important components of a healthy diet. In this framework, however, we are also informed about the discourse of health promotion and its assumptions going side by side with the discourse of marketing, where the individual is essentially constructed as a health consumer (Moulding 2007). Following this view, and not least the idea that it is increasingly difficult in contemporary culture not to be involved in ‘promoting’, it is not unusual for the Foundation insiders producing the genre to be able to incorporate the ideological value of health in a strategic and tactical food-related marketing mix and to create a “consumption community” (Fairclough 2001: 168-170) where consumers as groupings ideally share the evidence base about food products in terms of their nutrient composition. By so doing, insiders will make the connection between nutritionally valued food and health-related diseases that are important for consumers, who may subscribe to healthy diet and lifestyle promoting practices,

such as those shaped by the language and imagery examined. Although acceptance of healthy diets may still be culturally determined by groups of the same culture sharing similar values and therefore lifestyles (Hinde and Dixon 2007: 413), the food-related marketing mix is not without “hybrid”, “mixed” or “embedded” forms of discourse flowing into the genre (Fairclough 1995a; Bhatia 2004). This is accounted for by the booklet’s purpose of informing the individual on the level of health risk associated with the macro/micronutrient profiles of a food (health-related nutrient education) on the one hand, and incorporating some kind of promotional elements based on a selection and interpretation of positive qualities of those nutrients (nutritionally marketed foods) on the other. More than that, this marketing mix is no exception to the Barilla Food Company acting behind the Foundation, in that its business outlook is one which acknowledges responsibilities to stakeholders beyond shareholders, including consumers/customers (those who use and buy products). Consequently, this kind of prospect engages in corporate social responsibility - CSR (Evangelisti and Garzone 2010) by embedding sustainability approaches to food and nutrition products into the core of its business operations and communication to create shared value for business and society as is necessary for the Foundation to stand as an expert knowledge provider and customer/learner-orientated research institution around food and nutrition issues.

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Appendix

Figure 1



Figure 2



The Mediterranean diet can protect against the onset of Alzheimer's disease

As already noted, there are numerous international studies that show how changing certain eating habits helps to protect individuals from neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and dementia.

One study, published in 2005 in the *British Medical Journal* and based on the analysis of information from seven different studies conducted over the past two years around the world (and in which more than 2 million people were involved), focused on the benefits generated by the so-called "Mediterranean diet" product. The study determined the impact that the Mediterranean diet could have on preventing individuals from neurodegenerative diseases.

Developing a specific scoring for adherence to the Mediterranean diet, researchers have highlighted that an increase of just two points in one's score can actually translate into a gain in terms of protection from the major chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, but also from those neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and dementia.

In fact, increasing - even slightly - one's adherence to the dietary habits of the Mediterranean basin can translate a reduction in cardiovascular disease and cancer of 33% and 45%, respectively, as well as a 25% reduction in the risk of developing other diseases.

Moreover, changing one's diet to include fruits, vegetables, cereals, legumes, fish and olive oil can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease. The study found that, although 33% of the European population is at risk of developing the disease, for a 25% reduction in the number of patients it would be sufficient to delay the onset of the symptoms for ten years through adherence to a Mediterranean dietary model.

Photo: Getty Images / Contrasto

Figure 3

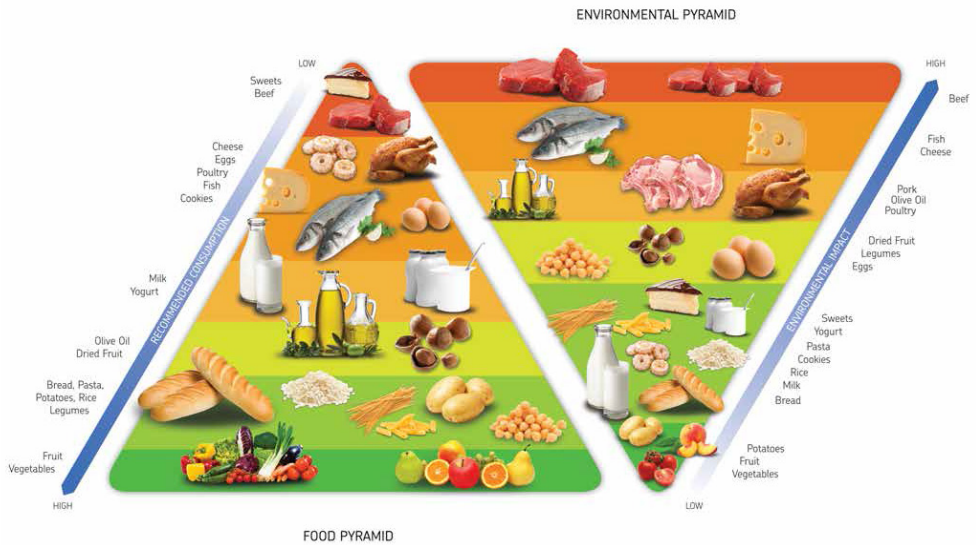


Figure 4



Biosketches

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Seven ways to knit your portfolio: Is the language of investor communication gender neutral?

Cecilia Boggio, Elsa Fornero, Henriëtte Prast, José Sanders

Abstract

This study investigates whether (lack of) familiarity with the language of investor communication may contribute to an explanation of the well-documented gender gap in financial decision-making (i.e. women are more risk averse than men) and financial literacy (i.e. women are less literate than men). Using an interdisciplinary framework that combines insights from Behavioral Economics, Finance and Linguistics, we analyze metaphors used in websites that target beginning retail investors in three different languages: Dutch, Italian and English. Employing the conceptual metaphor analysis proposed by Cameron and Low (1999) and Charteris-Black (2004), we find that in all three languages the metaphors come from the same conceptual domains; namely, war, health, physical activity, game, farming and the five senses. As these domains refer to worlds that are predominantly and (stereo)typically masculine, we conclude that the language of investor communication may give rise to feelings of familiarity and belonging among men while creating feelings of distance and non-belonging among women. Based on our findings, we conclude that further research is needed to assess whether language could be a tool to reduce the gender gap in financial attitudes and behavior.

Keywords

Familiarity, gender gap, financial communication, conceptual metaphor theory, critical discourse analysis.

1. Introduction

Marketing practice and research find that *words* influence consumers' attitudes and behavior by creating conceptual associations that may have a different impact on men and women. For instance, while women liked Diet Coke (Coca Cola's first ever sugar-free cola) from the moment it entered the market in 1983, the Coca Cola Company persuaded men to consume its zero-calorie cola only with the release of Coca Cola Zero in 2005. The word 'diet' evokes associations with a stereotypical woman's world:

- where she is overly concerned with her looks and physical attractiveness;
- whereas the word 'zero' evokes associations with a stereotypical man's world;
- where he is strong, tough, possesses quantitative skills and is a black and white thinker.

In discussing the concept of gender branding applied to the world of diet beverages, Jill Avery (2012) maintains that, for years, Coca Cola failed to entice men to consume Diet Coke, even though there was a practical need for men to drink lower-calorie soda, as men identified 'diet' cola as a woman's drink, and thus could not bridge the gap image-wise without a new product just for them.

Whereas in the area of non-financial consumer products, gendered branding is common, in the area of financial products it is seldom found. The latter can be explained by several factors. First, the household, not the individual, has traditionally been the relevant unit for saving, investing and insurance decisions. Second, finance theory assumes the presence of a unitary financial consumer (Donni and Chiappori 2011). Finally, the financial industry is required to meet several demands from the law as well as financial supervisors when it comes to providing guidance and suggestions for investors. These demands rarely take financial consumers' biases and heterogeneities into account, other than through asking them about their risk attitudes and financial expertise. Moreover, from the perspective of risk taking and financial participation, both academic research and financial industry studies have well documented that men and women exhibit different financial behavior. It is a fact that women participate less in the stock market than men and, if they do, they take less investment risk.

Starting from these premises, this study, first of all, hypothesizes that language may have a different impact on men and women depending on the metaphors that are used. Then, it investigates the language used in communication with financial consumers in Dutch, English and Italian, and the likelihood of this language to create feelings of belonging or distance depending on whether the consumer is a man or a woman. If that were the case, this language bias could contribute to explaining the gender gap in financial decision-making. In other words, this study wants to be a first step towards a better understanding of the effects of language, and metaphors in particular, on financial attitudes and behavior. And this is not just of academic importance. Far from it. Nowadays, with pension risk increasingly transferred to individuals, increased and increasing labor market participation by women, and a growing need for women to manage their own wealth and take care of their own financial security in retirement (as a result of divorce and reduction of survivors' benefits), the need to understand how to reach women effectively is of great significance, and it has practical relevance not only for policy makers and financial sector supervisors and regulators but also for the financial industry.

2. Theoretical background

The main research question of this study, thus, is whether the language used in the financial sector could contribute to the gender gap in financial attitudes and decision-making. The notion that language, and more specifically metaphor use, could have such an effect is grounded in three main theoretical frameworks; namely, familiarity and investing, affect heuristic, and conceptual metaphor theory.

2.1. Familiarity bias in investing

The behavioural finance scholar Gur Huberman (2001) uses the concept of *familiarity* to explain why investors hold many more stocks of companies they are familiar with, diversifying less than would be optimal according to finance theory. As a matter of fact, the strong and pervasive influence of this so-called home bias on investment decisions takes different forms. There is a home country bias, with investors not diversifying enough internationally (French and Poterba 1991), a regional bias within countries, with investors holding an excessive percentage of their portfolio in stocks of companies operating at a regional and even local level (Coval and Moskowitz 1999; Huberman 2001), an industry bias, with employees overinvesting in stocks of companies in the industry they work in (Døskeland and Hvide 2011), and even an employer bias for pension savings, with employees holding too a large fraction of their pension wealth in their employers' stocks (Laibson 2005). Moreover, Prast *et al.* (2015) study familiarity in the context of the gender difference in stock market participation and risk taking. By assuming that women are more exposed to advertisements in women's magazines than men, they construct a 'pink' stock market index and investigate whether behavior differs according to whether participants are exposed to this pink index or to the traditional stock market index. They find that with the traditional index it takes women three times as long as men to decide, while with the 'pink' index they decide more quickly than men.

2.2. Affect heuristic

The psychological mechanism underlying the effect of familiarity discussed in 2.1. can be found in social and cognitive psychology research and has been defined as the affect heuristic. This psychological phenomenon refers to a sort of mental 'short-cut' that behaves as a first and fast response mechanism in decision-making, no matter the type of decision one has to make.

In recent years, it has been demonstrated that the affect heuristic plays a role in risk judgment within the decision-making process. Indeed, an inverse relationship between perceived risk and perceived benefit has been observed, and it occurs because people rely on *affect* when judging the risk and benefit of specific hazards. In other words, people act upon their swift and instinctive emotional responses (i.e. affects) in a risky environment, instead of, or in addition to, logical ones. While positive *affect* decreases perceived risk, negative *affect* increases it (Finucane *et al.* 2000). Specifically in the context of investor decision-making there are at least two additional effects. The first one is that positive (or negative) affect, besides decreasing (or increasing) perceived risk, also leads to a higher (or lower) estimate of return (Slovic *et al.* 2005), even when this is logically not warranted for that given situation. The second effect, as the findings of Alakami and Slovic (1994) and Finucane *et al.* (2000) demonstrate, is that when people feel they are adequately familiar with an investment context, they are willing to gamble with ambiguous probabilities whereas they are not prepared to do so in unfamiliar

iar investment contexts (Boyle et al. 2012; Dimmock et al. 2016). Thus, one can conclude that, as far as investment behavior is concerned, familiarity very often creates a positive *affect* that may explain why people often invest in the familiar while ignoring the main principles of portfolio theory.

2.3. Conceptual metaphor theory

It should now be clear that the existing economic research into the role of familiarity in influencing investor behavior focuses on the effect of *physical* closeness. Instead, as previously mentioned, we hypothesize that preference for the *familiar* could manifest itself through language. If words evoke metaphorical associations that create *psychological* closeness, they may have an impact on investor behavior in a similar way as geographical closeness. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory, we look into the possibility that the language of investor communication creates positive affect through familiarity for one of the genders, but less for the other.

The conceptual theory of metaphors by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pioneered the notion that metaphors underlie the conceptual systems according to which human beings think and act; metaphors are then the lens through which people view the world around them. The compelling implication follows that every aspect of our experience is molded by metaphors we are hardly aware of and, most important of all, metaphors are lurking in the discourse of all diverse manner of human enterprise. Thus, metaphors are not merely decorative devices, peripheral to language and thought. Rather, they are central to thought. As a matter of fact, language – and metaphors in particular – is what makes our thoughts or conceptual systems ‘visible’. Particularly in abstract fields, such as finance, people use, often unconsciously, metaphors to make concepts and actions ‘imaginable’, more vivid, and thus easier to understand. They do so precisely by transferring meaning from an imaginable domain to an abstract domain (Charteris-Black 2004).

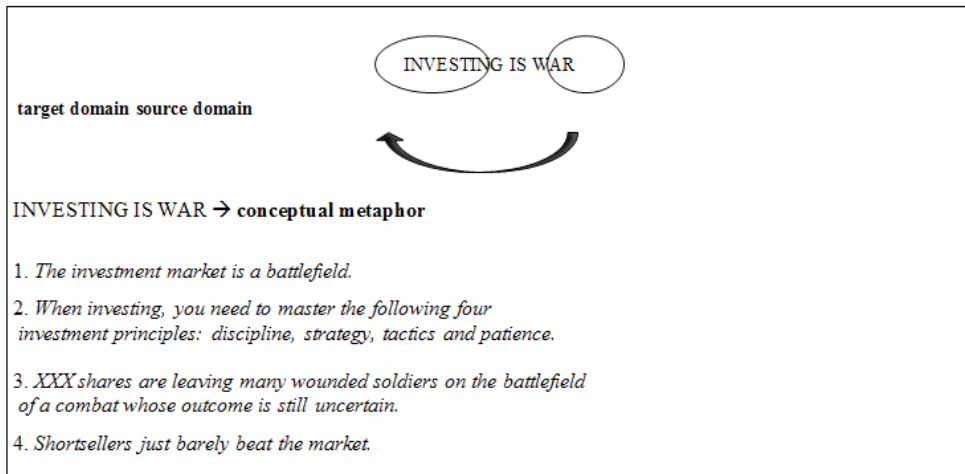
As Figure 1 illustrates, a certain (abstract) domain, i.e. INVESTING, ‘borrows’ words from a certain (concrete) source domain, WAR, in order to turn the abstract concept or experience into a more concrete, and thus easier to imagine, one. In short, there are two main roles for the conceptual domains posited in conceptual metaphors:

- 1) *source domain*: the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions (e.g. INVESTING IS WAR);
- 2) *target domain*: the conceptual domain that we try to understand (e.g. INVESTING IS WAR).

INVESTING IS WAR¹ is an example of conceptual metaphor and may result in

¹ Evidence that INVESTING IS WAR is a discourse-specific conceptual metaphor is given by, for example, the headlines of the following articles: “Sun Tzu, the Art of War and Your Portfolio” (*Financial Post*, 17 August, 2013); “The Art of War and Investing” (*Laissez Faire*, 10 August, 2015); “The Investing War is Over, and the Index Fund Won” (*Fortune*, 1

Figure 1. Structure of a conceptual metaphor



many different realizations at the surface level of language such as the four examples, all from authoritative sources, given in Figure 1; “The investment market is a battlefield”, “When investing, you need to master the following four principles: discipline, strategy, tactics and patience”, “XXX shares are leaving many wounded soldiers on the battlefield of a combat whose outcome is still uncertain” and “Shortsellers just barely beat the market”.² Far from having the rather superficial role of enhancing stylistic elegance through linguistic ornamentation, the above linguistic realizations of the conceptual metaphor INVESTING IS WAR are cognitive instruments as the interaction between thoughts from the two domains (the source domain and the target domain) leads to new understanding (Charteris-Black 2004). This understanding, however, is informed by discourse practices (Fairclough 1995), i.e. ways of talking about and defining investment issues, notions and institutions that have been formulated over and over again, such that, though they are conventional, they come to seem natural, and they construct a social reality in which investing is an activity involving risk taking and possible damage. As such, these ‘natural’ discourse practices in the field of investing – historically dominated by men (Crystal 2003; Ferguson 2008) – may result as unfamiliar, and thus also often unattractive, to women. To the extent that the field of finance

February, 2016).

2 Sources: 1. *Business Insider* (23 March 2016); 2. Robbins, Rob (2012). *Tactical Trend Trading: Strategies for Surviving and Thriving in Turbulent Markets*. New York: Apress; 3. *Il Sole 24Ore*, 16 October 2014, p. 46 (our translation of “Il titolo XXX sta facendo molti feriti sul campo di una battaglia che resta incerta”); 4. *Financieel Dagblad*, 24 October 2014; p. 21 (translated by the authors from the Dutch “Shortsellers verslaan de marktmaar net”).

and investing has been a largely male enterprise for centuries, the metaphors – a form of discourse practice – used in this field have been conceived, formulated and repeated again and again by men, and they have therefore become ancillary in first constructing and then reinforcing the idea that finance is a male arena.

From this viewpoint, the often-quoted metaphor ‘money talks’ conceptualizes and embodies a way of talking about money that is predominantly masculine, as is shown by previous studies in cognitive linguistics and critical discourse/metaphor analysis that examined the most common conceptual metaphors in Economics and Business. Boers and Demecheleer (1997) find evidence that the majority of metaphors used in *The Economist*, *Business Week*, *The Financial Times*, and *Fortune* come from the source domains of journey, health, war, mechanics, gardening, and food. Koller (2004) finds that in mergers and acquisitions texts evolutionary struggle metaphors prevail, while Guo (2013) concludes that the metaphors used in the Chinese media coverage of Geely’s acquisition of Volvo come from the source domains of marriage, journey, health, and war. Morris *et al.* (2007) underline the fact that metaphors may not be neutral in their impact on investor behavior. They study the occurrence and effect of the metaphors used by stock market commentators and distinguish between agent metaphors and object metaphors. Agent metaphors describe stock price movements in terms of an intended action by an animate being: “the Dow fought its way upward,” and “the S&P dove like a hawk.” Object metaphors, instead, describe stock price movements as the result of an external physical force: “the Nasdaq dropped off a cliff” and “the S&P bounced back”. They find that metaphor use affects investor expectations, as agent metaphors increase the probability that investors expect a stock price trend to continue, while object metaphors do not.

To illustrate how metaphors evoke conceptual associations (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 2008), let us compare the metaphorical expressions ‘asset building’ and ‘asset growth’. They both express significant, but quite different aspects of an increase in wealth. ‘Asset building’ evokes associations with the domain of physical constructions, design, heavy physical labor, and maintenance, while ‘asset growth’ evokes associations with the domain of sowing, caring, and dependence on weather conditions. Therefore, if it is true that conceptual metaphors may guide judgment and behavior (Barrett *et al.* 1995; Ferraro *et al.* 2005; Cornelissen *et al.* 2011), ‘building assets’ may steer the viewpoint towards working according to a plan in the direction of a clearly envisioned result, while ‘growing assets’ may steer it towards awaiting a less controlled result. Pursuing this line of argumentation, ‘building’ could make users think that planning and acting are called for and unavoidable, whereas ‘growing’ could make users think that caring and waiting are the way to go. Moreover, if the represented reality seems unfamiliar, conceptual metaphors may steer the receiver away (Oberlechner *et al.* 2004). To sum up, the carrying across of words from one conceptual domain to the other inevitably makes some aspects of reality (the concept or action it is meant to describe) vivid and concrete, with the result of ‘hiding’ other aspects of that same reality. Depending on, for instance, the receiver’s social identity, they may, therefore, create positive or negative affect.

3. Methodology

We selected websites targeting beginning retail investors in three different languages: Italian, Dutch, and English. These languages have in common that they are spoken on the European continent even though they have different origins; Italian is a Romance (Neo-Latin) language, whereas Dutch and English are West Germanic languages. Italian, like all Romance languages, has a gender-marked grammar (i.e. nouns are either masculine or feminine and all determiners, pronouns and adjectives related to a noun change their form according to the gender of the noun they refer to), while the grammar in Dutch and English, like many Germanic languages, is gender-neutral. Note that the purpose of this paper is *not* to compare and analyze differences among these languages. Rather, the focus is on similarities: can metaphors used in investor communication be traced back to similar source domains? The sample websites selected for our investigation into the metaphors used in investment communication are the following:

- Italian: *Investire in borsa – corso pratico per principianti* (http://www.windoweb.it/dossier/investire_in_borsa/guadagnare_in_borsa_1.htm, retrieved 25-9-2013)
- Dutch: *Beleggen voor beginners* (<http://www.beleggenvoorbeginners.org/>; retrieved 27-9-2013)
- English: *The beginner's guide to investment* (<http://www.which.co.uk/money/savings-and-investments/guides/the-beginners-guide-to-investment/>; retrieved 26-9-2013)

These websites were chosen for a number of reasons. First of all, we need texts that potential investors get to read. Ideally, we should analyze texts produced across all media in order to thoroughly dissect the investment language encountered by all financial consumers, not merely the visitors of investing sites for beginners, which is already a biased group. However, this was not feasible, and investing websites for beginners were our second-best choice as they constitute a 'portal' target in an audience of financial consumers who still do not invest in the stock market. Second, these websites score highest on Google when searching, in each language, for a combination of the words indicating 'beginner' and 'investment'. Third, being beginner's guides to investment, they try to avoid the highly specialized vocabulary of the field as much as they can. Finally, the websites are more or less comparable length-wise, and content-wise they give beginning investors similar guidelines. It is an admittedly limited corpus but worthwhile as a starting point, since, to our knowledge, no existing corpora about investment language exist.

The key steps in our qualitative investigation process are the following (Cameron and Low 1999; Charteris-Black 2004):³

³ Although we are not explicitly employing the "metaphor identification procedure"

1. Data retrieval: the complete text was downloaded.
2. Data selection: parts recognizable as advertisements or news stories were omitted.
3. Close reading: the remainder was read to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
4. Metaphor identification: based on Charteris-Black's definition of metaphor discussed in 2.3. and the resulting chart in Figure 1, each text was scrutinized for words and/or phrases that revealed the presence of incongruity or semantic tension resulting from a conceptual shift in domain use. Here are some examples.

- a) Despite *the poor financial health of the market* in recent years, investment opportunities exist.
- b) If you had all of your money invested in one asset or sector, and it began to drop in value, *your investments would suffer*.
- c) [...] *European stocks and bonds began feeling the chill*.
- d) Investors are routinely warned to spread risk by putting their money in a broad mix of assets. But *how many baskets of eggs is it sensible to carry at once?*

The phrases in italics are metaphorical expressions because they create a relationship between two different conceptual domains by shifting the use of words from one domain to the other: from HEALTH in (a) and (b), THE FIVE SENSES in (c), FARMING in (d) to INVESTING.

5. Metaphor analysis: using the above explained semantic tension at a cognitive level as a required criterion for classification as a metaphor, words and phrases were selected and their context further examined to determine whether its use was metaphoric or literal.

6. Metaphor coding: each candidate metaphorical expression was reported as such, noted with its immediate context (i.e., surrounding words) and classified according to its source domain. The process of establishing the source domains was a joint effort of all the authors. In the end, we agreed to six main source domains: WAR, HEALTH, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, GAME, FARMING and THE FIVE SENSES. Section 4 will discuss these domains and their selection in more detail. Although the six domains may appear as uniform and quite self-explanatory, each of them blends metaphoric expressions referring to more than one aspect of the conceptual model/system they label.⁴

(MIP) of Gerard Steen (2002) and the Pragglejaz Group (2007), their extremely detailed method to identify metaphorically used words by literally dissecting every single lexical unit in discourse informed, though indirectly, our research.

4 All authors of this paper are fluent in English, two are native speakers of Dutch, two are native speakers of Italian and one is fluent in Italian. This made it possible to have each text examined by at least two authors. The analysts compared the metaphors found and, on that basis, distinguished a closed set of overarching source domains to be used to categorize the metaphors found in the investment texts.

7. Metaphor categorization: the six source domains found were categorized according to whether they could create different affect depending on the gender of the reader by using a gender stereotype classification.

4. Findings

Table 1 presents an overview of the most frequent metaphors found in the chosen investing websites for beginners.⁵

Table 1. Summary statistics

	Dutch	Italian	English
Number of words used in full text	6,023	3,761	3,735
Number of metaphoric expressions found	142	92	148
10 most frequently used metaphors (with frequency of their linguistic realizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goed/slecht doen [to do well/bad] (19) • stijgen/dalen [rise/fall] (11) • turbo/sprinter (11) • spreiding/spreid [dispersion/to spread] (10) • verlies [loss] (8) • winst [profit] (8) • partij [party] (8) • hefboom [leverage] (6) • doel/doelstelling [target] (5) • moeilijk/makkelijk [difficult/easy] (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scendere/salire [rise/fall] (23) • andare bene/male [to do well/bad] (17) • oscillazione/oscillare [fluctuation/fluctuate] (7) • sano/malato [healthy/ill] (7) • tranquillo/nervoso [calm/nervous] (6) • reazione/reagire [reaction/to react] (4) • armi/armare [arms/to arm] (2) • centrare/mancare [to hit/to miss] (2) • correre un rischio [to run a risk] (2) • giocare [to play] (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rise/fall (24) • grow/growth (16) • lump sum (14) • protection/to be protected (12) • to spread (10) • fluctuation (8) • loss (6) • to be good/bad (4) • impact (4) • step (in) (3)

While some metaphors appear in the top ten for all languages, there are also differences among the languages. For instance, there are more metaphors belonging

⁵ A full list of metaphors, as well as their categorization into source domains, can be obtained from the authors.

to the source domain WAR in the Dutch and English texts than in the Italian one. Moreover, neither the Dutch nor the Italian texts contain ‘growth’ metaphors but there are sixteen of them in the English text. The analysis of the similarities and differences would be interesting in itself but is not the subject of this study. Still, we would like to draw attention to the fact that although the Dutch text contains more words than the Italian and English texts, the number of metaphors is greater in the Italian and English texts than in the Dutch text.

After having identified the candidate metaphors in our three texts, we allocated each of them to a source domain. We found that the majority of them can be grouped into six different source domains, which are hereafter listed with some examples.⁶

1. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, intended both as speed or motion (i.e. going fast/slow or up/down) and (de)construction (i.e. building or destroying):

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
	speed/motion	(de)construction
Dutch	... u kunt beleggen in <i>sprinters</i> . (... you can invest in <i>sprinters</i> .)	... als je rendement aan het <i>verdampen</i> is. (... if your investment is <i>evaporating</i> .)
	... het resultaat van <i>snelle stijgers</i> . (... the result of <i>fast climbers</i> .)	... een <i>plan</i> voor uw vermogen <i>opstellen</i> . (... set up a plan for your assets.)
Italian	... fino a quando i titoli non danno chiari segnali di <i>un'inversione di rotta</i> . (... until your shares give clear signs of a <i>turnaround</i> .)	... può <i>far lievitare</i> un titolo. (... it can make a stock price <i>rise</i> .)

⁶ The English translation of each example in Dutch and Italian is provided below the original metaphorical expression.

	<p>... non è detto che i titoli <i>marcino</i> con utili a due cifre.</p> <p>(... shares do not necessarily <i>march</i> on a double-digit profit growth.)</p>	<p>... ti <i>bruceresti</i> l'investimento al primo calo.</p> <p>(... you would <i>destroy</i> your investment after the first stock market drop.)</p>
English	And while <i>riding out</i> the movements of the market, ...	How <i>to build</i> a successful portfolio ...
	A way <i>to steer around</i> the fluctuations in price of markets or assets is and ensure that your investments <i>are tailored</i> exactly to your needs.

2. HEALTH, intended as both physical and psychological, including illness and death:

	HEALTH	
Dutch	<p>... kunnen deze lasten <i>fataal</i> worden.</p> <p>(... these burdens can be <i>fatal</i>).</p>	
	<p>... de gehele sector zit in een <i>dip</i>.</p> <p>(... the whole sector is in a <i>dip</i>.)</p>	
Italian	<p>Alcuni titoli hanno oscillazioni molto contenute ma altri possono essere più <i>nervosi</i> ...</p> <p>(Some stocks have moderate fluctuations but others can be more <i>nervous</i> ...)</p>	
	<p>... i mercati sono <i>depressi</i> ...</p> <p>(... markets are <i>depressed</i> ...)</p>	
English	... you may prefer <i>to drip feed</i> your money on a regular basis.	
	You have less time for your money <i>to recover</i> ...	

3. WAR, intended as physical violence (i.e. fighting), armed battle (i.e. a conflict) and military strategy:

	WAR	
	fighting/conflict	military strategy
Dutch	... de kans op <i>verlies beperken</i> . (... limit the chance of <i>losses</i>)	... kieren voor een andere <i>strategie</i> . (... choose another <i>strategy</i>)
	... aandelen <i>beschermen</i> tegen koersdalingen. (... <i>protect</i> investments against falling.)	... laat u <i>adviseren</i> door een <i>partij</i> . (... have some <i>party advise</i> you)
Italian	... è sempre molto meglio <i>mancare</i> un maggiore guadagno che <i>centrare</i> una perdita secca. (... it's always better to <i>miss</i> a greater gain than to <i>hit</i> a dead-weight loss.)	...le migliori <i>mosse strategiche</i> per investire in Borsa. (... the best <i>strategic moves</i> to invest in the stock market.)
	... come <i>difendersi</i> da questi rischi. (... how to <i>defend oneself</i> from these risks).	... compiere delle <i>manovre</i> sul mercato azionario. (... <i>to maneuver</i> in the stock market.)
English	When the credit crunch <i>hit</i> the following year you have to master the following four investment principles: <i>discipline, strategy, tactics and patience</i> .
	The investment market is a <i>battlefield</i> to <i>maneuver</i> through investment rules.

4. GAME, referring to games with rules (including sports) as well as games of chance (i.e. gambling):

	GAME	
	games with rules/sports	chance-based games
Dutch	...tussentijds <i>switchen</i> kan altijd... (... you can always <i>switch</i> in between ...)	... laat u niet <i>verleiden</i> ... (... do not let yourself <i>be tempted</i> ...)
	... u kunt tussentijds <i>bijsturen</i> ... (... you can <i>steer</i> in between ...)	... <i>gokken</i> op hoger rendement. (... <i>gamble</i> for higher investment)
Italian	... come fare a <i>vincere</i> contro il panico da trading. (... how to <i>win</i> against trading panic.)	Ma allora sì che <i>si gioca</i> ... e si corrono dei bei rischi. (But in this case you are <i>gambling</i> ... and you are taking big risks.)
	... desiderano <i>cimentarsi</i> in investimenti. (... they would like <i>to have a go</i> at investing.)	Non cercare di fare troppo il furbo ... rischieresti di <i>restare con un palmo di naso</i> . Don't try to be too smart ... you'll run the risk of <i>being very disappointed</i> .)
English	Investment can enable you <i>to match</i> or even <i>beat</i> inflation ...	Don't <i>bet on</i> only <i>one horse</i> .
	... inflation <i>is beating</i> the return on interest rates.	<i>How much risk</i> do you think you're <i>willing to take</i> ? No investment is <i>risk-free</i> .

5. FARMING, referring to all the activities that need to be carried out to run a farm (i.e. growing crops, raising livestock, etc.):

	FARMING
Dutch	... de <i>opbrengst</i> doorgeven ... (... pass on the <i>profits</i> ...)
	... afhankelijk van dit geld als inkomsten <i>bron</i> . (... depending on this money as a <i>source</i> of income)
Italian	... e sperare che i titoli <i>diano i frutti attesi</i> . (.. and hope that your stocks <i>yield the expected benefits</i>).
	... non <i>mettere il carro davanti ai buoi</i> . (... don't <i>put the cart in front of the horse</i> .)
English	If you want <i>to grow</i> your money, ...
	... spread the risk and <i>do not put all your eggs in one basket</i> .

6) THE FIVE SENSES, referring to human sensory experiences; namely, sighting, smelling, hearing, tasting, and touching:

	THE FIVE SENSES
Dutch	... aan gouden tips zit nog wel eens een <i>luchtje</i> . (... golden tips tend to be <i>smelly</i>)
	... het kopen en verkopen komt vaak op <i>gevoel</i> aan. (... buying and selling are matters of <i>feeling</i>)
Italian	... <i>tastate bene il terreno</i> prima di decidere in quali titoli investire. (... <i>taste the waters carefully</i> before deciding which stocks to invest on.)

	<p>... forse i titoli <i>sentono odore di crisi</i>.</p> <p>(... perhaps your stocks <i>are smelling</i> the crisis.)</p>
English	Buying assets on a monthly basis is a means of <i>tipping your toe in the water</i> and monitoring your investments.
	Listening to market predictions may <i>blur your vision</i> .

Table 2 shows, for each of the above source domains, the most frequent metaphors in the Dutch, Italian and English texts respectively. Table 3 gives, for each source domain, the frequencies of all the metaphors found and Figure 2 presents these frequencies graphically.

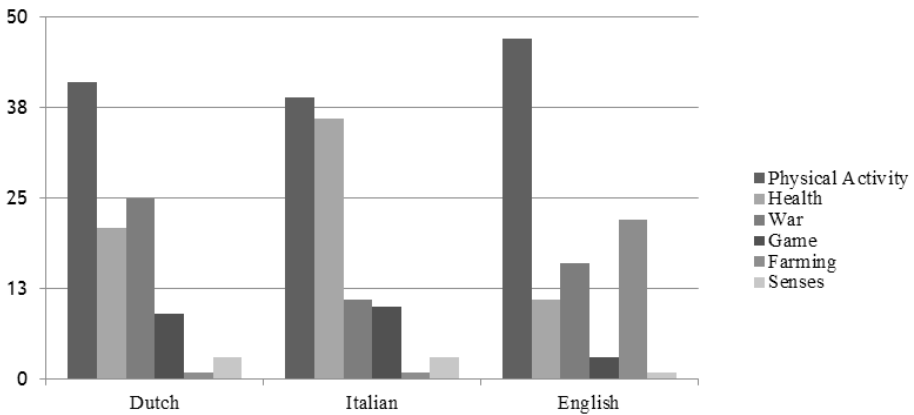
Table 2. Most frequent metaphors in the three languages, divided by source domain

	Dutch	Italian	English
Most frequently used metaphors by source domain (with frequency)	<p>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stijgen/dalen (11) - turbo/sprinter (11) - spreiding/spreid (10) - heefboom (6) <p>HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>goed/slecht</i> doen (19) - moeilijk/makkelijk (5) <p>WAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - verlies (8) - winst (8) - partij (8) - doel/doelstelling (5) <p>GAME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gambling (4) <p>FARMING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opbrengst (1) 	<p>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - salire/scendere (23) - oscillazione/oscillare (7) <p>HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - andare bene/male (17) - sano/malato (7) - tranquillo/nervoso (6) <p>WAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reazione/reagire (4) - armi/armare (2) - centrare/mancare (2) <p>GAME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - correre un rischio (2) - giocare (2) <p>FARMING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dare i frutti (1) 	<p>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rise/fall (24) - to spread (10) - fluctuation (8) - step (in) (3) <p>HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to be good/bad (4) <p>WAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - protection/to be protected (12) - loss (6) - impact (4) <p>GAME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to beat st/sm (2) <p>FARMING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - growth/grow (16)

Table 3. Metaphors divided by source domain, absolutes and proportions

Source domains	Dutch	Italian	English
Physical Activity	58 (41%)	36 (39%)	69 (47%)
<i>speed/motion</i>	31	34	44
<i>(de)contruction</i>	27	2	25
Health/Well-being	30 (21%)	33 (36%)	17 (11%)
War/Conflict	36 (25%)	10 (11%)	24 (16%)
Game (<i>play/chance</i>)	12 (9%)	9 (10%)	4 (3%)
Farming	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	32 (22%)
Senses	4 (3%)	3 (3%)	2 (1%)
Total	142 (100%)	92 (100%)	148 (100%)

Figure 2. Metaphors according to their source domains, percentages per language



In Tables 1 through 3 several things stand out. First, the metaphor source domains are the same across the three languages. Second, some of them are similar to those found in business texts, notably WAR and HEALTH (Koller 2004; Guo 2013), while others are not. Finally, while in business texts MARRIAGE is a frequent metaphor, it is absent in the texts we analyzed. This is most likely so because business texts often talk about mergers and acquisitions between/of companies, whereas our texts address financial consumers.

To categorize PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, HEALTH, WAR, GAME, FARMING and the FIVE SENSES based on their gender dimension we use the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem 1974). The BSRI is a self-report questionnaire that asks participants how well 60 different attributes describe themselves. This list of attributes reflects the definition of masculinity (20 questions) and femininity (20 questions), while the remaining 20 questions are mere filler questions. The masculine and feminine attributes were chosen based on what was culturally appropriate for males and females in the early 1970s, and the inventory was developed to tell what kind of gender role and individual it fulfills and, most importantly, the level of androgyny of individuals. As part of the cultural transformation of the so-called second-wave feminism (Eckert 2003), Sandra Bem, a professor of psychology at Stanford University, wanted to prove that women and men possess similar characteristics by testing the level of androgyny of individuals (i.e. their combination of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ personality traits) and providing empirical evidence to show the advantage of a shared masculine and feminine personality versus a sex-typed categorization. Since the year the BSRI was published, decades have passed in which gender roles have changed. However, it was still valid at the turn of the century (Holt and Ellis 1998) and is still the instrument of choice in research on gender role orientation and perceptions. It can therefore be safely assumed that, despite trends towards egalitarianism in Western societies in the 21st century, essential imagery and metaphorical framing are still different between men and women.

According to the BSRI, women are assumed to be emotional, empathetic, caring and loving, supportive, cooperative and lacking physical strength, whereas men are assumed to be rational and impassive, competitive, willing to fight and take risks and possess physical strength. Therefore, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, WAR and GAME are source domains that correspond to conceptual systems that feel more familiar to men than to women. Also the decision to consider HEALTH and FARMING as source domains that are in a neutral position regarding gender was made with an eye on the BSRI, and further linguistic evidence confirmed our decision. Despite the large body of empirical research that supports the popular belief that there is a lack of expressiveness in relation to men’s physical and emotional health issues, Charteris-Black and Seale (2010) have recently demonstrated that both men and women talk about their health issues. What *is* different are the ways – both at a grammatical and lexical level – in which men and women talk about them (Seymour-Smith et al. 2002).

As to the source domain of THE FIVE SENSES, linguistic evidence underscores that sensory metaphors are universally used (i.e. used across families of languages

and cultures), as they are more memorable - easier to retrieve from memory - than their semantic analogues. More specifically, sensory metaphors help express abstract concepts by linking them to direct bodily experiences with the physical world. For instance, calling an unfriendly person ‘cold’ suggests that, like a frosty winter, he or she is not very inviting (Akpınar and Berger 2015). Sensory metaphors provide a common ground for social interaction inasmuch as referring to universally shared human experiences - those of the five senses - which strengthens social bonds and enhances conversation flow among people, independently of their gender. Still, as the agreed upon reference point of our categorization is the BSRI – according to which women are considered more ‘sensitive’ and ‘emotional’ than men and, thus, they are supposed to ‘feel’ more than men – we categorized THE FIVE SENSES as a feminine source domain.

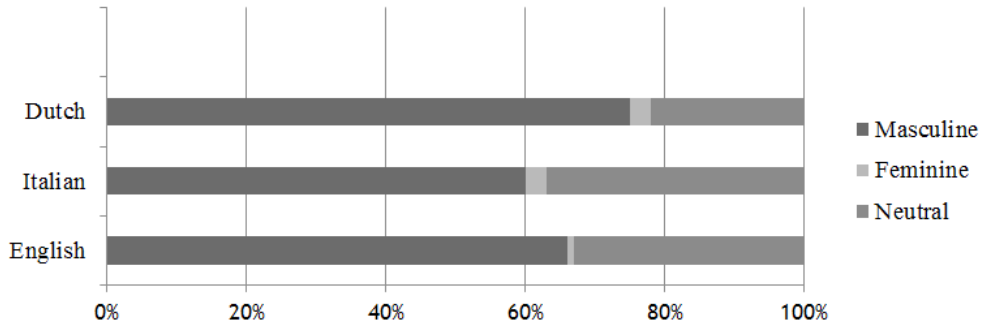
In conclusion, our categorization includes only one source domain that women identify more with than men. Table 4 shows the percentages of metaphors found according to their familiarity to each gender for each of the three languages.

Table 4. Metaphors and their gender familiarity based on the BSRI, proportions

	Dutch			Italian			English		
	F	M	N	F	M	N	F	M	N
Familiarity									
Source domain									
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		41			39			47	
HEALTH			21			36			11
WAR		25			11			16	
GAME		9			10			3	
FARMING			1			1			22
SENSES	3			3			1		
Total	3%	75%	22%	3%	60%	37%	1%	66%	33%

F: Feminine source domain; M: Masculine source domain; N: Neutral source domain.

Figure 3. Distribution of metaphors over masculine, feminine and neutral source domains



Based on Figure 3, and accepting a source domain classification based on the BSRI, the conclusion should be that the majority of these metaphors come from worlds/conceptual systems that are familiar to men and unfamiliar to women. There is a slight difference among the three languages, with more masculine and less neutral source domains in Italian compared to Dutch and English as Figure 3 illustrates.

5. Discussion

Our findings indicate that in the three languages - Dutch, Italian and English - metaphors in investor communication come from identical source domains, and that these domains are predominantly masculine.

A predominance of metaphors from masculine source domains comes as no surprise. On the one hand, while, within the patriarchal household, providing financial security to the family has been a masculine endeavor from the start, financial markets and institutions have traditionally been a man's world. In the past, sons, not daughters, inherited the family's fortune, and the one and only investment decision that might have been made by upper class women was choosing (or rather, being chosen by or for) a wealthy husband. The husband used to be the only or main income earner, and any investment decision was taken at household level. Even finance theory continues to assume a unitary financial consumer (Donni and Chiappori 2011) and research into differences in financial planning preferences within the family is of a recent date (Browning *et al.* 2014). This may also explain why gender marketing, so common for most consumer products, is virtually absent for financial products and services.

On the other hand, the use of gendered metaphors does not mean that, for instance, men like to go to war or even that they have actually served in the army. Rather, the masculine source domains evoke images of worlds that are, or were,

populated more by men than by women, or worlds and activities that are (perhaps unconsciously) considered to be carried out more likely by men than by women, just as the word ‘diet’ evokes images of a world in which men feel they do not or should not belong, even though men *are* interested in their weight and the way they look. As explained in 2.2., people tend to have swift and instinctive emotional responses when asked to make decisions in a risky environment. Therefore, choosing metaphors that feel familiar to them in those situations may be an unconscious, automatic process, largely based on the gender stereotypes they have grown up with. Moreover, people are (linguists excluded, perhaps) unaware of the fact that metaphorical expressions such as, for instance, ‘building a portfolio’ is not neutral - until they realize that ‘knitting a portfolio’ sounds very different.

Our findings, though based on a small corpus, are consistent with the hypothesis that the presence of a gender bias in investor communication could be one of the explanations of a gender difference in investor judgment and behavior.

6. Conclusions and future research

Our analysis so far has, of course, various limits. In particular, only using the BSRI to categorize the six source domains according to their gender dimension is insufficient to draw firm conclusions on the role of metaphors in explaining the gender gap in financial attitudes and decision-making. However, in their analysis of stock market reporting Prast *et al.* (2015) find that other categorization criteria of source domains lead to a similar conclusion as the BSRI. Further research is needed to verify whether metaphors in investor communication are indeed non-neutral.

There is no doubt that our analysis suggests that comparing the effects of the found masculine metaphors on financial attitudes and behavior of both men and women with their feminine counterparts is certainly worthwhile. If a different impact on attitudes and behavior were found, this should have practical implications. Most important of all, it would imply not only that a language change within investor communication is needed to make financial markets a gender level playing field, but it would also imply that investor communication may bias people, regardless of their gender, toward making decisions that are not in line with their true preferences. Given policymakers’ attempts to help investors make adequate decisions (see, for instance, MiFID rules and regulations)⁷, this would have implications both for an evaluation of current investor protection policies *and* for a greater financial inclusion of women.

⁷ The Markets in Financial Instruments Directive 2004/39/EC (known as MiFID) is a European Union law that provides harmonized regulation for investment services across the thirty-one member states of the European Economic Area (the twenty-eight EU member states plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein). MiFID’s main objectives are to increase competition and consumer protection in investment services.

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Congressional hearings as privileged loci to display rhetorical strategies: Hillary Clinton on Benghazi

Cinzia Giglioni

Abstract

The article is intended to illustrate recourse to apologetic discourse in a specialized genre, i.e. congressional hearings. More specifically, the case studies under examination are Hillary Clinton's two congressional hearings held in 2013, when she was called to testify about the September 11 attack on a U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya, in an appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee. The study shows how, to illustrate her decisions in the Benghazi investigation, Clinton made ample use of apologetic strategies, similar to those employed by companies reporting on their poor financial performance.

Keywords

Political discourse, congressional hearing, apology, lexical markers, morphological markers.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Aim and method

This article aims to illustrate recourse to apologetic discourse in a genre of political communication, i.e. congressional hearings. To this end, it relies on a case study, consisting of Hillary Clinton's two congressional hearings held on 23 January, 2013. They are the first, long-awaited testimony about the September 11, 2012 attack on a U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya, in an appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee. On 22 October, 2015, Hillary Clinton testified again, after the setting up of the United States House Select Committee on Events Surrounding the terrorist attack in Benghazi in May 2014.

The study is part of broader research project on apologetic discourse. The results of previous studies conducted within the framework of the research, but focusing on a different discursive domain (most notably, financial reporting) have been published – and will be referred to in the article – and/or presented at national and international conferences. Each article and each conference paper stands on

its own right, but they are also closely complementary. The present study continues along the lines of research pursued in them.

Apology has been fruitfully analysed in the context of political discourse (cf. Harrell, Ware, and Linkugel 1975; Harris, Grainger, and Mullany 2006) although it occurs in a variety of discourses. In the first stages of the research project, attention was paid to corporate communication, but in the spirit of looking back to the – Socratic – origins of apology in this study attention has shifted to political discourse. ‘Apology’ has therefore been taken into consideration in its very broad sense of justification of one’s actions or positions insofar as it is expected that such actions and positions may be the object of potential criticism on the part of an imagined opponent.

Political leaders’ self-defense discourse has always been part of political discourse and it is a relatively unambiguous field of investigation, since the “seemingly naïve question” (Van Dijk 1997: 11) about the essence of political discourse appears easier to be answered: politicians are intrinsically included among the possible actors of political discourse. This observation is made for the purpose of making it clear in which way political discourse is viewed in this study, also in consideration that, as Wilson (1985: 411) points out, “defining political discourse is not a straightforward matter. Some analysts define political so broadly that almost any discourse may be considered political”.

Previous findings (Gigliani 2010, 2012, 2014) on apologetic discourse in corporate communication correlated texts, i.e. annual company reports, with context, i.e. the economic and financial crisis, thus trying to engage in what Bhatia (2004 and 2015) has defined as “critical genre analysis”. More specifically, the relationship between apologetic strategies deployed in annual reports and the financial performance of the companies who issued the reports was investigated, thus increasing the attention paid to context and to “communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991; Gee 2005) in which genres are produced. Framing discursive activities in a context is the ultimate objective in critical discourse studies, their rationale being to overtake the impression that “producing and interpreting is an end in itself, rather than a means to an end” (Bhatia 2015: 9).

The theoretical framework described above was applied to corporate communication and brought its fruits: previous research findings underlined a strong relationship between poor financial performance and a massive presence of apologetic discourse. The study carried out on annual company reports was deliberately interpretative, since it was deemed that a purely textual study of lexico-grammatical recurrences would be unlikely to reveal the exploitation of specific domain genres in achieving their communicative purpose (Bhatia 2004).

The same methodological perspective has been taken in this stage of the research. A strong relationship between a problematic context and discursive outcomes is expected also in a different field of investigation, as is the case with political discourse. The way the “Al-Qaeda like”¹ attacks in Benghazi were man-

1 This definition was used by Hillary Clinton in an email to her daughter Chelsea

aged and presented to the public by the Secretary of State provides an example of controversial topic. The contentious nature of this topic is comparable to companies' poor economic performance and the politician taking responsibility - in Clinton's own words² - is a single person, just as it happens with companies' CEOs who sign the letter they address to shareholders in annual company reports.

Both CEO letters and congressional hearings are "relatively stabilized and thus readily analyzable genres" (Cap and Okulska 2013: 12). Among the genres that have been traditionally of interest to political discourse analysts, political speeches, political interviews and policy documents have received considerable attention (cf. Chilton 2004; Fairclough 2006). Congressional hearings, on the other hand, have attracted scholars from various disciplines but they seem not to have been very attractive for linguists.

As will be explained in more details in Section 2, congressional hearings are composed by several elements: opening statements by chair and ranking minority member, written witness testimony, oral remarks summarizing testimony, examination/questioning of witnesses, exhibits (e.g. articles, letters, reports). For the purpose of the present study, the oral parts of the hearings have been left out, together with the "dynamism of the genre" (Cap and Okulska 2014)³ and "theatricality" (Kenzhekanova 2015): the parts selected for the investigation are limited to the statements submitted by the witness.

In the case of formal speeches read aloud from a written text, "written text is prior to the spoken one" (Chilton and Schaffner 2002: 7). Written parts of Clinton's congressional hearing have been selected because they are especially suited to being investigated using the analytical tools utilized in previous stages of the research project, and also in consideration of the fact that the oral parts of the hearings, for their very nature, would have needed different tools of analysis.

The opening statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee closely matched Hillary Clinton's opening statement to the House Foreign Affairs Committee later in the day, therefore - due to this overlapping - the first text is the only one which has been analyzed in this article using linguistic research tools. All quotations have been retrieved from the Archive for the U.S. Department of State (<https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203158.htm>).

(<https://hillaryspeeches.com/category/benghazi-investigations/> retrieved 25 September 2017).

2 Clinton, Hillary, 2013, *Testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*. "As I've said many times since September 11, I take responsibility". In the present article, all quotations from this Testimony have been retrieved from *2009-2017 Archive for the U.S. Department of State* (<https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/2013/01/203158.htm>)

3 Cap and Okulska (2014) use the expression "dynamism of the genre" when they talk about political interviews, where on one side there are written, ready-made questions, and on the other side the politician's oral answers. A similar situation occurs during congressional hearings, when witnesses are questioned by committees.

The research method combines critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001; Wodak and Meyer 2001; Van Dijk 2011) with computer assisted scrutiny (Garzone and Santulli 2004). Given that the text under examination is a relatively short document, qualitative investigation seemed the most appropriate to detect the rhetorical strategies apologetic discourse relies on, and reliance on computer queries was made only occasionally to confirm the results of qualitative analysis.

1.2. Strategies definition and previous research steps

The foundations for the previous steps of the research project were findings by Ware and Linkugel, who published their research in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* in 1973 (Ware and Linkugel 1973). The two scholars identified four tactics or common strategies in apologetic discourse: transcendence, indirect denial, differentiation, bolstering. Transcendence is the strategy that tries to reframe the situation in a broader context; indirect denial is the response to charges in such a way that the charges are never explicitly acknowledged; differentiation is the strategy that seeks to create necessary distinctions that somehow redefine the questionable situation; bolstering is the process of enhancing the image of a subject by linking it to abstract values.

As said before, previous findings showed that in corporate texts a distinct tendency is detectable: when companies perform poorly, CEOs tend to use all four strategies of apologetic discourse in their letters to shareholders. In a second stage of the research project the attention was shifted to strategy identification problems. In fact, the four strategies often overlapped within the same paragraph, possibly making it difficult for readers to distinguish among them and decide which was the prevailing one in a certain paragraph or section. Therefore a further development of the investigation involved intercoder agreement by independent coders to ensure a higher generalizability of results.

Finally, the focus of the research shifted from macro-textual analysis to linguistic analysis proper. Lexical and syntactical regularities of apologetic strategies were researched on the belief that they may have considerably contributed to the recognition of the four strategies on the part of independent coders. It is one of the aims of the present article to verify if previously identified lexical and morphological traits of apologetic strategies occur also in the congressional hearings under investigation.

2. Congressional hearings

2.1. Idiosyncrasies of a genre

Congressional hearings are often the most requested government documents in a library. Hearings give researchers the “ability to discover whom the Congress is listening, who the players were in an issue and how they positioned themselves in a debate” (Sevetson, n.d.: 1). More has been written on hearings than on oth-

er areas of congressional publications. With approximately 120,000 hearings spanning over 180 years, there can hardly be an untouched subject. Most Americans have watched at least one televised committee hearing, and hearings have been glorified in movies – e.g. *The Quiz Show* (1994), *The Aviator* (2004), *Good Night and Good Luck* (2005) - and TV shows. However, as mentioned above, to my knowledge discourse scholars have hardly engaged in in-depth research on the genre, an attitude somehow contrasting with lay public's general interests and a lost opportunity to gain a unique view into the actors, the interested parties, the issues.

Congressional committee hearings may be broadly classified into four types: legislative, oversight, investigative, and confirmation (Sevetson, n.d.: 2). The heterogeneity of discourses in congressional hearings is “no impediment to either genre classification or recognition” (Garzone 2005: 180) by the members of the discourse community which regularly engages with this type of texts.

The concept of genre in linguistics has been addressed within several perspectives (e.g. systemic functional linguistics, (new) rhetorical studies, applied linguistics, discourse community studies, linguistic pragmatics, critical discourse analysis). Notwithstanding the consensus about a rather intuitive notion of genre and a common sense that discourse involves “conventional use of stable utterance groups which follow recognizable patterns that suit the accomplishment of certain social goals” (cf. Cap and Okulska 2013: 11), the theoretical spread of work on genres has caused many crucial questions to remain unanswered. One of these questions refers to possible genre components or stages. Congressional hearings, being a standardized genre organized in easily recognizable stages and constituent parts, seem to have - if compared to other, more unstable political genres without a clear macrostructure (Gross and Stärke-Meyerring 2009) - a “competitive advantage”, when it comes to facing this question. In fact, this highly codified genre needs precise preparation and procedure, which the reader of this study will find presented in the next few paragraphs⁴. Hearings are communicative events which occur in a very specific setting in terms of actors and locations, thus helping to disperse part of “genre fuzziness” (Swales 1990: 33) for discourse community members and for scholars. Genre recognition, in the case of congressional hearings, is immediate for both the communicator and the analyst. Whether confirmation hearings - a procedure unique to the Senate - legislative, oversight, investigative, or a combination of these, all hearings share common elements of preparation and conduct.

Official hearings, which are printed by the Government Printing Office (GPO), usually include: written and oral statements of witnesses, transcripts of the verbal question-and-answer session between committee members and witnesses; reports, exhibits and other materials submitted for the record by witnesses; correspondence and other materials submitted by interested parties.

⁴ A detailed description of both preparation and procedures for congressional hearings is given by Carr (2006) and Sachs (2004).

House and Senate Rules (cf. Sachs 2004; Carr 2006) require a witness to file with the committee an advance copy of the written testimony and then to limit oral remarks to a brief summary of his or her statement. The individual rules of committees often state how far in advance of the hearing the testimony should be filed, usually between 24 and 72 hours. Committees assert their right to receive advance copies of testimony for several reasons. Before the hearing, committees may want to summarize or outline the testimony, draft questions tailored to each witness's statement, and photocopy the statement for distribution to the press and others. According to one traditional format, a witness summarizes his or her written statements and then takes questions from committee members. During her congressional hearing, Clinton read out virtually *verbatim* the written copy of her testimony.

House and Senate Rules influence how a committee plans for media coverage and other publicity matters. For example, rules require that hearings be open to the public, as well as to radio, television, and still photography coverage, unless a committee votes to close a hearing. Hearings may be closed only for limited and specific reasons - for example, to deal with information that could compromise national security.

Hearings involve extensive preparation. By the day of the hearing, important requirements of House and Senate Rules are met - such as publicly announcing hearings - and critical decisions, such as choice and format of witnesses, are made. Necessary research has been conducted and relevant materials assembled in a briefing book. Briefings may have been prepared for committee members, staff, witnesses, and the press. Administrative issues, such as arranging for an official reporter, have been attended to. As a result of thorough and careful preparation, many hearings proceed without surprises. What the public may have found surprising, during Hillary Clinton's hearings on Benghazi - extensively broadcast and posted online - was not the format but the strong personality of the witness who, with her "combative testimony" (Harp, Loke, and Bachmann 2016), found a memorable way to close up her tenure as Secretary of State.

In order to begin the hearing, the Chair usually makes an opening statement introducing the subject and purpose of the session. The Chair may describe important events leading to the hearing and key contemporary issues. He or she also may outline the committee's approach to the matter; how interruptions, such as for roll call votes, will be handled; and the schedule of future hearings. When finished, the Chair generally recognizes the ranking minority party member to make an opening statement, and may then recognize other members. Most notably, in his opening statement to Clinton's congressional hearing, the Chair - a Republican member of the U.S. House of Representative - underlined⁵ systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior level within two bureaus of the State Department, and wanted Clinton to comment on the issues.

5 For committee leadership styles and influence of assertive behavior on the part of committee Chairs, see De Gregorio (1992).

One well known method of distribution of and access to congressional hearings are subscription databases. Free open access is another – reader friendlier - option: congressional committees websites, C-Span video Library, GPO’s (Government Publishing Office) Federal Digital System (FDsys). The Law Library of Congress contains approximately 75,000 volumes of printed congressional hearings. As part of the Law Library’s transition to the digital future, a collaborative pilot project was undertaken with Google, Inc., to digitize as Adobe Acrobat PDF files the entire collection and make it freely available to the Congress and the world. Ultimately, both the Library and Google will provide full-text access to the complete collection of hearings.

2.2. Critical interpretation of political discourse

“Critical interpretation of political discourse involves [...] thinking through a mass of relevant empirical facts” (Jones and Collins 2006: 30), and it is in this perspective⁶ that attention can now be shifted to the political scenario in which the congressional hearing under investigation originated.

Hillary Clinton served as United States Secretary of State under President Obama from 2009 to 2013. Two years after her appointment, Chris Stevens, the American ambassador in Libya and three other Americans serving in the State Department were killed during a terrorist attack on a U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi.

Whether or not the Obama administration misled the public when it initially claimed that the Benghazi attacks on 11 September, 2012, began “spontaneously”⁷ in response to an anti-Muslim video on the internet is a problem on which the author of this article leaves to the reader for his or her own judgment. That the administration was quick to blame the video, which did trigger protests in Egypt and elsewhere, and slow to acknowledge that the incident was a terrorist attack is quite evident now, five years and many Benghazi reports later. Republicans claim this was done by administration officials to help get Obama reelected, while Democrats - including former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton - have blamed the initial response on the “fog of war”. It was Clinton who then was running for president, therefore attention shifted to her statements in the immediate aftermath of the Benghazi attacks. As part of the House Benghazi Committee Final Report⁸, Republican Representatives Jim Jordan and Mike Pompeo issued an addendum with their views. In it, they blamed Clinton for being among those who misled the public rather than tell the American people the truth and increase the risk of losing an election.

6 In their article Peter E. Jones and Chick Collins (2006: 29-30) actually criticize “linguistic methods used by Critical Discourse Analysis” and write that “a political document is a matter for politics analysis and judgment and linguistic analysis cannot help”.

7 Cf. Kiely, 2016:1.

8 Retrievable at <http://benghazi.house.gov/NewInfo/>

Previous research, as reported in Section 1.1., correlated the exploitation of apologetic discourse on the part of prominent officials (in that case, CEOs) to their low achievements. The rationale the present study is based on is that the presence of apologetic discourse in the textual outcomes of a politician facing a controversial topic, i.e. her possible failures running the State Department, can reveal actual shortcomings.

3. Apologetic discourse in congressional hearings

3.1. Presence and articulation of apologetic strategies

The first research question that was formulated for the purpose of this article may be summarized as follows: did Clinton make recourse to apologetic discourse in the opening statement of her congressional hearing? If so, how did she articulate it / structure it?

According to Ware and Lonkugel's (1973) definitions, one of the strategies used in apologetic discourse is transcendence, which entails reframing the situation in a broader context. In the examples which will be following below, the textual realizations of the strategy are italicized.

In Clinton's congressional hearings, the description of the context is frequent and the very word "context" is used in a prominent position, as in ex. (1), which is the first paragraph in the text and follows the usual, formal acknowledgments to the committee members.

(1) [...] the terrorist attacks in Benghazi on September 11th 2012 [...] are part of *a broader strategic challenge to the United States* and our partners in North Africa. Today, I want briefly to offer some *context for this challenge*.

The strategy's presence is massive and implies frequent references to the general – challenging – situation. Clinton lists previous terroristic attacks on American diplomats, thus putting the Benghazi attack in a three-decade perspective in the effort to picture it as a recurrent type of event for which she cannot be blamed.

(2) Any clear-eyed examination of this matter must begin with this sobering fact. Since 1988, there have been 19 Accountability Review Boards investigating attacks on American diplomats and their facilities. *Benghazi joins a long list of tragedies* for our Department, for other agencies, and for America: hostages taken in Tehran in 1979, our Embassy and Marine barracks bombed in Beirut in 1983, Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996, our embassies in East Africa in 1998, consulate staff murdered in Jeddah in 2004, the Khost attack in 2009, and too many others. *Since 1977, 65 American diplomatic personnel have been killed by terrorists.*

She also frames the event in a macro-political scenario, thus trying to divert her audience's attention from Libya.

(3) It's also important to recall that *in that same period, we were seeing violent attacks on our embassies in Cairo, Sana'a, Tunis, Khartoum, as well as large protests outside many other posts* where thousands of our diplomats serve.

(4) We've also been moving forward on a third front: addressing the *broader strategic challenge in North Africa and the wider region*, because, after all, *Benghazi did not happen in a vacuum. The Arab revolutions have scrambled power dynamics and shattered security forces across the region. Instability in Mali has created an expanding safe haven for terrorists* who look to extend their influence and plot further attacks of the kind we saw just last week in Algeria.

(5) Concerns about *terrorism and instability in North Africa are of course not new*. They have been a top priority for the entire Administration's national security team. But we have been facing a *rapidly changing threat environment*, and we have had to keep working at ways to increase pressure on al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and the *other terrorist groups in the region*.

From a macro-textual perspective, transcendence is the most evident among the apologetic strategies displayed in the hearing – e.g. at the beginning –. Clinton engages in it quite frequently, and she does so in crucial moments of her opening statement.

The strategy called differentiation is typically used to turn readers' attention on positive data and divert their attention from negative ones. The example provided here below is thought to be the most representative in the text under consideration, also in reason of its length.

(6) Now of course, the list of attacks foiled, crises averted, and lives saved is even longer. We should never forget that our security professionals get it right more than 99 percent of the time, against difficult odds all over the world.

Indirect denial is the strategy that entails response to charges that are never explicitly acknowledged. In the following two examples of indirect denial, the language used triggers presuppositions which, if compared to other forms of pragmatic inference, are based more closely on the actual linguistic structure of sentences (Levinson 1983: 167) thus making it easier for the reader to retrieve him.

(7) [CLAIM] I am determined to leave the State Department and our country safer, stronger, and more secure.
[PRESUPPOSITION]: State Department isn't safe, strong and secure enough.

(8) [CLAIM] And we will use this opportunity to take a top-to-bottom look and re-think how we make decisions on where, when and whether people operate in high-threat areas, and then how we respond to threats and crises.
[PRESUPPOSITION]: Decisions were taken more superficially before.

In both examples an unfavorable situation is implicitly evoked, with the Secretary of State's statements implying that her actions are leading to improvements in safety measures.

As far as the strategy of bolstering is concerned, in previous stages of the research project, findings suggested that bolstering is a ubiquitous strategy in the discourse of financial assessment. In fact, annual report drafters used it both in times of crisis and in times of plenty, when companies performed well.

Bolstering enhances the writer's image by linking him or her to abstract values. In her role as Secretary of State, deployment of this strategy on the part of Clinton was highly predictable. She refers to her love for the nation and for the values her country embodies, she underlines how much honored and responsible she feels in her position as a Secretary of State. The textual realization of the strategy has been identified – and emphasized in italic type – in the sentences here below:

(9) Our men and women who serve overseas understand that we accept a level of risk to protect *the country we love*. And they represent the best traditions of a bold and generous nation.

(10) It has been *one of the greatest honor of my life to lead the men and women of the State Department and USAID* [...]. They get up and go to work every day, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances, because *they believe, as we believe, the United States is the most extraordinary force for peace and progress the world has ever known*.

(11) Every time that blue and white airplane carrying the words “United States of America” touches down in some far-off capital, *I feel again the honor it is to represent the world's indispensable nation*.

(12) We can work together to not only honor our fallen colleagues, but *continue to champion America's interests and values*.

(13) I know you share *my sense of responsibility and urgency*, and while we all may not agree on everything, let's stay focused on what really matters: *protecting our people and the country we love*.

The latter example is located in the penultimate sentence of Clinton's preliminary statement. Its prominent position reminds us she is an extremely skillful communicator, who intentionally ends her remarks about a controversial situation she could have been blamed for in a positive tone.

3.2. Lexical and morphological markers of apologetic strategies

Attention can now be shifted from the macro-textual analysis to linguistic analysis proper, focusing on lexical and morphological regularities.

The second research question addressed in the present study involves recognition of previously identified lexical and morphological traits of apologetic strategies.

At a previous stage in the project - when analyzing dozens of CEOs' letters - automatic computer query was involved, with quantitative analytical tools being used to confirm hypothesis formulated by means of qualitative investigation. Meaningful recurrences in the linguistic realization of each single strategy were identified (Gigliani 2014); these recurrences have proved to be present also in the case study under investigation.

Previous findings showed that the most evident markers of the strategy called transcendence are lexical. In particular, lexical items referring to negative circumstances regularly occurred within the passages where the strategy was deployed. Based on this, the text of Clinton's hearing was also investigated using automated routines, with a view to identifying relevant lemmas. As said before, the relatively small size of the text under investigation called for close reading. Nevertheless, in order to corroborate qualitative analysis results, data processing by means of WordSmith Tool 4.0 has been included in the study and revealed that the stem *threat** occupies a prominent position⁹ in the word frequency list and is the clearest case of context-evoking lexicon:

*Fig. 1 Concordance lines of the stem threat**

what has become constantly evolving threats . This is the least than the men
areas, and then how we respond to threats and crises. We are initiating an
we have been facing a rapidly changing threat environment, and we have had to
we started to respond to some of these threats : the Global Counterterrorism
interests suffer; our security at home is threatened . That's why I sent Chris
to face what are increasingly complex threats . I know you share my sense of

The other strategy which eminently relies on the recurrence of lexical words in its textual realization is bolstering. Bolstering occurs when the writer wants to enhance his or her own image by linking it to abstract values (ethos building). Therefore the words used mainly belong to the semantic field of self-representation. It needs to be noted that three of the lexical items that have been correlated to the strategy of bolstering in Clinton's congressional hearing ("trust", "responsibility", commit*) are the same lexical items which had been correlated with the same apologetic strategy when CEOs' letters were analyzed (Gigliani 2014).

⁹ Position n. 25 (position from 1 to 19 are occupied by functional words), frequency 11, % 0,5221.

Fig. 2 Lexical items correlated to the strategy of bolstering

why, like my predecessors, I literally trust them with my life. Let’s also
I have no higher priority and no greater responsibility . As I have said many times
As I have said many times, I take responsibility , and nobody is more
I take responsibility, and nobody is more committed to get this right. I am

For the strategy of differentiation, it was not possible to identify lexical or syntactic markers. In previous stages of the research, differentiation - unlike the other strategies - showed not to involve uniformity in its textual realization. This strategy seems to be more subject to variation due to the broad range of topics covered in the portion of text where its presence is detected.

The last strategy to be considered is indirect denial. It is deployed in response to charges that are never explicitly acknowledged. Amongst the previously identified distinguishing morphological traits of indirect denial, comparatives and verbs that take the *re*-prefix proved to play a crucial role, as they trigger presupposition.

In Clinton’s congressional hearing, these morphological traits have been recognized and are displayed here below.

Fig. 3 Morphological traits of indirect denial strategy: examples

the necessary resources, and to do better in protecting our people from what
the State Department and our country safer, stronger, and more secure . Now
to take a top-to-bottom look and rethink how we make decisions on

4. Final remarks

The foregoing analysis illustrates the use of apologetic strategies in a specific genre of political discourse. More specifically, it shows that transcendence and bolstering are extensively used in the genre under investigation and are usually deployed when a controversial topic has to be dealt with. The findings are in line with previous research findings conducted on corporate narratives, when poorly-performing management employed the strategies, while high achievers didn’t.

Despite the fact that the television and media coverage of congressional hearings is regulated with full particulars by House and Senate Rules to prevent their

political exploitation by parties and that these events “cannot be used as partisan political campaign material to promote or oppose a person’s political candidacy”¹⁰, hearings are in fact used to influence voters and are recognized as highly influential even by the lay public.

In Hillary Clinton’s congressional hearings, therefore, much was at stake, not only her competence as Secretary of State but her suitability as future president of the United States. Political communication, especially at the level of national politics, involves realization of macro-goals, and winning a presidential campaign can be one of them (cf. Cap and Okulska 2013:10).

“Political actors are well aware of the importance of how language is used” (Chilton 2004: 31) and even if they may “remain hopeful there are still things left in [a] country that can transcend politics” (Chair’s opening statement at Clinton’s congressional hearing in 2015) or they say they want to rise above partisanship (Clinton’s words in her opening statement in 2015), they will always be “campaigning”, especially if questionable behavior triggers self-defense strategies.

As described in Section 2.1, committees hold hearings for a variety of purposes. The four categories of hearing may be somewhat fluid, the witnesses may vary - groups of interest, politicians, normal people; nevertheless the ultimate communicative purpose of the genre is not purely informative: its persuasive inclination is expected, but at the same time it is looked on with suspicion. Being openly persuasive might have been risky for Clinton, since it would have implied recognition of wrongdoing. Therefore the Secretary of State, a captivating communicator and a long-experienced politician, opted in her hearing for more sophisticated devices, as the extensive use of apologetic strategies seems to prove.

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¹⁰ House Rule XI, clause 4 and Senate Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(c).

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Biosketch

Cinzia Giglioni currently teaches Business English as a contract professor to second level master students and BA students. After her doctorate at the State University of Milan, she published articles on genre criticism and on fictional devices in non-fictional writings. Her research interests then shifted to Language Studies and she has articles published and forthcoming on rhetorical devices in business communication and political discourse. Her research interests also include Teaching Studies, and more specifically CLIL methodology. She has presented results of her research both at national and international conferences in the last ten years.

Anatomy of an (un)professional apologizer: The case of former FIFA President Sepp Blatter

Dermot Heaney

Abstract

In his time as FIFA President, Sepp Blatter became an increasingly controversial figure, not least because of his need to repeatedly apologize for unprofessional and unethical comments on sensitive political and social issues within football and for overseeing controversial decisions taken by the FIFA executive committee in the sphere of geopolitics. In spite of this, Blatter survived at his post for seventeen years. Referring to an established taxonomy of the component parts of an apology, this paper attempts to assess two of Blatter's performances as an apologizer. In line with more recent orientations within this branch of (im)politeness studies, the analysis also recognizes that apologies cannot be viewed as linguistic performances alone but should also be investigated as events in which evaluation plays an important part. To that end, as part of a more integrated, discursive approach, qualitative analysis of two official apologies are compared with specific evaluations of them. The findings of the analysis indicate divergences in the evaluations and invite reflections on the role this may have played in Blatter's survival at his post and his continuing unprofessional behaviour.

Keywords

FIFA President, offences, apologies, component parts, evaluations.

1. Introduction

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is the body that governs football worldwide. Football, as FIFA's mission statement points out, "is more than just a game", it has "unique power and reach" and according to the organisation this includes a drive "to improve the game of football constantly and promote it globally in the light of its unifying, educational, cultural and humanitarian values, particularly through youth and development programmes"

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(FIFA). As proof of this programme, FIFA points to its support for initiatives to combat racism and sexism within the game and even policies to ensure that football does not have a negative impact on the environment. A further area of influence, though one that FIFA does not include in its mission statement, is its ability to act as a key broker of “soft power” (Nye 2004), namely, the international prestige, influence and acceptance that staging events like the FIFA World Cup can bring to governments, states and geographical areas. Many critics and observers have noted that the latter sphere of influence would seem to be at odds with the commendable aims of its mission statement, especially as the construction of the stadia required to host matches has flouted workers’ rights, working and pay conditions, as well as safety regulations. A similar inconsistency is apparent in the organisation’s decision to hold the coming editions of the World Cup in controversial locations like Russia and Qatar, states and cultures that are not immediately associated with a commitment to the humanitarian and cultural values that FIFA is ostensibly dedicated to spreading.

From 1998 to 2015, FIFA was presided over by Sepp Blatter, who increasingly came to be seen as the incarnation of FIFA’s geopolitical ambitions and pursuit of power and profit, while seeming to merely pay lip service to the social and cultural programmes enshrined in the mission statement. A measure of the changing priorities can be gleaned from the number of times during his tenure the FIFA president had to offer public apologies for having given offence when referring to sensitive issues like sexism, homophobia and racism within the game (for a definition of offence see Harris, Grainger and Mullany 2006). At the same time, FIFA’s geopolitical agenda also began to draw fire from commentators, culminating in a call for an apology for holding the World Cup in Qatar in the winter of 2022, so that players will be able to perform in the high temperatures of that country, but with a consequent disruption in the national football championships of many countries and upheavals in the economies that revolve around them.

Each of Blatter’s offences brought in its wake media-fuelled calls for an apology, though not always as vociferously for each offence, nor with similar evaluations of the apology in the online media. Yet, he weathered calls for his resignation for the best part of fifteen years.

Apologies and the offences that call for them can represent defining moments and turning points in the career and fortunes of public figures and the institutions they represent. As Hearit puts it, “for an institution, the act of apology is as much about the institution as it is about its victims” (2006: 203). Sepp Blatter’s survival, after repeated examples of unprofessional comments on the one hand, and the pursuit of questionable goals on the other, would have undoubtedly prompted the resignation of many other public figures from similarly high profile official posts. This study considers the apology strategies that may have allowed Blatter to weather various media storms, but it also considers the role evaluation in the online media may have unwittingly played in his survival. It does so by analysing two apologies, one within the sphere of FIFA’s social and cultural agenda; the other falling within its more geopolitical scope of action, and then comparing them with examples of explicit evaluation available in the online media. The first

is an apology offered for crass remarks Blatter made in 2011 about the issue of racism within the game; the second is an apology offered in 2015 in response to criticisms of the decision to hold the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

2. Method

This article focuses on offences that require an apology “if a person/group feels they have been wronged in some way in public life” (Mullany 2011: 152). In considering public offences that necessitate official apologies, classic accounts, heavily influenced by Brown and Levinson (1987) and largely based on their model of redress by negative politeness and face-saving strategies (see Holmes 1998: 217), while useful, are not exhaustive in such contexts. Considering the stakes and implications of public apology, this is hardly surprising: the performance of an unreserved apology for certain offences in the public arena may both wreck the career of a given official and do lasting damage to the institution s/he represents, by instilling distrust and suspicion in the public and the media or by spurring the recipients to take legal action (Hearit 2006: 42; Harris, Grainger and Mullany 2006: 723). Given their potentially high cost, such apologies are unlikely, then, to embody the “quintessential politeness strategy” (Harris, Grainger and Mullany 2006: 733); it is far more likely that there will be a tension between total redress and self-preservation in the linguistic strategies used by the official offender. As a consequence, in public official contexts “what constitutes a valid apology is likely to prove especially contentious, both from the point of view of the apologiser and the recipient/s of the apology” (Harris, Grainger and Mullany 2006: 720). Thus, this analysis is carried out by adopting a similar perspective to that proposed by Davies, namely by including “metalinguistic discussion of the interest in the pre-conditions to successful apologising and not just its linguistic form” (2011: 189). The approach adopted here is therefore in line with more recent shifts in politeness theory (within which apology is naturally viewed) that place “more emphasis on discursively negotiated constructions of politeness and a greater focus on addressee evaluations” (Davies 2011: 189).

Nevertheless, in defining apology as a linguistic performance, parameters are useful. In a review of traditional studies Harris, Grainger and Mullany (2006: 722–723) propose the following ingredients of an apology shared by Davies (2011: 193) and largely based on Olshtain and Cohen’s 1989 account, as anticipated in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984):

[...] studies on apologies [...] have come up with some variant of the following component parts or ‘strategies’ as constituting an apology: (1) an IFID² token; (2) an ex-

2 An Illocutionary Force Identifying Device (typically verbs like ‘apologize’, and ‘regret’; or predicative adjectives like ‘sorry’ (see Searle 1969: 62).

pression which indicates acceptance of responsibility and/or blame; (3) an explanation or account; (4) an offer of reparation; and (5) a promise of future forbearance.

While reference to these component parts will be made in analysing and defining Blatter's apologies as linguistic performances, it will be borne in mind that scholars like Mills regard apologies as contested acts and hold the view that "apology is not necessarily a formal linguistic element but is a judgement made about someone's linguistic performance: whether the right amount of effort and work has been expended, and whether sufficient commitment and sincerity have been expressed" (2003: 112).

Consequently, Blatter's apologies are defined by the above parameters, but also compared with corresponding folk-linguistic views (Davies 2011: 201) taken from the online media, reflecting a more integrated discursive approach in which evaluation is also given its place (see Davies 2011; Kampf 2008).

The purpose of this approach is twofold: primarily it is used to assess whether and to what extent folk evaluations actually allowed the continued survival of Sepp Blatter at his post, despite the numerous apologies he was forced to make in his lengthy tenure; secondly, it will indicate the increasing importance of understanding the power of public evaluation (or lack thereof) in the face of serious political-institutional offences and their related apologies.

3. The data

Taking its cue from Mullany (2011), the analysis is conducted on texts taken from two data sets which are divided into three sections: offence, apology, evaluation. Sections A1-B1 are the texts/transcripts of the offences; Sections A2-B2 contain transcripts of the apologies for his alleged offences in the realms of racism in 2011 and the issue of moving the World Cup to winter 2022 so that it can be played in Qatar, where temperatures would make this otherwise impossible; Sections A3 - B3 comprise explicit and self-contained evaluations of Blatter's apologies. There is a far greater volume of response in the media to the offence than to the apology. This disparity in volume of itself indicates that the apology phase of a controversy does in fact take the heat off the offender and mollify the offended, or at least enough of the onlooking audience and its mediators to take the offender out of the spotlight. Conversely, far less space is given to explicit evaluation of the apology. Even those few texts that contain evaluative elements are often dominated by opinions on the issue or by instances of retaliatory impoliteness directed at Blatter, rather than by reactions to how Blatter actually offers his apology. From the point of view of analysis, the relatively low ratio of evaluation data to the offence and the apology material invites a qualitative analysis.

The examples of evaluations are rather heterogeneous. They take the form either of transcripts of analyses offered by professional journalists or statements made by commentators in videos, originally embedded in online articles or reports and subsequently available on file sharing platforms like Youtube. Alter-

natively, some are available in readers' comment strings, now a feature of news reports in the online print media.

4. The remarks on solving racism on the football pitch

4.1. The offence

In 2011 the Chelsea captain John Terry was alleged to have aimed racist comments at the black player Anton Ferdinand in the course of a Premier League match. On 17 November, in the wake of this controversy, during an interview on the CNN network, Blatter was asked if he felt players were still making racist remarks on the pitch. In his reply he played down the importance of racist comments uttered in the heat of the moment during play and indicated that any misdemeanours committed could be resolved with a shake of hands:

Text A1

[...] during a match you may make a movement to somebody to hurt somebody or you may say something to somebody who is not exactly looking like you but at the end of the match it's for forgotten because this is in the this is no malice is if there are spectators or outside the field of play there are movements of discrimination but on the field of play I deny that there is racism... if the a when it happened if it is in the in a league then they have to make the investigation and they come to a solution and what what would they say? They bring the two people together and they say "shake hands".³

4.2. The apology

A day later, in response to the ensuing media furore, during an interview with BBC journalist David Bond, Blatter recorded a formal apology embedded in an online article on the BBC news site and also broadcast in the sports section of BBC television news bulletins, subsequently available on Youtube:

Text A2

SB: My personal position and also FIFA's stance against racism and any form of discrimination is very clear and has been very strong for many years. I started my FIFA career in Africa, thirty-six years ago, and it is part of my core values to respect all nations all cultures and I see football as a game that unites people I'm sorry and I regret that my statements earlier this week have resulted in an unfortunate situation and has taken this dimension. I'm committed to the fight against racism and I have

³ Transcript of embedded video. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/international/8894556/Sepp-Blatter-Fifa-president-claims-there-is-no-racism-in-football.html>

no doubt about that and I want to make it very clear I will not stop until we have stamped out of football racism [...]

And then at a certain I found myself pushed into a corner of a very I would say unfortunate words I have used and this I deeply deeply regret. It hurts and I I'm still hurt because eh I couldn't expect or just envisage such a reaction but the reaction is there and ehm when you are in a situation where you have done something which was absolutely not totally correct, otherwise it would not have created this, I can only say I'm I'm sorry for all those people eh they have been affected by my declarations and I can eh just ensure that my fight against racism and discrimination it will go on it will never stop.⁴

In terms of its component parts, the above apology seems quite comprehensive. It includes the IFIDS 'sorry' and 'regret' (though not the speech act 'apologize'); an acceptance of blame by way of an explanation of why the offence occurred (the unhappy choice of words and the fact he was led into saying something that contradicts a commitment that has marked his entire career); reparation (the promise to stamp racism out of football). Forbearance is not mentioned, principally because Blatter points to a track record of fighting racism.

Additionally, it is possible to identify auxiliary apology strategies for some of the component parts. The IFID 'to be sorry' which, to use Searle's terms, is an expressive (1976: 12) can be regarded by some analysts as insufficiently performative (see Davies 2011: 192 for a discussion of this) and nearer an expression of 'regret' (the verb he actually uses) than to a full unreserved apology for an offence. This expressiveness is sustained by the predicative adjective "hurt[ed]" which, together with the verb "hurt", puts the accent on Blatter's own feelings, allowing him to present himself as a victim too. Attenuation devices are also in evidence in the admission of responsibility. In his admission of guilt, he describes how his words have led to the understated "unfortunate situation" rather than a full-blown crisis of confidence. What is more, he defines the offence negatively, more as something "absolutely not totally correct", rather than, for example, "totally wrong", which would be a far more damaging admission, possibly entailing unavoidable consequences like resignation.

In short, although Blatter ticks a number of the boxes required to recognise a political apology, many of his accompanying linguistic choices would appear to attenuate the offence, frame him as a victim too, and reduce the threat to institutional face that an unconditional full apology would bring.

4.3. Evaluations

As the network chosen by Blatter to issue his apology, the BBC gave more space to evaluation than any other online source. One early, specific analysis of that FIFA

⁴ Transcript of video embedded in the BBC online report. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/15782265>

president's apology was offered by sports news correspondent James Pearce on the midday news programme:

Text A3a

Not once but twice he uttered those immortal words I AM SORRY and I think it will be enough to take the heat off him. We should emphasise really that this is a problem of his own making one that's really been magnified in this country. It hasn't played nearly so big around the rest of the world. I'm sure this will be enough to take him off the front pages and perhaps some of the back pages. Sepp Blatter is a survivor and this is once again I think a very effective way of making sure that he continue. For him to say I am sorry he knows he's taken the heat out of the situation and I think that you'll see now once he's done this Sepp Blatter will be going a little bit quieter for a few weeks and resurfacing next year with perhaps his next initiative. But I think Sepp Blatter, who started this week by doing a round of international media, trying to put out his new agenda has made a few mistakes and will just disappear quietly until 2012 now.⁵

This 'folk' evaluation (see Davies 2011) really boils down to the presence of the IFID "sorry", which in the eyes of the journalist is enough to make the apology effective. Although he focuses on this part, it is of course possible that the presence of the components mentioned in Section 4.2. also helps to make it persuasive.

The next evaluation, contained in the blog by David Bond (2011), the journalist who conducted the interview with Blatter at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich, is a more nuanced and considered one. The text is lengthy and deals with much else; the apology is dealt with in two central sections. In the first of these, Bond recognises that:

Text A3b

Contrite and seemingly shocked at the offence his comments had caused, Blatter said sorry three times - once in a prepared statement and then twice more later on when I questioned him on the subject.

Leaving no room for any doubt, he made it clear this time that if one player racially abused another during a match there should be zero tolerance.

But why did Blatter take so long to realise his comments had caused offence and why did he say them in the first place?

He told me he hadn't been sufficiently clear with his choice of words and that it hadn't dawned on him for some time that his remarks had been interpreted in such a negative way.

Bond's evaluation stresses the number of IFIDs and also the commitment to reparation. However, although he allows that Blatter's NNS status is possibly a mit-

⁵ Transcript of video available on Youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dip-wnw1me2I>

igating element, the journalist considers whether the nature of the offence and the timing of the apology are fatal flaws in the performance: the former suggesting that if he is capable of making such comments, Blatter is unfit for office anyway; the latter indicative of cynicism and thus a lack of sincerity in the apology itself. At the end of the evaluation a significant degree of uncertainty prevails: “So is his apology today sufficient to douse the flames? Probably. But was he genuinely contrite?” While this evaluation accepts that some component parts will probably combine to achieve the desired effect, it also suggests that timeliness is an important component of an effective apology and that tardiness raises questions about sincerity.

David Bond points to tardiness as an indicator of insincerity; the evaluation of Ian Wright, black British footballer and pundit, indicates that there is only one way to gauge sincerity:

Text A3c

He's now realized the enormity of the gaffe he's made and as much as it is em round Europe they're very quiet em, which is quite disturbing em. For him to feel that he can say something like that em and get away with it, it makes me realize that em the kind of guy we're dealing with here. Now to say sorry now for me it doesn't carry any weight. Course you got to apologize for that because he's offended a lot of people em, but what I (unclear) it reminds me of my little daughter. Well, she's like 22 months. If you say to her 'say sorry' she'll say sorry. Does he really mean it or is he saying sorry because I've upset a lot of people I'm genuinely sorry. An' if he was really sorry, em in the position he's in em, the amount of people's calling for him to resign, because I think that he's out of touch, I think that if he's really sorry he would resign and then maybe go and do stuff to prove that that's not what his real intentions are but I don't think that's going to happen em an' like I say it's just a sorry to placate.⁶

In Wright's opinion, sincerity can only be measured in terms of suitable reparation, namely resignation. These three substantial evaluations correspond to shorter ones quoted in the BBC analysis of the apology. Broadly speaking they fall into the three above categories: 1) that the IFIDS have done their job and put an end to the controversy, as is the case of former Chelsea manager Andre Villas-Boas, who believes Blatter's apology should be the end of the issue: “Blatter made his apologies today and end of story. When a person assumes he has made a mistake, it's for all of us to accept a mistake was made. There are things that should have been avoided in the first place. But at least there is humility.” A similar stance is taken by David Davies, former acting chief executive of the FA, who regards the apology as “fulsome” and feels “it's churlish not to welcome someone saying sorry for the offence they have caused”; 2) that the timing of the apology is suspect,

⁶ Transcript of video available on Youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1p-wnw1me2I>

an opinion expressed by David Moyes, then manager of Manchester United; 3) that the only index of sincerity is resignation, an opinion also held by black former player and activist Sol Campbell: “For me, it doesn’t wash... For the head of Fifa to come out with something like that is shocking. I’m astonished he’s still in a job. I think he should do the honourable thing and step down” (BBC 2011).

The evaluations analysed in this section have identified two more related components of an apology: timeliness, which also seems to be considered an index of sincerity/insincerity, even though the latter is apparently felt more by some evaluators than others. Both Pearce and Bond note that there has been a far stronger reaction to this offence in Britain than elsewhere in the world, where there may be more sympathy for Blatter’s unhappy turns of phrase. It is also evident that evaluation is split along other, possibly racial lines: only the former black players Sol Campbell and Ian Wright feel that the apology is critically flawed and that resignation is the only acceptable form of reparation, while the white voices, be they those of sports journalists or professionals within the sport, largely regard the apology as effective and even sincere.

5. The apology for holding the 2022 World Cup in Qatar

5.1. The offence

The second apology to be analysed was issued by Blatter during a Press conference at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich in March 2015. This time it was not Blatter’s words that caused offence to sensitive groups, but the fact that as President of the organization he was held responsible for overseeing FIFA’s decision to hold the 2022 edition of the World Cup in Qatar during the Winter, thus causing enormous disruption within national football associations in Europe and to the economies that revolve around them. The offence was summarised in a question put by Ben Rumsby, *The Telegraph’s* sport correspondent, to the President of FIFA during the press conference:

Text B1

BR: Now the World Cup in Qatar has been moved to the winter, is it time for you to apologise on behalf of the FIFA EXCO and on behalf of FIFA as a whole for everything that has happened in the 2010 vote, everything after that, the fact that the the premise for the bidding was for the summer and now it’s at the winter and it’s caused all these problems that we’ve seen in recent years. Do you need now to draw a line on this and say sorry to the football world?⁷

⁷ Transcript of video embedded in the online *Telegraph’s* report of the event at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/world-cup/11486374/Sepp-Blatter-apologises-for-Qatar-World-Cup.html>

The power of an official apology is implied by this member of the press, who claims it would allow Blatter to “draw a line” under events and move on. However, his call for an apology may also be a carefully laid legal trap, which Blatter does not intend to walk into, despite the journalist’s apparently conciliatory tone and the fact that the call for an apology is put as a question rather than a demand. There are obviously good legal reasons why he needs to avoid an outright unambiguous apology for the perceived offence: any admission of guilt on his or FIFA’s part would risk setting in train a series of legal appeals to nullify the decision to hold the World Cup in Qatar, which would make the position of the executive community completely untenable, a scenario covered by Hearit (2006: 214).

5.2. The apology

Although Blatter’s response is timely, on closer analysis the apology itself only comes at the insistence of the journalist.

Text B2

SB: Listen, this this is eh this is a question then I would take it up and I will eh discuss it at the Executive Committee and probably we will give it to the ethics committee. Eh this was a decision taken by an Executive Committee of FIFA. They had the right to do it, and if you are looking on the conditions, which have been laid down for the organisation of the World Cup eh Please eh Secretary General con eh correct me it is said that in principle the World Cup shall be played in June/July. And it is also said in the same document which has been signed by everybody (unclear) but most parties it has been signed that anyway if something happened, the FIFA executive Committee can change the venue of the World Cup, can take away the rights to organise the World Cup. Everything we can do. So we can also say we play in Winter.
BR: (unclear - off mike) an apology for the problems this causes.

SB: If you like that I apologise to you, I do it.⁸

At first sight the last part of this exchange meets two of the conditions of a political/institutional apology: there is an offence to important categories and there is an ostensible apology in the form of “I do it”, though it is arguable that the auxiliary lacks the full illocutionary force of “I apologise”. However, on closer inspection, we cannot but note the absence of all the other component parts mentioned by Harris, Grainger and Mullany.

In fact, in his first reply, Blatter rejects the call for an apology. The prosody of the opening actually suggests that he intends to use a conditional ‘if’ here, which would shift the offence into the realms of the hypothetical. The imperative “Listen” is far from conciliatory and indicates an asymmetrical stance towards the

⁸ Transcript of video embedded in the online *Telegraph’s* coverage of the event at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/world-cup/11486374/Sepp-Blatter-apologises-for-Qatar-World-Cup.html>

journalist. This impression is strengthened by the use of the exclusive “we” that both allows him to deny personal responsibility and to stress that he is part of a large, powerful organisation exclusively governed and validated by its own procedures; moreover, it will be *that* organization that determines whether an offence has been committed and whether an apology is in order. Further personal distancing is achieved by the use of “they” in reference to the FIFA ExCo. The final part of the rebuttal is characterized by the strong pure modal “can”, emphasising unimpeded power of action, conveyed through its blunt repetition four times in close succession. What is more, as a Non-Native Speaker, Blatter’s use of this modal, combined with the inverted SVO order in the utterance “everything we can do”, appears more marked and adds considerably to the overall impression of an asymmetrical communication, as does the unfortunate choice of “everything”, that conveys, possibly unintentionally, an impression of omnipotence.

As Mills (2003: 11) reminds us, although the presence of the IFID “I do it” would, in traditional speech act theory, qualify Blatter’s statement as indeed an apology, this would provide an incomplete account, because it is clear that Blatter is being insincere by merely offering a surface apology, confirming Searle’s contention that “only where the act *counts* as the expression of a psychological state is insincerity possible” (1969: 65, emphasis added). First of all, Blatter once again employs the conditional, and by choosing the verb “like”, implies that the request is subjective. This sudden shift to a personal apology undermines any validity this utterance may have as an official one. By doing so, he indicates that there is no real, controversial cause for such a mediated apology, but only the journalist’s capricious personal insistence on one; the implicature being that ‘I apologize to *you* because you are insisting on an apology for something which I have just proved does not warrant one’. Davies notes that in official apologies the “ability to take responsibility must be met [...] but it has to be perceived to be met by “the ‘right’ person” (2011: 211). The implicature of Blatter’s reply is that he has demonstrated that he is the wrong person to ask, and that the journalist is therefore wrong-headed to ask for one; by deigning to apologize to him personally, he is, in his own interpretation of the exchange, ridiculing him and thus threatening the journalist’s professional face. In such cases, as Davies (2011: 192) indicates, other strategies are available: the use of ‘sorry’ or expressions of regret are often used by officials to wriggle out of full apologies and their legal implications. Blatter instead rejects this kind of compromise solution and opts for on-record deliberate impoliteness that threatens the journalist’s professional face and undermines his own credibility as the head of the organization, precisely because he has stooped to personal impoliteness. Despite Blatter’s look of triumph after the putdown, a linguist might see this as a pyrrhic victory, although the evaluations analysed in the next section diverge so surprisingly that they appear to give FIFA’s President the benefit of some doubt.

5.3. Evaluations

Of the two apologies analysed in this paper, this is undoubtedly the more controversial and ineffective. Yet it is also the more unfruitful in terms of explicit evaluation; indeed, the apology seems to have been regarded as considerably less newsworthy than the one Blatter made in response to the previous controversy, a fact reflected in the lower number of news stories about it in the online media, where it is largely reported as a straight apology. Although the apology is available on YouTube and is evaluated ironically with inverted commas, the comment feeds themselves are overwhelmingly made up of observations about Blatter's character, or opinions on the issue, rather than negative judgements about the specific speech act. As a consequence, this section has drawn on a smaller pool of evaluations, some necessarily occurring within what appear to be regular hard news reports.

Interestingly, *The Telegraph*, whose correspondent called for the apology and clearly did not receive one, seems to be at odds with the assessments contained in its own comment feed to the article. Thus we read in the headline and lead⁹:

B3a

Sepp Blatter apologises for Qatar World Cup

Sepp Blatter issues an apology to the Daily Telegraph's Ben Rumsby for the Qatar 2022 World Cup being staged in winter

This is in sharp contrast with the few short evaluations in the embedded comment feed:

B3b

Ian Wright That's not what my self means apologize. That is a get out I am not responsible WHAT A LYING TOE RAG. The quicker he leaves the better for football.

Cris A. Ocbania Sorry with out sincerity is useless.

Paul Hughes That's not an apology!

Brief as they are, two of these of these negative evaluations foreground slightly different aspects of Blatter's performance. Ian Wright, one of Blatter's more intransigent evaluators, seems to be concentrating on the carefully worded attempt of the "get out" from personal responsibility that makes up the first part of Blatter's reply. He also feels that the ultimate reparation of resignation is the only acceptable form of an apology. It is also worth noting that insult is never far away in lay or folk evaluations such as these: it is more common to vent frustration and distrust than to identify missing parts of an apology. Cris A. Ocbania stresses the

⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/world-cup/11486374/Sepp-Blatter-apologises-for-Qatar-World-Cup.html>

insincerity, possibly missing the fact that, as the analysis above has demonstrated, it is patently insincere. Paul Hughes' opinion, though accurate, fails to say why, a reaction he shares with the only two other evaluations found online. The first from the online *Daily Mail* takes the form of a caption to the embedded video of Blatter's press conference, "Sepp Blatter has offered no apologies for the planning and controversy surrounding the Qatar 2022 World Cup which has come under immense criticism and has also been at the centre of a corruption probe"¹⁰; the second, remarkably similar, in the headline to an article in the *International Business Times*: "Fifa: Sepp Blatter offers no apology for Qatar 2022 World Cup winter schedule" (Justice 2015).

Nevertheless, confronted with a blatant non-apology, it is remarkable that opinions can still differ. Most surprisingly, Blatter's performance is accepted as an apology by *The Telegraph* itself. It can only be surmised that the paper gives this verdict for self-complimentary reasons, implying that one of its own journalists squeezed an apology out of such a powerful and slippery customer. If that were so, it would add a further dimension to evaluation that would make it even more difficult to predict and even trust: *The Telegraph* not only reports the offence but shows itself in a flattering light as having elicited an apology for it, even though it can hardly be deemed one.

6. Concluding remarks

This case study has shown that some evaluators also regard timeliness (indicative of sincerity) as equally important as the five canonical components of an apology listed by Harris, Grainger and Mullany (2006). While reparation in the form of resignation would have placated even the most critical evaluators, it was the most costly for the offender and could or would not be made. Hence Blatter's adeptness at using some of the canonical component parts and simultaneously deploying strategies that mitigate his responsibility, put the offence in doubt, stress the subjectivity of offended parties, and even imply that he, too, is a victim.

Although this information appears to offer clear parameters for official apology evaluation, it does not necessarily make it easier to anticipate how they will be applied. As Mullany notes "there is clear evidence [...] of political apologies generating yet more controversy after they have been delivered, and part of the ensuing controversies is whether the apologies themselves actually constitute apologies" (2011: 159). Thus, in the examples analysed here, a white TV sports journalist is convinced by a repeated IFID, while a black sports pundit questions its sincerity and requires reparation in the form of resignation; the positive evaluation of an online newspaper report, whose own correspondent was offended by Blatter, is at odds with comment feeds that follow its version of the event and with evalua-

¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1188082/Sepp-Blatter-offers-no-apologies-Qatar-2022-World-Cup.html>. Last accessed 22.12.2016.

tions in other news stories. In the final analysis, this case study has revealed that there was considerable uncertainty, inconsistency and unpredictability in the evaluation of two official apologies issued by the former FIFA President.

This begs the question of whether Blatter's professional conduct might have improved had there been greater consensus in evaluating it among media experts and lay readers. Instead, the prevailing inconsistencies in evaluation may have been a contributing factor to the survival of a serial offender/apologizer like Sepp Blatter. Interestingly enough, the astonishing non-apology over the Qatar World Cup was performed shortly before the FBI investigation of FIFA officials that led to Blatter's suspension and subsequent eight-year ban from office in 2015 in what now looks like a textbook example of the adage "pride cometh before a fall". After reviewing this sample of apologies and evaluations, it is legitimate to wonder whether he would have risen to such heights of hubris at the end of his career if there had been more stringent and converging evaluations, both from inside and outside FIFA, of his earlier lapses from professional behaviour. Hearit describes how "the ritualistic nature of apologies [...] functions to reassure stakeholders that corporations and institutions have learned from their wrongdoing and that reoccurrences of ethical misconduct is improbable" (2006: 213). The multiple apologies Blatter was called on to make for myriad offences during his tenure steadily eroded any such impression, resulting in the legacy of a much-tarnished personal and institutional image; the latter will only be restored if those who now represent and speak for FIFA's ostensible values refrain from such unprofessional lapses and also if there is greater consistency in evaluation when they fail.

Immediately after FIFA imposed the eight-year ban on Blatter, the ex-President called a press conference. This could have been an opportunity to bow out with a modicum of good grace by issuing an apology for the scandal breaking out on his watch. It is true that Blatter used the IFID 'sorry' ten times in one short statement; possibly more than in all his previous official apologies put together; however, the result was a travesty of an apology, and the IFID was exclusively used with the alternative illocutionary force of conveying displeasure, pity, personal sadness, and self-commiseration:

I'm sorry that I'm still somewhere a punching ball, but I'm sorry that I am as President of FIFA this punching ball. And I'm sorry for football. I'm sorry for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association I'm serving now for forty years. I'm sorry for the 400 plus FIFA team members they are working in FIFA. I'm sorry about that. I'm sorry. But I'm also sorry about me. How I'm treated in this world of humanity and humanitarian qualities.¹¹

A fitting, self-pitying epitaph for an (un)professional apologizer, whose prime concern never seemed to be the recipients of an offence, but his own survival at all costs.

11 Transcript of bulletin available at: <http://www.101greatgoals.com/blog/sepp-blatters-non-apology-im-really-sorry-im-still-a-punching-ball-video/>

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Biosketch

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The linguistic analysis of Samantha Cristoforretti's logbook: a successful example of CoP in the creation of new professional identities

Germana D'Acquisto

Abstract

This paper explores the specific linguistic features of the Astrosamantha logbook. I have taken into consideration Sange's definition of learning organisation and the changes that occurred in the teaching-learning process as a consequence of the impact of new technologies (Comiskey, Alexander, Hazlett, McCartan, and O'Boy 2016: 235). Considering that communities of practice can help the individual bridge the gap between knowing what and knowing how (Duguid 2005), the use of websites seems to facilitate their experience in professional practice as well. The method of the present study is based on: Swales' definition of genre (2007); Functional Linguistics analysis (Halliday 1994); Popularisation discourse (Gotti and Bhatia 2006); Concepts of 'Communities of practice as social learning systems', 'Community and network'; 'Landscape of practice', 'Identity: learning citizenship' (Wenger 1998; Wenger and Lave 1991); Concept of 'workplaces' (Candlin and Sarangi 2011; Sarangi and Roberts 1999); 'Multi-voicing' and the Concept of 'resemiotization' (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; Lemke 1999); Construction of interdiscursive texts (Candlin and Maley 1997); The concepts of 'Conversationalization' and 'Recontextualization' (Fairclough 2011; 1992). The quantitative analysis is supported by Antconc 3.4.4. software.

Keywords

Community of practice, professional identities, learning, teaching, logbook

1. Introduction

This paper explores the specific linguistic features of the Astrosamantha logbook. In particular, the focus is on the communicative and linguistic strategies used by ASI – the Italian Space Agency – to disseminate scientific knowledge about the "Missione Futura". I have taken into account the target audience as one of the key elements of this research in order to analyse the role of the language used to implement citizens' international participation and the construction of new professional identities (Gotti 2015; Angelelli 2015; Hazlett 2015). Moreover, I have considered Sange's definition of 'learning organization'. According to the author: "Learning organizations [are] organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and ex-

pansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together” (1990: 3). Furthermore, Sange points to the fact that “[...] team learning entails the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine ‘thinking together’ [...]” (1990:10). As regards the importance given to the citizen participation, it seems useful to report an extract from an interview by Dordain who suggests that:

Today space activities are pursued for the benefit of citizens, and citizens are asking for a better quality of life on earth. They want greater security and economic wealth, but they also want to pursue their dreams, to increase their knowledge, and they want younger people to be attracted to the pursuit of science and technology. I think that space can do all of this: it can produce a higher quality of life, better security, more economic wealth, and also fulfill our citizens’ dreams and thirst for knowledge, and attract the young generation. This is the reason space exploration is an integral part of overall space activities. It has always been so, and it will be even more important in the future (October 31, 2003).

Furthermore, as established in the document *Brussels, 4.4.2011 COM (2011) 152 final Communication from the commission to the council, the European parliament, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions towards a space strategy for the European union that benefits its citizens*, space activities and applications seem to be crucial in terms of social, economical benefits such as growth, development, innovation, competitiveness and job creation. In particular, ESA space mission *Futura* gave a considerable contribution in the pedagogical field. Thus, I have taken into account the changes that have occurred in the teaching-learning process as a consequence of the impact of new technologies. As suggested by Comiskey, Alexander, Hazlett, McCartan, and O’Boy, “The change in pedagogic emphasis from teaching to learning has increased the architectural and technical requirements of new learning spaces. This has stemmed from the realisation of how limiting a traditional lecture theatre can be for interaction” (2016: 235). ESA astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti spent almost 200 days on the International Space Station as part of Expeditions 42 and 43 for a mission conducted by Italy’s ASI space agency. Running scientific experiments was her primary aim (<http://www.asi.it/it/news/gli-esperimenti-di-samantha>). A comprehensive educational programme based on nutrition will prompt children to eat well and live a healthy lifestyle. Samantha began the worldwide “Mission-X” challenge aimed at schoolchildren aged 8–12 years from more than 25 countries. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to notice Wenger’s definition (1998) of community of practice. According to the author, it is not limited to a process of sharing information without a physical setting (Lave and Wenger 1991), but it is a social community whose main aim is the teaching/learning process. *Futura* mission, which is narrated as a web-mediated story that represents, in many ways, a typical COP (Wenger 1998) in relation to some stylistic features and purposes. Thus, the focus in this analysis is on the participation-reification duality because

of its links to knowledge management (Wenger 1998). Astrosamantha's logbook shows some characteristics typical of this kind of community, which embraces a duality characterised by a participation-reification process in the construction of professional identity (Wenger 1998). In this sense, learning is a crucial element in the construction of human identity here, considering that the individual, in this kind of community, is an active participant as opposed to other kinds of 'groups' such as 'network of practice' which only emphasize connectivity (Wenger 1998).

2. Methodological framework

The study is based upon a methodological framework mainly relying upon Swales' definition of genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre" (1990: 58). As regards the present linguistic analysis, based on the investigation of the English verbal system, and in particular of some modal verbs and lexical items, I have adopted Halliday's Functional Linguistics analysis approach (1994). Furthermore, I have considered the concept of popularisation discourse (Gotti and Bhatia 2006) as a sort of translation whose purpose is the dissemination of knowledge from insiders towards the public at large. More specifically, the central point of the work is focused on the analysis of Astrosamantha's webpage and its multimodal aspects based on concepts such as "Communities of practice as social learning systems", the difference between "Community" and "network" and, in particular on the definition of "Landscape of practice" and "Identity: learning citizenship" (Wenger 1998; Wenger and Lave 1991). Furthermore, I have paid attention to the concepts of 'workplaces' and 'professional practice' as suggested by Candlin and Sarangi (2010, 2011:4) and Sarangi and Roberts (1999) since, according to these authors, "The contingencies surrounding professional practice defy a logical, patterned, indiscriminate application of what is learnt as part of professional education and training. It goes beyond the dogma of 'communication skills' as currently ingrained in many professional curricula" (Candlin and Sarangi 2010). As regards the multimodal analysis, I have taken into account Kress and van Leeuwen's concept of resemiotization (1996) and Candlin and Maley's theory about the construction of interdiscursive texts in order to investigate how collections of webpages should become a crucial element in the creation of new opinions about science and scientists (1997). Finally, I have also considered the influence of new technologies on discursive practices in the pedagogical field (Comiskey, Alexander, Hazlett, McCartan, O'Boyle 2016), the concepts of conversationalization and recontextualization (Fairclough 1992, 2011), 'Situated cognition' and 'Literacy studies' (Gee 2000, 2001, 2002), which examine the context and situations in which language is used by individuals and how these changes, which are influenced by the Internet and other communication technologies, should affect literacy. The quantitative analysis is supported by the Antconc 3.4.4. software.

3. The linguistic analysis

3. 1. Text type and corpus

The corpus includes Samantha's logbook webpage and focuses on the most frequent lexical items according to quantitative analysis. Samantha Cristoforetti began writing her logbook on Google+ in July 2013, 500 days before her launch to the International Space Station. Her logbook entries were translated into Italian and posted on the *Avamposto 42* website starting from June 2014. A first step of the analysis was carried out by considering the participants in the communicative event and consequently the target audience. The logbook may be classified as a case of communication from 'specialists to a public at large'. The texts reveal a strategic use of language that, as proposed by Gotti's concept of "popularisation", is "a kind of redrafting that does not alter the disciplinary content – object of the transaction – as much as its language which needs to be remodelled to suit a new target audience" (2008: 205). The relevance given to the new pedagogical approach as a result of the impact of new technologies, which seems to encourage collaboration, is stressed by Corcoran (2014). The main page that appears when you sign in consists of a 'stream' of updates, conversations and shared content – similar in many respects to the Facebook news feed or Twitter stream – but different in some characteristics that are similar to a "community of practice" according to Wagner's definition (1998). As regards the text type and genre, as suggested by Hatim and Mason (1990: 140) and Bhatia (1993), the *Logbook* takes on the form of a virtual diary with a first-person narration style. It includes horizontal accountability (Wenger 2009) since it is associated with engagement in joint activities, negotiation of mutual relevance, standards of practice, peer recognition, identity and reputation, and commitment to collective learning. Moreover, according to Roberts' definition of workplace (1999) it seems to be a 'space' in which identities are played out and professional knowledge is constituted as may be seen in the following example (1):

(1) L-138: Logbook

Another busy day **feeling like a scientist** yesterday, **training** for several **life science experiments**, including one in which **we'll work with small plants**. **One last class** late afternoon was dedicated to the preparation of my vacuum chamber run next week, working with a Class 1 EVA suit and gloves. Class 1 is the designation of hardware that is meant for use in space (as opposed to training). The gloves, in particular, will be my custom-made prime and backup gloves: if we find no issues with them in the chamber, they will be packed and sent to Russia to fly with me on the Soyuz. [...] On Tuesday **we'll have the so-called altitude run**, in which we'll actually depressurize the chamber to almost vacuum. For this, we need to go through pre-breath procedures, purging nitrogen from the body to prevent decompression sickness as the pressure is lowered. The protocol used in the chamber is the 4-hour in-suit protocol, which is exactly what it sounds: breathing pure oxygen in the suit for 4 hours. The suggestion here is to bring one or two movies to

watch through a small window in the chamber door! [...]. (SamanthaCristoforetti's google plus account, bold type added)

The *Outpost 42*, the ESA's website, was created in order to illustrate and involve different receivers. We can find videos and pictures that may be used for different activities in different fields such as science and education. McMillan and Chavis (1986) identify four key factors that define a sense of community: membership, influence, fulfillment of individual needs and shared events, emotional connections. Furthermore, in a learning community, members can satisfy particular needs by expressing personal opinions, asking for help or specific information and sharing stories of events with particular issues that included emotional experiences. One example should be the section entitled *Don't panic! Section: the Guide to the Galaxy*, that as suggested on the website, allows people

to find facts, curiosities and insights at the limits of science fiction related to the principal challenges that people face in space. A challenge that deals with an absence, a void: the absence of weight, in fact. A challenge that is overcome with technology, with patience, with training, with teamwork and with the right nutrition (outpost42 webpage).

thus involving the reader with a reference to the absence of gravity and weight which represents a serious challenge for astronauts and maybe the most fashionable aspect of spatial missions, capable of catching readers' attention and involving them through an emotional participation as we can see on the webpage in example (2):

(2) *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is a wholly remarkable book — perhaps the most remarkable, certainly the most successful book ever to come out of the great publishing corporations of Ursa Minor. More popular than the *Celestial Homecare Omnibus*, better selling than *53 Things to Do in Zero Gravity* for two important reasons. First, it's slightly cheaper; and secondly it has the words DON'T PANIC printed in large friendly letters on its cover (outpost42 webpage).

3. 2. The Quantitative and qualitative analysis

The website (<http://avamposto42.esa.int/>) presents news, information and the latest images and videos of ESA activities, interwoven texts and multimedia, as well as a variety of shifting genres such as home pages, FAQs, blogs, to a broad spectrum of people interested in space and space activities. In many organisations, communities of practice have become an integral part of the organisation structure (McDermott and Archibald 2010) by taking on tasks and, in this way, the role of some formal organisations and institutions in order to benefit from shared knowledge. The reason for this may be found in organisations' interest in encouraging, supporting, and sponsoring communities of practice, thus benefiting from sharing knowledge (Wenger 2004; Wagner and Sternberg 1985, 1986,

1991). We can notice, in surfing the web, how membership is dependent on expertise – one should have at least some recent experience of performing in the role or subject area of the CoP like in example (3) that follows, in which we can notice the use of “us”, “we”, “our”, “our station population”, and first names “Sasha, Butch and Elena”:

(3) L+129: LOGBOOK

As you’ve probably noticed, I haven’t been writing much this past month – my evenings have been just flying away, divided between the irresistible pull of the Cupola, other outreach projects and many little personal things that need to be taken care of. During the day the Space Station **keeps us** really busy with science, maintenance, housekeeping, logistics and maintaining our proficiency in emergency responses, robotics, Soyuz flying...you name it. The variety of things **we do up here is mind blowing**, if I stop to think about it. 122B2685 Soyuz OBTOh, and by the way, we also had a Soyuz undock earlier this month, taking home half of **our Space Station population**. Well, at least in terms of human presence – I’m sure the microorganisms living up here, who outnumber us by orders of magnitude, would claim that it’s “their” Space Station and don’t care much if three biped mammals are replaced by three different ones. We, on the other, do care. It was hard to see **Sasha, Butch and Elena** leave after being so close for four months and we did become just a little bit apprehensive when communication with their Soyuz was lost during the engine burn, which was somewhat unexpected. So we were happy to hear from Moscow that the search & rescue teams had made contact with the capsule and even happier to see our friends’ smiling faces as they got their first breaths of fresh air in Kazakhstan. In case you’re wondering, we saw them on NASA TV, like many of you, I reckon. Not sure I mentioned it before, but we can get a TV station transmitted live on one of our laptops when we have satellite coverage for the Ku-Band antennas. (outpost42 web page, my bold type)

The web offers a new adaptation of traditional genres to new functional capabilities such as browsing, enquiring, ordering, and collaborating (links, comments, surveys) that carry out a highly significant social role by introducing new learners into their communities of practice and by reflecting the meanings of the wider community to sensitise web surfers to social and environmental issues as well (D’Acquisto and Pennarola 2015). The motivation to share knowledge is crucial for success in communities of practice. Studies (Ardichvilli and Wentling 2003) show that members are motivated to become active participants in a CoP when they view knowledge as meant for the public good, a moral obligation and/or as a community interest by using different methods such as promotion, reputation, self-esteem and exchange of practice-related knowledge and interaction. We may notice the use of colloquial and informal expressions such as “Hey”, emoticons such as the ☺ smiling face, exclamation marks “!” that are typical of netspeak, together with scientific and technical terms such as “countdown”, “Nanoparticles” and “microgravity” in examples (4), (5), (6):

(4) L-500!

It's L-500 days! Not that I'm counting of course:-) Launch date might always change a little bit, but one needs to have a target in mind, so I thought I'd start the countdown and also start a little logbook on what's going on in my training days. Thanks to +Michael Sacchi for indirectly giving me the idea

(5) I'm in Star City! [...] Today we'll do the emergency descent scenario... that's when something is really wrong and you need to get down quickly!

(6) L+150: Logbook

Hey, I didn't forget that I promised to talk to you about the NATO experiment! On Wednesday I wrapped up NATO by removing the experiment containers from the Kubik incubator and putting them into the MELFI freezer, their biological state being frozen until researchers on the ground can get hold of them and do their post-flight analysis. The full name of the experiment is Nanoparticles and Osteoporosis and, like Osteo-4 from the last logbook, it studies the bone. But while Osteo-4 is interested in determining the mechanisms that make us lose bone mass in **microgravity**, NATO wants to see what we can do about it and, in particular, if a particular type of **nanoparticles** could be effective in counteracting bone loss. (Samantha Cristoforetti's google plus account, bold type added)

This commingling of genres and registers can be explained as an attempt to involve people with others in a community of practice in order to create a 'social presence' which, as Tu affirms, is "the degree of salience of another person in an interaction and the consequent salience of an interpersonal relationship" (2002: 2), whose aim is the elimination of the possible barriers that could inhibit individuals (Wasko and Faraj 2000). The quantitative linguistic analysis reveals that the total number of TOKENS is 97,688. The most frequent words are the personal pronouns I - 1449 occurrences; WE - 1614 occurrences; YOU - 912 occurrences. The high frequency of personal pronouns should be explained as the need to underline the role of *agency* (Halliday 1994) in order to create collaboration and membership as we may notice in the concordances in the following figures (1, 2, 3):

Figure 1. 'I' Concordances

1. L-500! It's L-500 days! Not that I'm counting of course:-) Launch date might
2. bit, but one needs to have a target in mind, so I thought I'd start the countdown and
3. one needs to have a target in mind, so I thought I'd start the countdown and also
4. indirectly giving me the idea! L-500: Logbook I'm in Star City! In a few minutes
5. -500: Logbook I'm in Star City! In a few minutes I'll ride my bike to the training
6. I'll ride my bike to the training facilities. Today, I'll have four hours of Soyuz sim
7. another rainy and chilly weekend day in Star City. I guess I'll work out in the gym

Figure 2. 'We' Concordances

1. But before the sim itself, this morning we'll have a two-hour brief with our
2. using what awaits us in the afternoon. Yesterday we went over a nominal
3. main computer and the engine failed on us. Today we'll do the emergency de-
4. scent
5. the crew of Pavel Vinogradov this past spring, we've been experimenting with
6. the
7. how the orbit will look like after launch. So we now insert the data for the first
8. two
9. verification and to the leak checks, making sure we're not losing air into free
10. not yet the Station. Of course, as a good crew we'll try to look each other over the

Figure 3. 'You' Concordances

1. That's when something is really wrong and you need to get down quickly
2. to go back to classroom for a theory lesson! As you might have heard, the trip to
3. If you take a look at the picture, that's the bell-shape
4. as they should be, since you'll be under G and wearing the thick gloves of the
5. not exist in the real spaceship: on the launchpad you have to lower yourself down
6. from the top
7. But it could also happen that you have to leave the orbit quickly because of an
8. not my favorite part of training life: when you have to pack your bags and move
9. to the

As regards the occurrences of modal verbs, we can notice the frequency of the modal 'will' (459 occurrences). The prevalence of Volitive Modality (Palmer 1990, Gotti 2001) as a type of deontic modality that expresses the speaker's attitude of hope, wish or fear - since it manifests the speaker's wish that an unfavourable process will happen - seems to occur in order to strengthen involvement and participation. The Optative Mood - a modified (modulated) version of the Indicative Mood - (Guido 2004) seems to increase a sense of membership like in the following concordances (Figure 4):

Figure 4. 'Will' Concordances in the Logbook

1. hours of Soyuz sim with my Commander, Anton. It will look somewhat like
2. data and can predict pretty well how the orbit will look like after launch. So
3. will go pretty fast! As the board engineer, I will devote my attention mainly
4. In t4 A 4 will monitor the beginning of the dynamic mode
5. in preparation of the engine burns, the Soyuz will orient itself along the local
6. (with the "belly" pointing to Earth) and he will be able to observe this
7. in the picture except that at this point Anton will see the Earth, not yet the

Furthermore, we can find words in relation to scientific fields, such as ammonia, airlock, reentry, oxygen and it is worthwhile to notice the reference to the importance of water. This reference seems to have a dual aim; on the one hand, it seems to underline the importance of water as suggested in the "Healthy program" proposed by ESA and aimed at children; on the other hand, from a scientific point of view, it reveals some details and explanations aimed at scientists on how to get water in space:

(7) L-469: Logbook

Water, water, water!

Water is extremely important on ISS and we take measures to monitor its quality on a regular basis. Today I took the first of a series of classes aimed at making me familiar with all the water sampling and analysis procedures that will be scheduled to perform on orbit. This intro class focused on the equipment and the logistics. We'll have more integrated activities in future training events closer to flight.

(8) Take a look at the picture! Don't you love color-coded? A color for microbiology analysis, one for the iodine analysis, another one for the Total Organic Carbon Analyser and one final color for the return to Houston for ground analysis [...].

In addition, the fact that the the word 'space', which occurs 345 times, is used with two different connotations is noteworthy; on the one hand it is a physical setting, a space station; on the other, it is a sort of dimension, a 'vacuum' creating a parallelism with the infinite of the sea (Logbook: L+27, L+28):

(9) I like listening to the sounds of the Station at night. People sometimes tell me that they would like to hear the utter silence that they assume I hear in space, but the famous "In space no one can hear you scream" only applies to the vacuum of space: fortunately inside the Space Station we have a breathable atmosphere at about the same pressure you have on Earth at sea level.

4. Findings

Considering that communities of practice help the individual bridge the gap between knowing what and knowing how (Duguid 2005), the use of websites as a means to educate by enabling students to improve their abilities and knowledge through collaboration also seems to facilitate their experience in professional practice. A professional identity seems to be construed, in the *logbook*, through a discursive practice which, in emphasising connectivity (network), is based on horizontal accountability, whose focus is on the concept of learning community, meant as a group of people who share common pedagogical goals and attitudes (Wenger, 1998; Hazlett, 2015, 2016). Such a community proves to be a good example for an interdisciplinary approach to higher education and for an advanced educational program since it is not merely in relation to ‘network’ connectivity but rather shares a common goal: learning (Comiskey, Alexander, Hazlett, McCartan, O’Boyle 2016). The story of the *Futura* mission, through a process of reification/recontextualization/popularisation (Fairclough 2011; Gotti 2008) seems to ‘translate’ disciplinary – i.e. scientific content – to suit a new target audience in order to promote membership, thus creating identification and new professional identities as suggested by Senge (1990: 3) in relation to the role of learning organisations.

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Biosketch

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Filling in the missing gaps: From study to application of EFL learning in KSA

Mazeegha Ahmed Al-Tale

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the gap between the study of English as a foreign language (EFL) in colleges and universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the application of this knowledge professionally in the workplace. It investigates to what extent EFL graduates in the workplace are aware of the English language as a discipline as opposed to how far they apply this awareness in their vocational practice. A questionnaire, interviews, as well as observation, were used to collect the data of the study. A close analysis of this data shows that there is a severe gap between the theoretical knowledge of English linguistics and its practical application in the workplace by the Saudi female EFL graduates in this sample study. It is concluded that Saudi female EFL graduates are unaware of how their study of the English language as a discipline can enhance job performance; hence, they suffer from a knowledge gap in EFL competence and face difficulties in using EFL in the professional arena after their graduation. It is recommended that EFL graduates be offered training courses on how to mediate between knowledge about language and language usage, and on how they could benefit from what they studied in colleges and universities by applying it fruitfully to their future jobs.

Keywords

English as a Foreign Language (EFL), workplace, applied linguistics, language usage, job performance.

1. Introduction

Language is basically a means of communication. The ultimate goal of teaching any language is to enable the learner to use it effectively when interacting with others. The English language is well-known as the international language of communication (Seidlhofer 2005). The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was introduced into the Saudi Arabian educational system in 1928 (Al-Seghayer 2011). One of the general aims of EFL in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is to enable learners to acquire basic language skills along with the necessary linguistic competence for different professions (Rahman and Alhaisoni 2013). However, although Saudi EFL graduates readily acknowledge the practical opportunistic importance of English for higher education, international com-

munication and business, they show little command of that language. When it comes to its use in real communicative contexts, they face difficulties (Gallagher 2011; Faruk 2013; Al-Seghayer 2014).

Knowledge about language and knowledge of language have been discussed by linguists in order to differentiate between knowledge about the grammatical structure of language and its practical application. Widdowson attributed the ability to use language to an “access which is relatively independent of the analytic knowledge of grammar as defined in Chomsky’s original concept of competence” (1989:1). Saudi EFL graduates work in a variety of workplaces. All those workplaces require communicative competence. If the graduate does not wield that kind of competence, it will affect the job performance itself. In addition to professional practice, English competence is important for fulfilling ongoing global needs. Although the English language has been taught in KSA for several years in colleges and universities, with the aim of providing graduates with communicative competence that will be of service in their future workplaces, it has been noted that EFL graduates lack the skills which would enable them to comprehend, speak, write, and read accurately. Graduates mostly lack productive skills (speaking and writing). Fluency in these two skills is unfortunately not attainable for most. Moreover, some studies report that there are also some difficulties with receptive skills (Chen 2005; Hamouda 2013).

Specifically in the Gulf, EFL graduates have encountered difficulties due to inadequate output in English. EFL teachers have attributed this inadequacy to lack of motivation, reliance on rote learning, use of old-fashioned curricula and methodologies, emphasis on formal testing and inadequately trained teachers (Syed 2003; Al-Issa 2011). Researchers have called for extensive research on EFL use in the Arabian Gulf (Charise 2007; Gallagher 2011). The problem of stunted EFL use is not unique or confined to the Arabian Gulf countries; rather, it extends to other Arab countries, to Japan, China, Korea, as well as some European countries (Ying 2009; Georgopoulou and Griva 2012; Belhabib 2014; Tahaineh 2014).

This paper investigates EFL graduates’ theoretical awareness of their use of the English language as a discipline vis-à-vis their ability to communicate in that language skillfully in their vocational practice, with a particular focus on the difficulties they face. Although the study is limited to the Saudi context, its findings and recommendations are possibly relevant to various other foreign language teaching contexts worldwide. Its recommendations, in particular, are hoped to be fruitfully applicable elsewhere, with due consideration of local cultural and logistical permutations.

2. Review of related literature

The field of EFL teaching and learning has been one of ongoing and extensive interest and research. Many studies have already been conducted on teaching methods, on ways of better teaching and learning, and on better application of the taught language. For example, Belhabib (2014) investigated the teaching/

learning situation of productive skills at the University of Tlemcen in Algeria. The data was collected via a series of interviews and a questionnaire. The researcher used quantitative and descriptive methods of analysis. It was found that most of the EFL interviewed students faced the same problems and difficulties in both speaking and writing. The interviews with EFL teachers showed that students in general lack motivation and do not give sufficient importance to writing and speaking methods, which, in turn, discouraged them in teaching. EFL teachers and students confirmed the importance of productive skills. Recommendations were made on the importance of developing these two skills by encouraging learners to use them outside the classroom in real-life situations.

Loubazidions (2012) also investigated some barriers hindering EFL learners' participation in speaking courses at the English department of the University of Biskra in Algeria. The study hypothesizes that psychological issues (anxieties, fear and shyness) and linguistic inadequacies (lack of vocabulary, mispronunciation and grammatical mistakes) – in addition to negative attitudes towards the topics – were at the root of the problem. In order to test the hypothesis, the researcher conducted a case study and administered questionnaires to the students and teachers of oral courses. The hypothesis was confirmed. Loubazidions gave recommendations for specific techniques and activities that may help EFL students get rid of these obstacles.

In Japan, Matsuya (2003) attributed poor speaking and listening skills on the part of Japanese students to the lack of teaching communication skills.

In a different study, Dooley (2006) also indicated that students from different language backgrounds studying in Australia faced several listening and speaking difficulties, and provided recommendations aimed at developing listening and speaking skills. Although these studies have been very useful in suggesting good ways of teaching EFL, few EFL studies have concentrated on the use of English in the workplace for professional practice. One such study, by Al-Khatib (2005), investigated the EFL communication needs, wants and skill gaps of thirty tourism and banking employees, as well as their attitudes towards the practical use of the English language in the workplace. A questionnaire, interviews, and an analysis of authentic workplace texts were the main tools that were used to collect the data of the study. It revealed that employees' attitudes toward English greatly influence their perceptions of their needs, wants and skill gaps. It concluded that specific courses in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) should be developed and taught in order to enhance communication amongst employees in the workplace.

Aldohon (2014) also examined the ESP needs, functions and problems of 46 tourist policemen serving in different workplaces in Jordan. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect the data. It was discovered that, in this work context, speaking and listening were the most important skills, followed by reading and writing. It also found that maintaining general conversation, answering questions, solving problems and providing services were the most important functions. It revealed that foreign tourists' speaking too fast in English is the most serious problem for Jordanian tourist policemen. Other difficulties that test subjects encountered were using inappropriate English in speaking, lexis shortage

and the inability to use grammar for writing. Not surprisingly, it was concluded that Jordanian tourist policemen faced problems with specific English language skills - listening, conversation and reading respectively. It was recommended that more ESP training should be provided.

In the KSA context, Al-Hazmi argued that EFL teacher preparation programs were “nonsystematic and inadequate” (2003: 341), calling for a systematic approach to pre- and in-service education for EFL teachers. Harbi (2005) attributed the difficulties faced by Saudis in the workplace to their being taught by non-native speakers of English, lack of concentration on teaching communicative skills, and to their late beginnings in learning the foreign language. The present paper is expected to add to the literature which focuses on effective EFL/ESL use for professional practice.

3. Methodology

Quantitative and descriptive methods of data collection and analysis similar to those of Belhabib (2014) were applied in this study.

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 114 female Saudi EFL graduates selected from the English departments of the Colleges of Education, Arts, and Languages and Translation at five Universities in KSA. The students studied English language as a science: phonetics, phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics. Some of them studied language skills and English literatures courses as well. The graduates now work as assistant professors, lecturers, school teachers, administration staff, and interpreters in colleges, schools, private companies, banks, and hospitals respectively. The participants have work experiences ranging from one year to more than 15 years. Their ages range from 22 to 50 years. This specific group of participants was selected for this study as they are currently employed in professions where EFL is crucial to the workplace.

3.2. Materials

The researcher used three methods to collect the data of the study: a questionnaire, interviews, and observation. The questionnaire was made up of three parts. The first was constructed to elicit biographical information about the participants, mainly their ages, workplaces, current degrees, Grade Point Averages (GPAs), years of work experience, and the category of colleges from which they graduated. The second part consisted of three multiple-choice questions designed to investigate the participants' practical use of EFL in their professional practice. Each of these three questions was followed by a space for the participants' comments. The third part of the questionnaire consisted of six Likert scale questions ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), designed to elicit the participants'

attitudes towards their use of EFL after graduation as well as the difficulties they face (see Appendix A). In addition to the questionnaire, most of the participants were interviewed about their personal experience in using English in professional practice after graduation. These interviews were conducted in the English language in order to give the researcher the chance to observe the participants' level of competence regarding their EFL speaking and listening skills (see Appendix B).

3.3. Procedures

The researcher distributed the questionnaire to several EFL graduate Saudi employees at various locations around the country. The email addresses of the researcher, along with her mobile phone number, were made available for any inquiry from the participants. After receiving a sufficient number of replies to the questionnaire, the mean numbers of answers were computed and drawn into graphs with the SPSS program. As for the interviews, the participants were interviewed either face to face or via phone, where appropriate. The answers for the interview questions were recorded for analysis after each interview. Although the interviews were conducted in the English language, the interviewed graduates were allowed to use their mother tongue if they could not express themselves in English.

4. Results of the study

A careful analysis of the first part of the questionnaire indicated that the graduates' GPAs were good regarding the theoretical branches of the English language as a science: phonetics, phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics. The participants' perceptions about their actual use of the language in the workplace are illustrated in the following sections.

4.1. Importance of the use of English in the workplace

While 58% of the EFL graduates perceived the use of EFL as important in their workplaces, 42% of them did not (Figure 1).

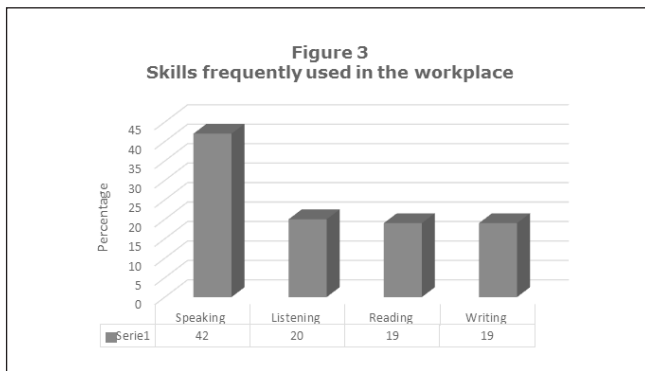
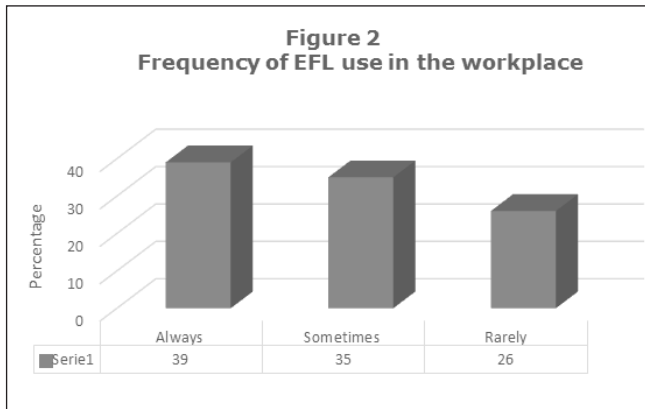
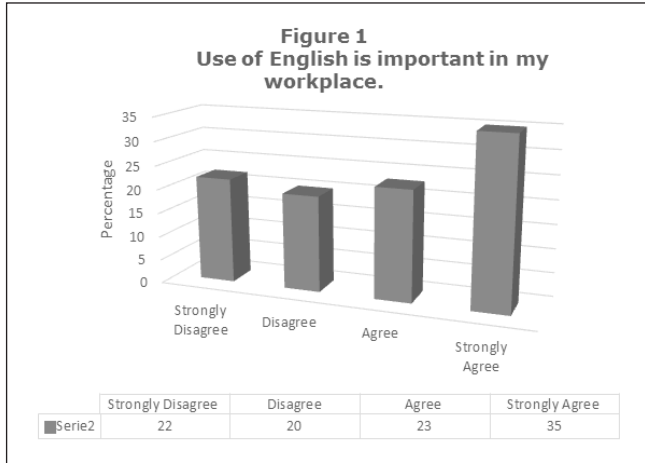
4.2. Frequency of EFL use in the workplace

While 39% of the participants reported that they always use the English language for their professional practices, 35% of them stated that they sometimes use it, and 26% reported that they rarely use it (Figure 2).

4.3. Skills frequently used in the workplace

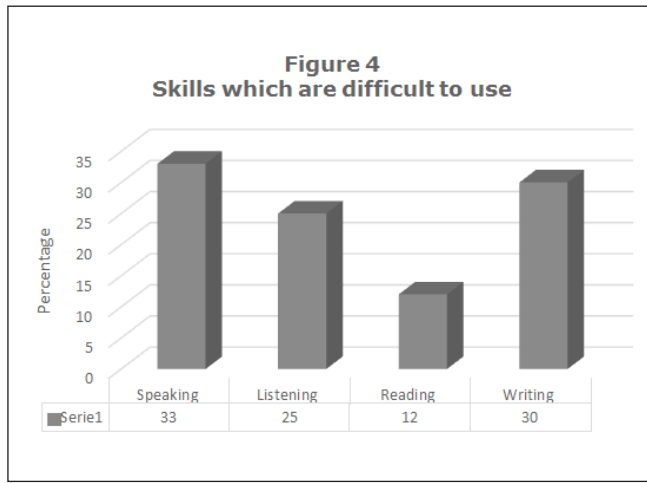
While 42% of the participants reported that they frequently apply EFL speaking skills in their workplaces, 20% reported that they frequently employ listening skills in EFL, and 19% of them reported that they frequently need to employ read-

ing skills. The final 19% reported that they frequently use writing skills (Figure 3). Thus, there was a perceived need for the use of the four EFL skills in the graduates' workplaces, especially productive ones.



4.4. Skills which are difficult to use

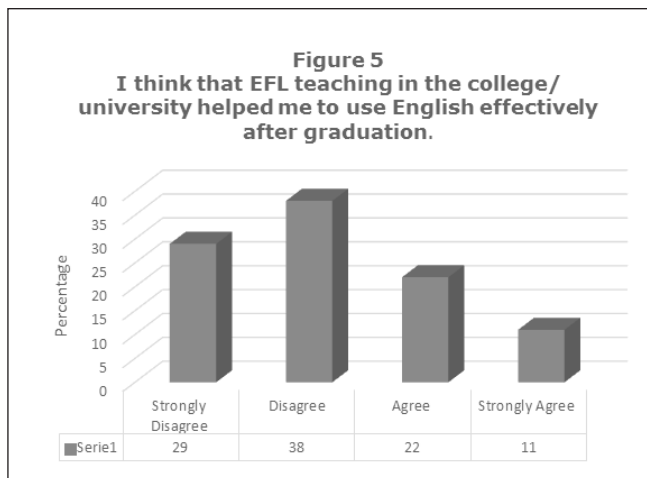
While 33% of the participants reported that speaking is the most difficult skill to use in the workplace, 30% reported that writing is the hardest, 25% of them reported listening as the hardest, and 12% reported that reading is the most difficult skill to use (Figure 4).



4.5. EFL teaching and EFL use after graduation

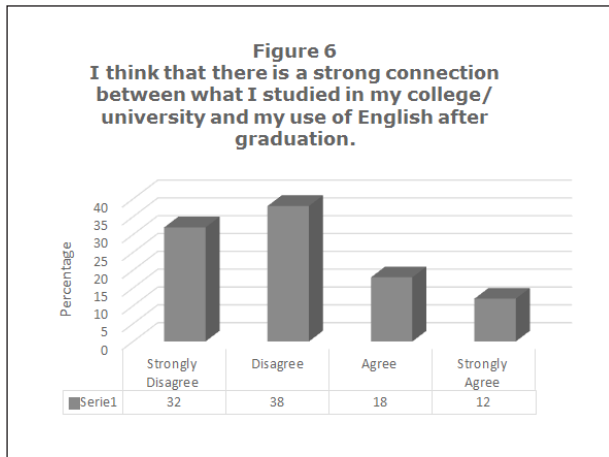
4.5.1. Perception of the helpfulness of EFL teaching

While 67% of the participants stated that EFL teaching did not help them use the English language after graduation, 33% of them reported that it did (Figure 5).



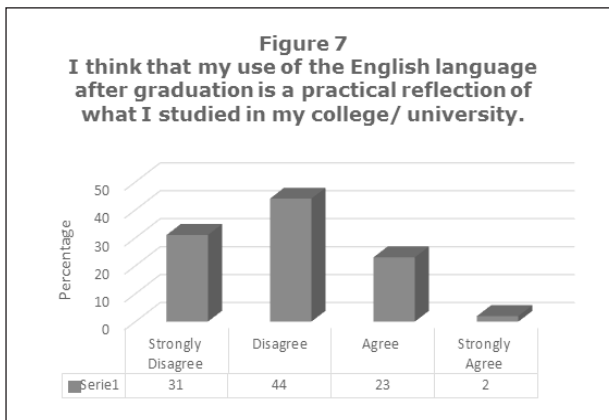
4.5.2. Connection between EFL study and usage

While 70% of the participants did not perceive a strong connection between their previous language learning experience of language in their colleges and universities and their actual use of it in professional practice after graduation, 30% of them perceived it (Figure 6).



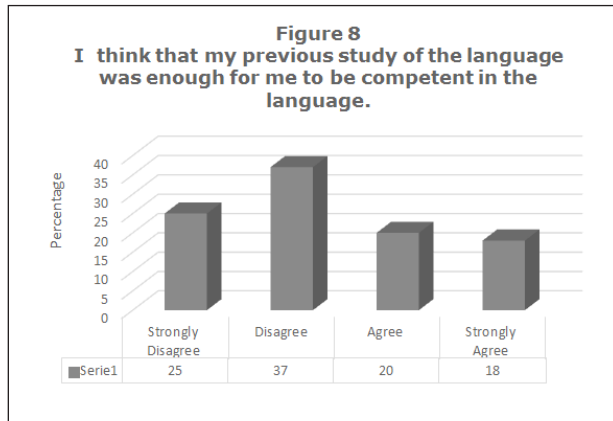
4.5.3. Correlation between EFL in college and the workplace

While 75% of the participants did not perceive their use of the English language in workplaces as a practical reflection of what they were taught in colleges and universities, 25% reported that it is (Figure 7).



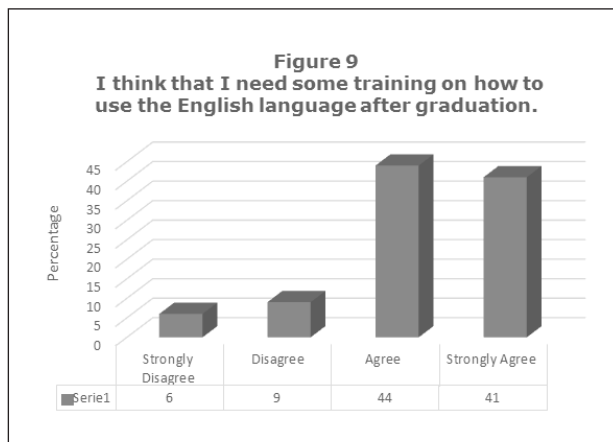
4.5.4. Adequacy

While 62% of the participants reported that previous EFL teaching was not sufficient for them to be competent in their language use, 38% of them reported that it was (Figure 8).



4.6. Training in EFL use after graduation

The majority (85%) of the participants felt the need for further training in how to use EFL after graduation, while just 15% of them did not feel that need (Figure 9).



4.7. Interview results

In the interviews, participants reported that they find difficulty in speaking and listening. These difficulties come to the fore when they encounter new situations or when they speak to native speakers of English. They also reported that they suffer from concentrating on grammar rather than fluency and spoke of need for more vocabulary. Participants attributed their difficulties to the way they were taught the language in college as well as the lack of sufficient opportunities to practice it in real life situations. In addition to participants' overtly vocalized difficulties, it was observed that they had difficulties to express themselves in English. Some of them switched to Arabic during the interviews.

5. Discussions and conclusions

In the researcher's opinion, the divide between EFL study and its communicative application in the workplace stems from the emphasis on teaching English as an academic theoretical subject rather than a living language in practice. A theoretical focus is ineffective as it mainly leads to knowledge of the language as a discipline with its branches, grammar rules and pronunciation rules, an in-depth study which is not necessary for it to be used effectively for communication. Theoretical knowledge enhances one's understanding, but is not essential to reach the level of command of the language that is required for effective job performance. Dosari (1992) indicates that the goal of teaching EFL is to enable students to communicate with other English speakers and to offer them a window on the world.

Based on the results of the interviews, it is concluded that Saudi female EFL graduates who suffer from difficulties in EFL language usage attribute their problem to ineffective teaching methodologies as well as the scarcity of opportunities to practice in real life situations. Such an attribution echoes the main challenges of EFL teaching in the Arab world cited by Fareh (2010: 3600-3604), i.e. "improperly trained teachers", "[l]ack of emphasis on developing skills" and lack of "[e]xposure to English". Although, in general, Saudi graduates' attitudes towards the English language and their realization of the importance of being competent at it is highly positive, "the English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' proficiency level in English remains inadequate and below expectation" (Al-Seghayer 2014: 17).

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on the practice of language skills by teaching their use in real life situations to equip graduates with greater competency and proficiency of the language. Moreover, EFL graduates should bear in mind that only via practicing the language can one attain communicative

competence in it. A kind of mediation between what is taught to students in colleges and universities and the needs of the job market is urgently required, with an emphasis on the practical part of language learning rather than the theoretical part.

In addition, EFL graduates should be enlightened about the essential role they play as learners of the language. They also should bear the responsibility of the self-development of their own language skills in accordance with the places where they work in order to attain the goals of EFL teaching in the region stated by the Ministry of Education. Moreover, it is hoped that future research on EFL will concentrate on effective methods to mediate between knowledge about language and knowledge of language, on how to enhance the teaching of communicative language skills, and on how to use EFL effectively for professional practices after graduation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix (A)

Questionnaire

Dear EFL graduates,

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data about your use of the English language for professional practice after graduation. There is no wrong or right answer. Please answer the following items carefully and honestly. Your answers will be kept confidential. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Part 1: Personal data

Name: (optional)

Age:

1. What is your workplace?

- A. School
- B. College
- C. Other (please specify)

2. What is your current degree?

- A. Bachelor
- B. Master
- C. Doctorate

3. What is your GPA for your current degree?

- A. more than 4.5
- B. between 3.5 and 4.4
- C. less than 3.5

4. How many years of work experience do you have?

- A. less than 5 years
- B. 6-10 years
- C. 10-15 years
- D. more than 15 years

5. What is the type of college you graduated from?

- A. College of Education
- B. College of Arts
- C. College of Languages and Translation

Part 2: Language use

Choose the answer that suits you. You can also add comments.

1. How often do you use the English language in your workplace?

- A. Always
- B. Sometimes
- C. Often
- D. Rarely

Comments:.....

2. Which language skills do you use most in your workplace?

- A. Speaking
- B. Listening
- C. Reading
- D. Writing

Comments:.....

3. Which language skill do you find difficult while using English?

- A. Speaking
- B. Listening
- C. Reading
- D. Writing

Comments:.....

Part 3: General statements

Instructions:

- Please choose only one answer for every question or statement.

· Use the following scales:

Strongly agree: (If you strongly agree with the idea stated in the item).

Agree: (If you agree with the idea stated in the item).

Disagree: (If you disagree with the idea stated in the item).

Strongly disagree: (If you strongly disagree with the idea stated in the item).

1. I think that the use of English is important in my workplace.

Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree

2. I think that EFL teaching in college/ university helped me to use English effectively after graduation.

Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree

3. I think that there is a strong connection between what I studied in my college/ university and my use of English after graduation.

Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree

4. I think that my use of the English language after graduation is a practical reflection of what I studied in my college/ university.

Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree

Thanks for your cooperation and time!

Appendix (B)

Interview Guide

Please answer the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties you face while using English for communication?
2. Why do you think that EFL graduates face difficulties in using the language after graduation?

Thanks for your cooperation and time!

Biosketch

Mazeegha Ahmed Al Tale is an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics affiliated with the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Department of English, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests are EFL teaching and learning, discourse analysis, CALL, E Learning, and language planning.

Fostering metalinguistic awareness through translation in LSP courses.

A focus on needs analysis in the frame of the WALLeT Project

Chiara Degano, Maurizio Naldi, Sandra Petroni¹

Abstract

This paper presents the results of an ESP needs analysis focused on university students' perception of ESP and translation as a fifth skill, carried out through a platform-based questionnaire and analysed using statistical methods. Results indicate little awareness of ESP peculiarities, associated with a preference for speaking and listening practice, but they also suggest that traditional ESP activities, centred on isolated functions, should be integrated with realistic multi-tasking communicative activities. At the same time, our results seem to question the reliability of learner's assessment of their needs in ESP, as the identification of needs is influenced by personal preferences.

Keywords

Teaching English for Special Purposes, Needs analysis, Computer assisted translation (CAT), metalinguistic awareness.

1. Introduction

The paper presents an ongoing interdisciplinary project (WALLeT – Wiki-Assisted Language Learning and Translation) on the use of collaborative computer-assisted translation as a means to develop metalinguistic awareness of Language for Special Purposes (LSP), with a twofold focus on translator training and second language acquisition (Baraniello *et al.* 2016a). The project, lying at the interface between applied linguistics and engineering, aims to devise, implement and assess a model that combines recent trends in language teaching, namely Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Collaborative Learning (CL), with Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT). This entails testing different open source technologies and the attendant affordances, with a view to finding a web-based platform that suits the theoretical and methodological assumptions underpin-

¹ While all the authors have shared responsibility for the general design of this chapter, Chiara Degano is the author of sections 1, 2,3 and 6, Maurizio Naldi is the author of section 5, and Sandra Petroni of sections 4 and 7.

ning the project (Degano and Lozano Zahonero 2016).

At the same time, in line with LSP tenets for course design, attention is given to needs analysis, carried out through a questionnaire that takes into account students' needs as prospective members of professional communities, but also attitude and motivation issues, as envisaged by traditional approaches to needs analysis. In addition to that, the questionnaire addresses metalinguistic awareness, checking respondents' perceptions against their performance in activities centred on metalinguistic competence.

This paper will focus on needs analysis, particularly from the viewpoint of students' perception, giving a general account of the questionnaire results and dwelling more specifically on some correlations, which will be discussed in detail. Besides offering a picture of learners' needs, the questionnaire analysis will also be an opportunity to critically reflect on needs analysis as traditionally intended.

The research questions leading the present analysis are twofold, addressing on the one hand the learners' perception of ESP and its specificities, and on the other hand their perception of translation as a fifth skill. In particular, we will address the following issues: 1. Do the respondents perceive ESP as different from general English? 2. Can the respondents assess their needs in relation to their field of specialization? 3. Does previous translation experience affect their ESP competence, and 4) Is translation perceived as a need?

Section 2 will outline the WALLeT project, with its underlying rationale; Section 3 will provide a review of the literature on needs analysis; Section 4 will present the questionnaire used in the first stage of needs analysis, while Section 5 will present the questionnaire results, and finally Section 6 will discuss and set them in relation with the aim of the project.

2. The WALLeT project

The WALLeT project aims² on the one hand to develop a platform for assisted translation with a view to making students familiar with the new tools that are now commonly used for specialised translation and localisation. On the other hand, it is meant to explore new approaches to the teaching and learning of languages for special purposes by relying on the integration of computer assisted translation (CAT), computer assisted language learning (CALL), and collaborative learning (CL). This second aim rests on the assumption that language learning can benefit from a functional use of translation in a sort of *bilingual approach*. In particular, integrating translation competences with translation technology skills helps reduce interference and builds awareness in the students about the lack of one-to-one correspondence between two languages (Garcia and Pena 2011). At the same time, working on collaborative translation tools, in order to implement

² The WALLeT project is funded by University of Rome "Tor Vergata", in the frame of the *Uncovering Excellence* initiative.

and optimise them, allows students to develop their cognitive problem-solving and decision-making abilities while encouraging reflection on lexical specificities and syntactic patterns in specialized domains (Groot 2000; Scharle and Szabó 2000; Littlemore 2001; Schmidt 2010).

Originally, the project planned to use the popular MediaWiki platform and its translation extension Translatewiki (Baraniello *et al.* 2016a), but as a result of a first trial with the learners, this option was discarded in favour of another more functional platform, i.e. Zanata³, whose suitability for our purposes is currently being tested. The ideal platform should allow users to perform several activities and tasks, with both a linguistic and a metalinguistic focus, related to specialised translation, so as to let students experience how professional translation works. The 18-month project envisaged the participation of 200 students of English and Spanish enrolled in Language Degree Programmes, especially *Lingue nella società dell'informazione* (LINFO), i.e. Languages in the Information Society⁴, but was also open to volunteers from other degrees at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”. Besides the focus on translation and second language learning, the WALLeT project is driven by a research focus into second language acquisition and metalinguistic awareness. Once implemented, the platform will make a solid dataset involving individual results in terms of translation practice, self-correction and self-assessment, as well as correction and assessment of peers’ performances available to researchers, while also permitting *ad hoc* experiments to be designed and carried out.

3. ESP And Needs Analysis

Traditionally ESP and needs analysis go hand in hand. Needs analysis developed parallel to the affirmation of English as the international language of workplace communication. Early studies may be traced back to the Sixties, but a milestone in the field was set in 1978 by Munby’s Communication Needs Processor (CNP). This was intended as a tool to design a student’s profile, and included a range of questions about key purposive communicative variables: Domain, Setting, Interaction, Instrumentality, Dialect, Target level, Communicative event, and Communicative key. Starting from the analysis of needs carried out using the CNP, course designers had three alternative ways of developing a syllabus, focusing on micro-skills, on micro-functions or on linguistic forms, data banks of which were included in the model. Although very influential, Munby’s CNP was criticised for being too time consuming, as it entailed writing a profile for each student, and for considering only one viewpoint, the analyst’s, while ignoring those of learners and other stakeholders.

On this ground, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 54) proposed a model that distinguishes between target needs and learning needs. Target needs are further

3 <<http://zanata.org/>>.

4 This is a BA programme with an integrated focus on languages, linguistics and IT.

categorised as necessities, i.e. the demands of the target situation in terms of discursive, functional, structural and lexical features; lacks – the necessities the learner lacks, in other words the gap between the existing proficiency and the target proficiency; and wants, which concern the learner’s perspective. Learning needs include learners’ motivation, preferences in terms of learning methods and strategies, available resources, the time and place the course will be taught, and learners’ personal information. Hutchinson and Water’s model has remained unsurpassed as far as General English is concerned. As for LSP, needs analysis has inevitably converged with genre analysis, which provides more sophisticated models for the analysis of micro and macro levels of specialised discourse.

In the early stage of ESP research, then referred to as register analysis (Halliday, McIntochs and Stevens 1964; Ewer and Latorre 1969; Swales 1971), the focus was on vocabulary and grammar, having the sentence as a scope. The assumption behind register analysis was that, while the grammar of scientific and technical writing does not differ from that of general English, certain grammatical and lexical forms are used much more frequently (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998; Gotti, 1991, 2005). Pedagogically, the main drive for register analysis was making ESP courses more relevant to learners’ needs (Hutchinson and Waters 1987).

In more recent times, research on specialised discourse has brought to the fore extralinguistic aspects, such as the social context, speakers’ intentions and the interpersonal dimension, making LSP a comprehensive field, which encompasses both linguistic and extralinguistic factors, practical concerns and theoretical reflection. In a recent book-length contribution on LSP, Gollin-Kies *et al.* set the scope of ESP in the following terms:

For us the LSP agenda is to characterise the ways in which language is used in specific contexts by specific groups for specific purposes, to explore the extent to which language use in such contexts is stable, to examine the role of language in establishing, maintaining and developing group values and self-identification, and to identify and evaluate the means by which people can become proficient in using language in specific contexts for their own specific purposes and can graduate to membership of their target group or groups.

This definition of LSP reflects the gist and scope of the research on genre analysis, as developed from the early Nineties up to now. Starting from Swales’ all too famous definition of genre as a class of communicative events, defined by a common set of communicative purposes, and recognised by the members of the parent discourse community (1990: 58), genre analysis has been defined as “a cluster of analytical approaches aiming not only at surface-level description, but also at providing insights into socio-cultural and cognitive aspects underlying discursive and formal choices” (Garzone 2015, pre-print version). Directly observable, microlinguistic structures typical of a genre are then included in the broader *macrolinguistic* frame, which is determined by variables like the communicative purpose, the social practice and the community of discourse at issue, all of which are reflected in the cognitive structure, which presides over the actual textual realisation (Bhatia 1993: 32).

In the past decades, genre analysis has pursued the twofold aim of describing specific genres from different specialised domains, often employing corpus linguistics techniques for the investigation of large representative samples of a given genre⁵, while paying attention to the macrolevels discussed above. In this latter respect, recourse has also been had to ethnomethodological approaches, which favour contact with professionals from a given community of discourse, who are taken as informants.

Parallel to this evolution, research on genre has progressively recognised elements of variation that speakers can creatively bring to a given genre, thus destabilising its integrity. Strictly related to this aspect is the notion of interdiscursivity (Bhatia 2010), which refers to the relations among different genres, with contact generating a certain extent of hybridisation, as the discursive features of one genre are appropriated by another.

As a result of the research on genre, specialised communication is now understood as more complex than initially thought, and needs analysis consequently has to cope with such complexity. As Gollin-Kies *et al.* point out,

It has been recognised that target situations are far more complex than can be captured in a traditional needs analysis, and that approaches involving simulations and projects are better able to approach the actual conditions of real-life experience, including the differing levels of participant expertise and linguistic competence, varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and local workplace or educational practices (2015, ch. 7).

In order for needs analysis to be able to embrace such complex scenarios, Gollin-Kies *et al.* (2015) propose to define the needs specific to each context by applying Candlin and Chrichton's multifaceted model of interdiscursivity (2013), which includes five complementary perspectives: texts, participants, the social and institutional context, the social practice and the analysts themselves. On a similar basis, Huhta *et al.* (2013) have developed an analytic framework that moves away from the traditional focus on potential language needs as discrete items, with a view to drawing Professional Profiles based on a thick description of discursive practices in a professional community (Huhta *et al.* 2013: 39). Such an approach, known as Common European Framework Professional Profiles, results from evidence-based needs analyses carried out starting from the late Eighties in Finnish and European projects⁶, employing, among other 'tools', also the

5 This approach has characterised the Italian National Research Programmes "Specialised communication, culture and identity in international business and economics: linguistic and pragmatic aspects" (2005-2007), and "Tension and change in English domain-specific genres" (2007-2009), nationally coordinated by Maurizio Gotti. Among others, cfr. Bhatia, Candlin, Gotti (2012); Garzone (2014); Garzone, Catenaccio, Degano (2012).

6 The Prolang project (Huhta 1999) was the forerunner of the CEF professional profiles.

ethnomethodological observation of workplace communication. The projects highlighted some peculiarities of language use in the professional context across domains, among which the integrated nature of LSP activities in real-life professional practice, and the importance of translation. With regard to the former, the author concludes that communication takes place during complete communicative events entailing different forms, functions and skills at the same time, like reading, taking notes, making phone calls, consulting experts, taking appointments, documenting, discussing (Huhta *et al.* 2013: 40). Therefore, learners should be presented with activities that resemble this complexity, rather than with tasks based on single functions and notions if authenticity criteria are to be met. As for translation and its oral counterpart, interpretation, the Prolang project suggested that such abilities are required in many professional situations, in one form or another, while being generally overseen in LSP courses. On this ground, they call for an investigation of the role of translation in ESP course design.

4. Research method: a questionnaire for data triangulation

Scalability was among the features of the WALLeT project, which in the long term intends to consider all of the five perspectives envisaged in the Candlin-Crichton model. In the first part of the project, the one carried out so far, attention has been limited to texts, participants – namely learners as prospective professionals and language mediators – and analysts, in the way of our perception of translation-as-a-fifth-skill utility. The social/institutional context and the social practice will be addressed in future developments of the project, in which other stakeholders will enter the picture.

In particular, needs analysis was oriented towards university students and focused on their needs from the teacher's perspective and on their wants from the learner's viewpoint. Obviously, since the WALLeT platform will be customised in the future for a wide range of possible users – scholars and teachers of other languages and disciplines, professionals of the language industry and, last but not least, members of institutional governing/management bodies – needs analysis research will be further developed by encompassing other stakeholders and gathering their data and information. At the moment, English and Spanish are the two working languages for the WALLeT project even though the platform is set up to work contemporaneously on more than two languages, thus providing tools and activities for LSP courses. Needs analysis research was then carried out on both languages and two questionnaires were consequently designed.

Based on the above mentioned holistic theoretical framework for needs analysis (Huhta *et al.* 2013 - cf. section 3), the English questionnaire was distributed among a diversified range of university students and aimed at monitoring their perceived needs, aims and expectations, as well as attitude and aptitude with a view to implementing the platform. Students' perception involved ESP competences and they were checked through quantitative and qualitative/evaluative

methods which allow analysts to have data triangulation.

The questionnaire is composed of 38 questions whose answers are closed and managed through yes/no answers and drop-down boxes which include a limited number of *ad-hoc* items. Six sections group these questions, and they are as follows:

- Section 1 Background Information (Qs.1-10)
- Section 2 Self-assessment of language competences (CEFR) (Qs 11-15)
- Section 3 Translation practices (Qs 16-19)
- Section 4 Digital literacy (CAT tools) (Qs 20-24)
- Section 5 Learning styles (Qs 25-29)
- Section 6 “Test your competence” activities (Qs 30-38)

Given the high number of questions, the statistical correlations between the variables within each section and among sections have given rise to interesting and remarkable insights into the divide between what students perceive as necessity and preferences (wants) for their specialised curricula and how the academic provenance affects these perceptions. Besides, the correlation between learners’ linguistic awareness levels and their real performances deserves further consideration when linked to the area of specialisation.

Section 1: Background Information

This section explores variables related to personal information and educational background, with a focus on the student’s language studies. Along with personal details about age, sex and first language (in case of bilingualism both languages had to be declared) respondents were requested to indicate their high school provenance, their academic programme (undergraduate, postgraduate or master) and the year currently attended. The other questions drew on students’ learning experience. They were asked if they were studying languages other than English, how much time they had spent studying English (number of years), if they were regularly attending English classes and, if not, motivations had to be provided. Then, respondents had to indicate whether English lessons were held in English or not (or partially) and if they were attending different classes (with different subjects) held in English.

Section 2: Self-assessment of language competences (CEFR)

This section is dedicated to students’ self-assessment. By using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), respondents were asked to put a tick on their level of general English competence (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) of each skill (listening, reading, speaking, writing) after carefully reading the correspondent descriptor. Then they were requested to rate their priorities (along a scale from 0/ low to 3/ high) with reference to a) internal/external motivations to improve their English (a list of affective factors related to motivation was offered); b) the need to read specialised texts linked to their domain of specialisation; c) problems

about understanding vocabulary, syntactic structures, general meaning, cultural references; d) the text typology studied in their curricula (a list of text types was offered); e) the text types which would be used in their professional life.

Section 3: Translation practices

This section focuses on translation as the “fifth skill” (Degano and Lozano Zahonero 2016). The attention of the students was drawn to how they considered translation activities, if they worked on and with translation and, if the answer was yes, how and why. Respondents were then requested to answer whether they made use of translation practices from Italian into English during their learning activities (not necessarily with reference to English classes only) and, if the answer was yes, to describe the main text types they needed to translate and whether it was useful to understand the whole text or only the general meaning. Students were also asked to illustrate and to reflect on the most common strategies adopted when they needed to translate words they did not know, or to understand sentences and/or short paragraphs. Utilising the same scale of priority as in section 2, they were asked to provide more than one strategy among the following: a) making use of a bilingual dictionary (word-by-word search); b) making use of a monolingual dictionary (word-by-word search); c) making use of a phraseological dictionary; d) inferring from the context first and then checking in a dictionary; e) inferring from the context without checking in a dictionary; f) asking someone else for the solution; g) making use of a machine translation; h) making use of a grammar book; i) making a comparison between similar texts; j) avoiding the translation. Respondents were also asked to consider to what extent they made use of translation as a learning tool, thus incorporating a metalinguistic practice into their activities, rather than simply considering it as a skill to understand foreign language.

Section 4: Digital literacy (CAT tools)

In this section students were asked to provide information about their digital skills and whether they knew and used online language resources (such as Google translate, online dictionaries – monolingual and/or bilingual –, thesauruses, terminological databases, corpora, websites, forums, chat rooms, social media, etc.), and how they used them in their specialised domains. In the second part of this section, the focus shifted from automatic translation tools to assisted translation tools and the respondents who said they knew how to use CAT tools were asked to express how they evaluated them in terms of output quality and if these helped them to improve their English competences.

Section 5: Learning styles

This section explores students’ learning behaviours and allows analysts to monitor learners’ metalinguistic awareness. The first issue, posed at the beginning, is

to verify the respondents' perception of the difference between General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), given that most of them had specialised academic provenance. Students who recognised some divergences were asked to specify at which level of discourse they identified these differences mostly (vocabulary, grammar/syntax, text organisation). As for the other questions, respondents were given the same scale of priority (from 0/low to 3/high) to apply to language skills and competences – i.e. reading, writing, speaking, listening, translating, vocabulary, grammar/syntax, spelling and punctuation – and they were requested to evaluate the impact these abilities had on their learning processes in terms of efficacy in tackling specialised texts, preferences among skills, want of English improvement, and main requisites for future professionals. This section represents the core which will be utilised for the research questions posed in this contribution. Thanks to these results, it will be possible to evaluate respondents' metalinguistic awareness of ESP and how this can be fostered by CAT tools activities through the correlation of data. These will be inferred from what students perceive as necessities and what they prefer in order to master specialised English in their domains of practice.

Section 6: “Test your competence” activities

This section aims to verify students' performance concerning their real ESP competency. Students were first requested to work on a text taken from their primary domain of specialisation and immediately afterwards with a text taken from an alien domain of specialisation. The combination between the primary domain and the alien domain is automatically provided by the software and is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 - Couples of domains

One's own domain of knowledge	Alien domain of knowledge
Mathematics	Geology
Physics	Law
Chemistry	Classics, History and Tourism
Geology	Mathematics
Biology	Engineering
Medicine	Languages, Literature and Philosophy
Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine	Economics and Statistics

Engineering	Biology
Classics, History and Tourism	Chemistry
Languages, Literature and Philosophy	Medicine
Law	Physics
Economics and Statistics	Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine

The tasks for both texts entail: a) identifying the specialised domain of the text; b) self-assessing the level of text comprehension (from 0/low to 5/high); c) listing the first 3 words - chosen among a group of words provided by the exercise - which leads the learner to recognise the domain; d) identifying the genre; e) identifying the target reader (expert, student, layman); f) matching the given text with another sentence that can be chosen among a group of sentences provided by the exercise; g) searching for mistakes in the text and, in case of affirmative answer, giving the correct answer.

4.1 Research questions for questionnaire analysis

For the purposes of this paper, the scope of the analysis will be restricted to ESP awareness (section 5) in correlation with translation experience and practices (section 3).⁷

Four research questions will be tackled, precisely:

RQ1: Do the respondents perceive ESP as different from General English?

RQ2: Can the respondents assess their needs in relation with their field of specialisation?

RQ3: Does previous translation experience affect their ESP competence?

RQ4: Is translation perceived as a need?

As far as RQ1 is concerned, the items for which the respondents declare their awareness (or lack) of ESP specificities will be considered in general, and in detail with regard to single levels of language description (lexical, grammatical, and textual). We also test whether their perception of ESP specificities at different levels (lexical and textual) corresponds to a better performance in section 6 (*“Test your competence” activities*), with regard to items related to lexical features and features above the lexical level (considered as textual). No items in section 3 exclusively addressed the respondents’ ability to recognise grammatical features of ESP, so

⁷ Further aspects have been considered in a previous analysis of the questionnaires (cf. Baraniello *et al.* 2016b).

this variable will not be taken into account for the correlation.

With regard to RQ2 we want to see if their perceived needs are dependent on their preferences, even though we cannot statistically establish a causal link, i.e., whether one of the variables influences the other, but only if there is a correlation between them. Should such a correlation exist, the results would question the reliability of learners' assessments of their needs in ESP, while at the same time providing valuable information as to their likes and dislikes, motivation, and attitude towards ESP.

While translation is only marginally touched upon in research questions 1 and 2, this is placed at the centre of the stage in RQs 3 and 4 where we want to investigate, on the one hand, whether the respondents have ever had to translate a text from/into English and, if so, whether this activity enhanced learners' ESP awareness (as revealed from their performance in selected items from section 6 of the questionnaire). On the other hand, we are also interested in respondents' perception of translation, i.e. if they perceive it as a necessity.

5. Results

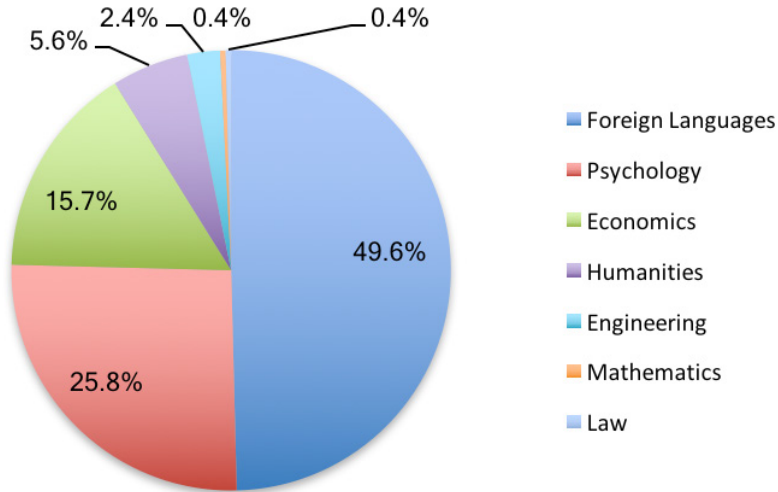
The questionnaire was administered through the Google Forms online platform⁸. This choice allowed students to fill the form at the time and on the platform (smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop PC) of their choice.

The overall number of respondents was 248, enrolled in a variety of university degree programmes. The distribution by subject is shown in Figure 1, where we see that we have a perfect balance between students enrolled in degree programmes with a focus on foreign languages⁹ and those from other backgrounds. For simplicity, these two groups will be referred to as "Foreign Languages" and "non-Foreign Languages" students (or FL and non-FL students for short).

⁸ <https://www.google.it/intl/it/forms/about/>

⁹ Apart from the LINFO students, respondents from language-oriented courses came from the BA programme in Modern Languages and Literatures, and the MA programme in European and American Languages and Literatures (University of Rome, Tor Vergata), as well as from the BA programme in Language Mediation and Intercultural Communication (University of Milan). We would like to thank Giuliana Garzone, formerly from said University and currently at IULM University, for her collaboration in gathering data.

Figure 1 - Distribution of respondents based on university degree area



We examine answers to Questions 16, 18, and 25 through 30, which address the following topics:

- Previous experience in translating (Question 16)
- Use of translation in L2 classes (Question 18)
- Awareness of any differences between General English and specialised English (Question 25)
- Identification of levels of language description that entail such differences, which can be either lexical or grammatical or textual (Question 25.1 only for students who recognised any differences between GE and ESP in Question 25)
- Key Skills to effectively learn English (Question 26)
- Preferred activities (Question 27)
- Identification of keywords in a specialised text (Question 30.2)
- Identification of the type of document (Question 30.3)

5.1. Research question 1

As to the first item (Q. 25), the students had to answer by means of a simple YES or NO answer, if they recognised the peculiarities of specialised English. The answers were largely on the YES side, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Answers to Q.25

Answer	Relative frequency [%]
YES	80.7
NO	3.2
I DON'T KNOW	16.1

Students who answered YES to Q. 25 were further asked to identify peculiarities of specialised English at the lexical, grammar or textual level. Multiple responses were possible, so the results are shown in Figures 2 and 3 (for FL and non-FL students respectively) for all combinations; each level of peculiarity is identified by its initial (L for Lexical, G for Grammar, and T for Textual), and the combinations are identified by the + sign (for example, L means just Lexical, while L+G means that the student reported differences both at the lexical and the grammar level). We can further compute the percentages of students indicating each of the three levels, either alone or in combination with others. The resulting aggregate percentages are shown in Table 3; in that table the percentage for the lexical level gathers all the students who answered L, L+G, L+T, or L+G+T, while that for grammar level includes all those who answered G, L+G, G+T, or L+G+T (see Figures 2 and 3); since multiple combinations (such as L+G) are counted more than once (e.g., for both L and G), the sum of percentages exceeds 100%.

Figure 2 - Levels of peculiarities of ESP for FL students

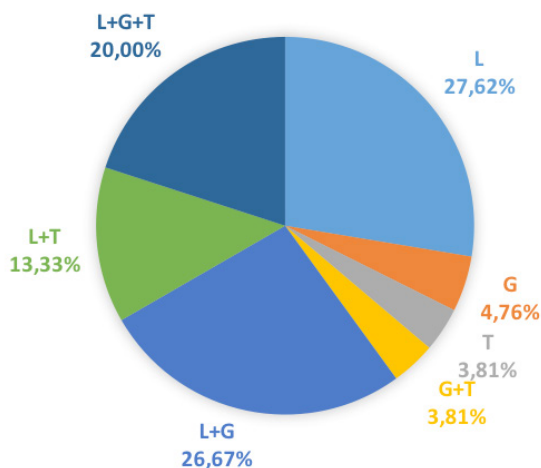


Figure 3 - Levels of peculiarities of ESP for non-FL students

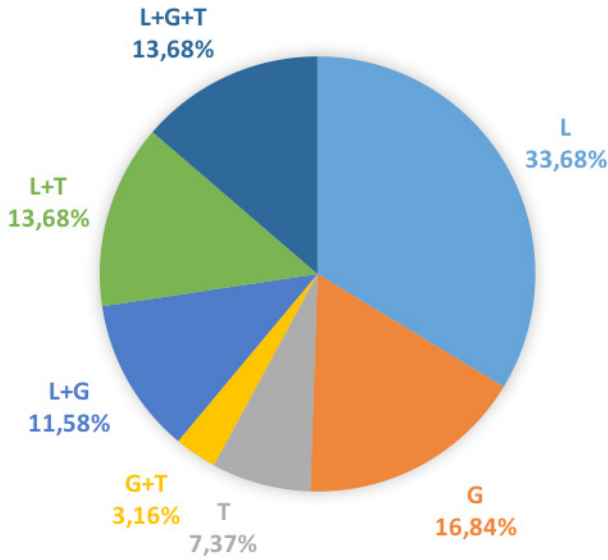


Table 3 - Aggregate levels of peculiarities

	Lexical	Grammar	Textual
FL students	87.62%	55.24%	40.95%
Non-FL students	72.63%	45.26%	37.89%

In order to see if the students' performances in the vocabulary test (Q. 30.2) were related to their recognition of peculiarities of specialised English at the lexical level, we divided the students into two groups: those who included the lexical level in answering Question 25.1 and those who did not, indicating instead either the grammar and/or the textual level; we will refer to the two groups as Lexical and non-Lexical group respectively, for the sake of brevity. We then assessed if the scores of the vocabulary test were significantly different between the two groups. In the vocabulary test, students were asked to choose 3 words in the text they considered as keywords, so that each individual score was an integer number from 0 to 3 (the number of correctly identified keywords). Since the number of respondents was not large enough to correctly perform a z-test (Devore and Beck 2012), we report here both the average scores and the score distribution separately for FL

and non-FL students. We report the average scores in Tables 4 and 5 respectively.

Table 4 - Average score in the vocabulary test for Foreign Languages students

Group	No. of respondents	Average score
Lexical	87.62%	2.74
Non-Lexical	12.38%	2.31

Table 5 - Average score in the vocabulary test for non-Foreign Languages students

Group	No. of respondents	Average score
Lexical	72.63%	1.80
Non-Lexical	27.37%	2.12

In both cases we see a significant difference in the average score.

The score distributions for the two cases are indicated in Tables 6 and 7, where we have reported for each group, the percentage of respondents who respectively scored 0, 1, 2, or 3 (i.e. 0, 1, 2, or 3 correct keywords) in the vocabulary test of Question 30.2:

Table 6 - Score distribution in the vocabulary test for Foreign Languages students

	0	1	2	3
Lexical group	0.00%	4.12%	17.53%	77.32%
Non-Lexical group	0.00%	15.38%	38.46%	46.15%

Table 7 - Score distribution in the vocabulary test for non-Foreign Languages students

	0	1	2	3
Lexical group	10.94%	25.00%	37.50%	26.56%
Non-Lexical group	7.69%	15.38%	34.62%	42.31%

The distribution data are shown in Figures 4 and 5 respectively.

Figure 4 - Score distribution in the vocabulary test for Foreign Languages students

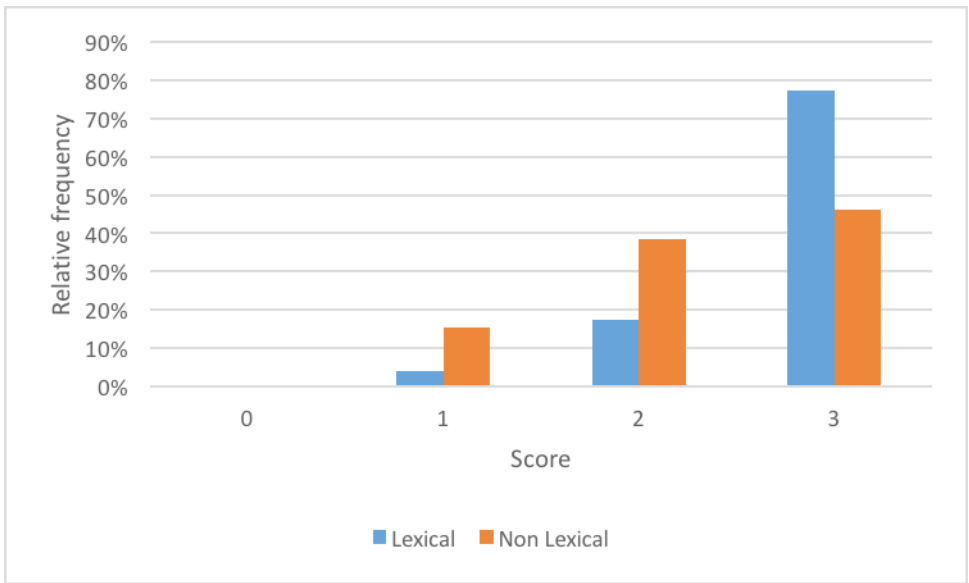
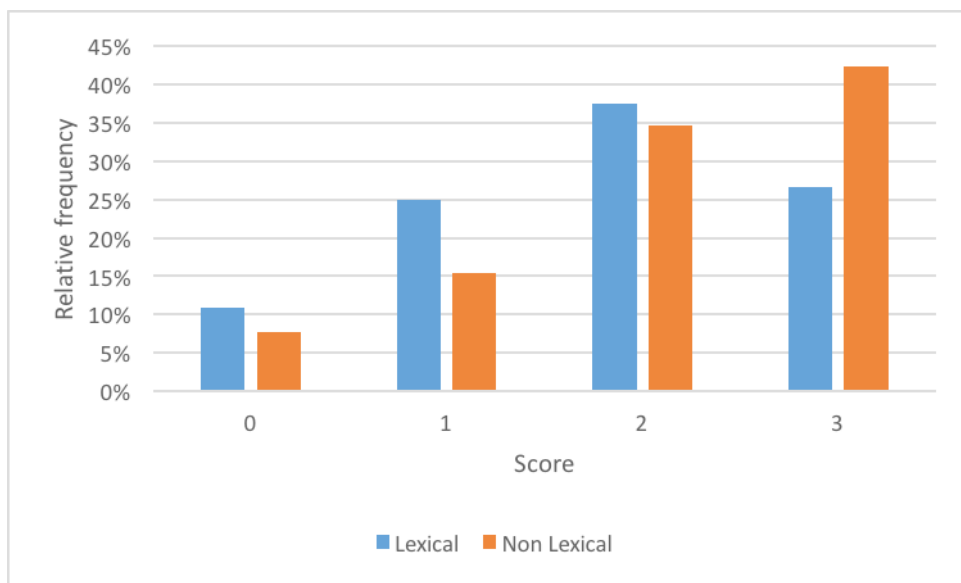


Figure 5 - Score distribution in the vocabulary test for non-Foreign Languages students



In a similar fashion, we considered how students who are aware of textual specificities in ESP scored in the test concerning the identification of the text type. Again, we divide the students into two groups: the Textual group, made up of those students who included the textual level in their answer to Question 25.1, and the Non Textual group, made up of all the others (who therefore included Grammar and/or Lexical features). We wish to see if the scores achieved by the two groups were significantly different.

Since there was a single correct answer to Question 30.3, we can assess the performances of students in the text type test by reporting the percentage of those who got the correct answer. In Tables 8 and 9 we relate the percentages of students' right and wrong answers to Question 30.3 to their declared awareness of textual features, respectively for Foreign Languages and non-Foreign Languages students.

Table 8 - Relationship between awareness of textual features and score in the text type identification activity (FL students)

	Wrong	Right
Textual group	62.5%	37.5%
Non-Textual group	60%	40%

Table 9 - Relationship between awareness of textual features and score in the text type identification activity (non-FL students)

	Wrong	Right
Textual group	61.3%	38.7%
Non-Textual group	77%	23%

In order to clarify how these data should be read for those who are not familiar with statistics, with regard to Table 8, one can see that 62.5 percent of those who declared awareness of ESP specificity at the textual level got it wrong when it came to deciding what type of text the excerpt was taken from (Q. 30.3). Similar results are shown in Table 9.

5.2. Research question 2

In Q. 26, the students had to assign a mark from 0 to 3 to each of 8 skills, with 0 marking skills of no importance and 3 marking skills deemed very important by the student. In Figure 6 we report the average mark assigned by students who answered YES to Q. 25, subdivided into two groups: FL students vs non-FL students. Although non-Foreign Languages students persistently assigned lower marks, we see that both groups consider the triplet {Reading, Speaking, Understanding} as the most important skills, whilst Spelling and Punctuation got very low marks.

Figure 6 - Key skills according to students' answers

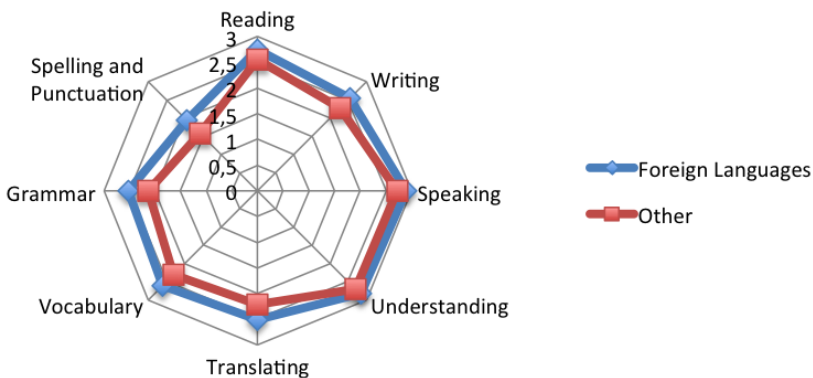
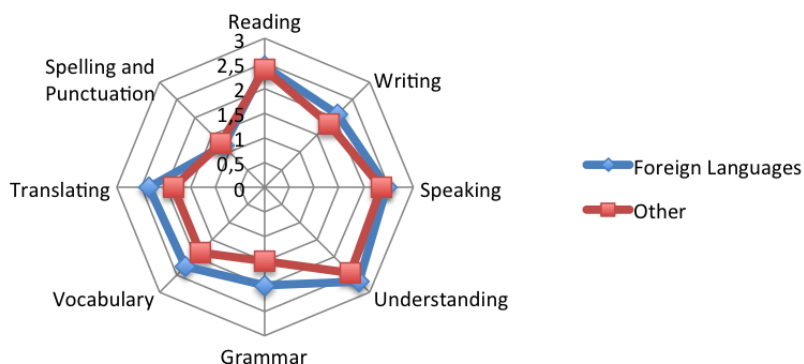


Figure 7 - Preferred activities according to students' answers



Similarly, in Q. 27, the students were asked to indicate their preferred activities by assigning a mark from 0 to 3. We show the average marks in Figure 7, by again subdividing the students into two groups: FL students *vs* non-FL students.

It is to be seen whether there is a correlation between the answers to Q. 26, which shows what students consider to be important (their target needs), and those to Q. 27, which shows what students like to do (their learning needs). We analyse that correlation through the statistical test due to Goodman and Kruskal and their Gamma index (Sheskin 2003). The Gamma index shows the degree of correlation between two ordinal variables (the marks assigned by the students in our case) and lies between -1 and 1, with the extreme values indicating respectively a perfectly negative and a perfectly positive correlation (the value 0 denotes no correlation at all). The Goodman-Kruskal test tells us if we can consider the two variables to be correlated, providing a sharp answer (YES or NO, accompanied by the indication of the confidence level, which was set at 5% in our study). The correlation analysis could be performed for any couple of skills, e.g., to examine if the answers provided for the Reading skill in Q. 26 (i.e., how much the students consider the Reading skill as a key one) correlate with those provided for the same skill in Q. 27 (i.e., how much the students like Reading), or, similarly, if the answers provided for the Vocabulary skill in Q. 26 (i.e., how much the students consider the Vocabulary skill as a key one) correlate with those provided for the Translating skill in Q. 27 (i.e., how much the students like Translating). Here we have considered the following couples of skills (the first skill in each couple refers to Q. 26 and the second one to Q. 27):

- Translating *vs* Translating;
- Vocabulary *vs* Vocabulary.

We report the results of the correlation analysis, following the same approach as in (Baraniello *et al.* 2016) in Tables 10 and 11. In the Goodman-Kruskal test, the

hypothesis under test was that there was no correlation between the variables at hand (i.e., that the students' answers to Q. 26 were not correlated with their answers to Q. 27), so the rejection of that hypothesis means that the answers are indeed correlated. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the rejection indication in Tables 10 and 11 is accompanied by a CORRELATION note. Again, we report the results separately for Foreign Languages students (Table 10) and the others (Table 11).

Table 10 – Statistical correlation results for Foreign Languages students

Skill (need)	Skill (want)	Gamma index	Goodman-Kruskal test
Translating	Translating	0.673	Rejected (Correlation)
Vocabulary	Vocabulary	0.692	Rejected (Correlation)

Table 11 – Statistical correlation results for non-Foreign Languages students

Skill (importance)	Skill (preference)	Gamma index	Goodman-Kruskal test
Translating	Translating	0.703	Rejected (Correlation)
Vocabulary	Vocabulary	0.644	Rejected (Correlation)

5.3. Research question 3

As for RQ3, we first asked if students had ever had to translate a text or part of it from/into English, and we got the answers shown in Table 12.

Table 12 – Statistics about previous translation experience

	Previous translation experience	No translation experience
Foreign Languages students	81.7%	19.3%
Non-Foreign Languages students	71.1%	28.9%

Another question addressing translation experience asked whether translation had ever been used explicitly in L2 lessons, geared towards language acquisition (Q. 18). We obtained the answers reported in Table 13.

Table 13 - Frequency of use of translation tools in L2 classes

Often	Sometimes	Never
30.65%	58.06%	11.29%

5.4. Research question 4

In Question 16 students have been asked if they ever had to translate a text from/ into English. In Question 26 instead they were asked to state the key skills they deem relevant to learn English by assigning a mark from 0 to 3 to them. Are students' answers to the two questions related? Do students boasting previous translation experience assign higher marks to Translating and Vocabulary skills? In order to assess this relationship, we first computed the average marks assigned by students belonging to the two groups (those having previous translation experience and those not having any) and then performed a z-test by comparing those averages (Devore and Berk 2012). The null hypothesis we wish to challenge is that there is no statistically significant difference between the marks assigned by the two groups (i.e., previous translation experience has no significant impact on key skills judgments).

The average marks are shown in Table 14, where we can see that the difference between the two groups is indeed quite small.

The results of the formal z-test are instead shown in Table 15, where we adopted a 5% significance level. We see that in both cases (i.e., for both the Translating and the Vocabulary skills) the null hypothesis cannot be rejected: students with no translation experience assign the same relevance to Translating and Vocabulary skills as students with previous translation experience.

Table 14 - Average marks assigned to key skills

	Average mark Translating	Average mark Vocabulary
Students with translation experience	2.41	2.43
Students with no translation experience	2.22	2.54

Table 15 - Test results

	Translating	Vocabulary
Test statistic	1.705	-1.14
Null hypothesis	NOT REJECTED	NOT REJECTED

6. Discussion

The results above can be read in the light of the two foci of interest for this analysis, in order to gain some valuable insights into learners' expectations and motivation, which will have to be taken into account when planning activities based on the final platform with its functionalities.

In the first research question, attention is initially placed on learners' awareness of ESP. 80.7% recognise the peculiarities of specialised English (Q. 25) and declare they are able to identify these specificities at lexical, grammar and textual levels (Q. 25.1). Among those enrolled in Foreign Languages degrees, 87.6% declare they have noticed differences between ESP and General English in terms of lexical features, while fewer are aware of grammar and textual specificities in ESP (55.24% and 40.95% respectively, as shown in Table 3). As for students from non-language degree programmes, awareness of lexical specificity is declared by 72.63% of the respondents, while grammar and textual features are recognised as ESP specific by 45.26% and 37.89% (see Table 3). Students from FL degree programmes have shown greater awareness of ESP specificities at all levels, giving more combined answers, (i.e. lexical and grammar, lexical and textual or grammar and textual, or even all of them), hence higher aggregated values. Students from non-FL programmes, on the other hand, have given more single answers, indicating one level of specificity or another, which suggests lower awareness of the nexus of discursive features which characterise ESP. These raw data about answer distribution (Q. 25.1) were then set in relation with the items in section 6 of the questionnaire (Qs. 30.2 and 30.3 only) which check the respondents' ability to identify features of ESP in excerpts of specialised discourse.

Among Foreign Language students, 77.32% of the respondents who indicated lexical features as one of the distinguishing traits of ESP (Q. 25.1a) correctly identified three keywords (Q. 30.2) as clues of the domain from which the excerpt was taken. Among those who did not indicate lexical features as distinguishing of ESP in Q. 25.1, only 46.15% identified three keywords correctly. Among non-FL students, only 26.56% of those who declared awareness of lexical specificity in LSP identified three correct answers in the relevant activity while, quite paradoxically, among those who did not declare awareness of lexical specificities, the performance is higher, with 42.31% percent getting three answers right. This result shows that for non-FL respondents, there is no correlation between the declared

awareness and the performance, thus suggesting that more work should be done with them to raise their meta-linguistic competence, and, eventually, their performance. The two groups also differ in that none of the language students fail to identify at least one lexical item as an indicator of ESP, irrespectively of what they declared, while among non-language students 10.94% of those who declared awareness of lexical specificity failed to do so, and the value falls to 7.69% for those who did not declare lexical specificity.

If attention is shifted to features above the lexical level, the correlation between Q. 25.1 (awareness of ESP features at the textual level) and respondents' ability to correctly identify macro-linguistic features in the related item in section 6 (Q. 30.3) shows that in both FL and non-FL students about 60% failed to correctly identify macro-linguistic features. We can therefore conclude that ESP awareness is often limited to lexical awareness, while other levels of specificity mostly go unnoticed.

As for research question 2, attention is drawn to respondents' target needs (Q. 26) and learning needs (Q. 27) in relation to their field of specialisation. The results show that both groups assess Reading, Speaking, and Understanding as the most important skills, whereas Spelling and Punctuation are not considered necessary. Competences related to Vocabulary, Translating, Writing and Grammar, which we consider crucial for ESP, received lower scores than general skills such as Reading, Understanding and Speaking. A similar behaviour can be observed for answers to Q. 27, concerning students' preferred activities. We see again (Fig. 6) that Reading, Speaking, and Understanding exhibit an average score near or over 2.5, while Spelling and Punctuation lie between 1 and 1.5. The ESP core competences (Vocabulary, Translating, Writing and Grammar) score even lower than in Q. 26, marking a clear gap between the top-two (Understanding and Speaking) and the rest. The correlation between Qs. 26 and 27 considers the homogeneous pairs translation-translation and vocabulary-vocabulary and allows us to understand if those who like translation best attribute the greatest importance to translation, and likewise if those who favour vocabulary evaluate it as necessary. Interestingly, the Gamma index (Tables 10 and 11) brings two new thought-provoking questions that are: a) to what extent then does perception of language specialisation affect students' target needs? And indirectly, b) to what extent might the importance of the affective filter hinder learners' ESP acquisition and command? These issues definitely deserve attention in future research on needs analysis.

In the third research question, our focus shifts towards students' translation experience and how it affects their ESP competence. Raw data with regard to Q. 16 (Table 12) show that most respondents (81.7% and 71.1% respectively for FL and non-FL students) have experience of translation, so that it is possible to claim that the need for translation spans across different degree courses, also touching those where languages are not part of the core curriculum. Another question addressing translation experiences (Q. 16.1) asked whether translation had ever been used explicitly in L2 lessons as a means for language acquisition (Q. 18). As data show (Table 13), 88.7% of the learners have often or sometimes had experience of translation during L2 lessons. While for Language students it can be expected that translation tasks were inserted in the course with a view to translation

training proper, in other courses translation was plausibly relied upon to enhance language acquisition.

Other interesting findings for the purpose of our research derive from the fourth research question where a correlation has, finally, been calculated to see if having translation experience affects the respondent's assessment of translation as a need, with regard to item 26, which has been previously analysed. As Table 15 shows, if the hypothesis had not been rejected we might have deduced that students with previous translation experience, i.e. those who had already found themselves before the necessity of translating texts related to their field of activity, would have been more inclined to indicate it among their top needs. But this is not the case, as the initial hypothesis was rejected for both FL and non-FL students. If compared with the results of RQ2, these findings lead us to state again that preferences overrule experience and a realistic assessment of students' necessities as a motivational factor. Therefore, course designers who want to gain information from needs analysis prior to planning the course, should be aware that the results can be biased and affected by preferences.

7. Concluding remarks

To sum up and come to an end, it is possible to claim that students' preference for communicative skills such as speaking and listening may signal a lack of awareness as to the peculiarities of ESP and reflect a general frustration that students feel when dealing with oral tasks, thus amounting to 'wants' not only in specialised discourse but also in General English. From this perspective the researcher might conclude that further work is needed to gain a deeper understanding of LSP, emphasizing those aspects related to lexical features and the peculiarities of the genres they are going to use, as mediators of the professional practices in which they are going to interact. At the same time, the learners' request for speaking and listening can be seen within the frame of their experience of language learning and acquisition, which is mainly grounded in the communicative paradigm – a context in which specific skills are conceived only in the light of communicative activities –, with scarce or no experience of specialised translation. Incidentally, this is in line with recent findings in the field of ESP and needs analysis (cf. Huhta 2013, section 3), which place emphasis on how L2 is used in increasingly complex tasks, where several skills are employed at once. Therefore, traditional ESP activities, which tended to focus the learners' attention on isolated functions, are not well-suited to prepare prospective professionals to cope with realistic multi-tasking requirements.

A second consideration concerns the reliability of learners' perception when it comes to defining their needs in relation to their field of specialisation. In particular, we wanted to see if their perceived needs were dependent on their preferences.¹⁰ Should such a correlation exist, it would question the reliability of learn-

¹⁰ In actual fact, the statistics used cannot establish whether one of the variables influ-

ers' assessments of their needs in ESP, while providing valuable information at the same time as to the importance of the affective filter that might hinder their ESP acquisition and command.

As far as translation practices are concerned, course designers intending to include ESP translation in their curriculum should reflect on the potential motivation offered by preferences, even when they seem at odds with ESP and translation core skills and competences. In practical terms, with specific regard to the WALLEt project, collaborative learning might offer the opportunity for oral interaction (entailing both speaking and listening skills), which is normally marginal to or absent in translation training. Also, voice-recognition software may offer an opportunity in this respect, engaging learners in speaking activities with a focus on pronunciation and intonation. Mixing speaking and listening abilities in lessons on translation can increase learners' motivation, while making the activities more representative of real-life language use in workplace communication.

As for activities with a focus on ESP written based tasks or exercises, focussing on vocabulary may be interspersed with tasks centred on audio and video materials, however peripheral these may be to the aim of the course, if only because they cater to needs perceived by learners themselves. Learning needs should then be taken into account when planning tasks to be integrated into prospective Learning Management Systems. In this way, students' awareness must be raised in the core activities which are not necessarily their favourites. These include spelling, however far it may be from the concerns of the communicative paradigm for language acquisition, as it can make a difference when creating a translation memory.

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Biosketches

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Training language experts in translation in a transferability perspective

Mirella Agorni, Costanza Peverati

Abstract

In recent years, there has been an unprecedented reappraisal of the role of translation in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. Underpinning this reappraisal are largely the beliefs that languages are more easily learnt in association with one's mother tongue rather than separately from it, and that the ability to move between one's mother tongue and other languages represents a core component of a language user's communicative competence in our increasingly multilingual societies. In light of this, translation activities can be seen as having considerable import both within and outside of education; in other words, they can serve as a language-learning tool and as a vehicle for the development of multiple skills to be applied in countless real-world situations in the learners' personal, civic and professional lives. The paper will focus in particular on translation teaching in university foreign-language curricula and will discuss an approach based on the concept of 'transferability': this approach goes beyond the strictly vocational focus underlying common Translation and Interpreting curricula to encompass a wider spectrum of workplace usability. Finally, the project of an accompanying classroom textbook will be presented.

Keywords

Foreign Language Teaching and Learning, translation, transferability, translation teaching.

1. Introduction: the revival of translation in language education

In the field of Foreign Language Teaching/Learning (FLT/L), the practice of translation has mostly been subject to a mixed press. After occupying the central stage in foreign-language didactics for more than a century, it was roundly condemned or simply ignored as soon as more monolingual and communication-based approaches rose to prominence and the reasons for learning another language shifted from mastering formal structures or reading literary works to interacting with speakers of that language (Colina 2002). Since the early eighties, there has been an unprecedented reappraisal of the role the learner's mother tongue and translation can play in the process of learning a foreign language. This reappraisal has been largely fuelled by two major theoretical shifts, one regarding the process and purpose of learning a new language, the other concerning the nature of transla-

tion itself. The former has been taking place over recent years in a general climate of cautious revision of monolingual policies in favor of the bilingualization of language teaching (Cook 2010). More precisely, consensus has been mounting around the belief that languages are more easily learnt in association with one's linguistic substratum rather than separately from it, and that the ultimate goal of learning them is not exclusively or necessarily the acquisition of an ability to perform in monolingual environments with native-like proficiency, but also – and increasingly so in our interconnected world – to participate effectively in multilingual communicative settings, where the ability to move between one's mother tongue (L1) and other languages (L2s) is most important (Butzkamm and Caldwell 2009). It has followed that one of the objectives of FLT/L should be to foster the development of a polyglot mind, able to keep both L1 and L2 simultaneously active and skilled at switching between them. This clearly entails a form of translation. The latter of the two shifts rests on the idea that translating, far from only being a tool for the exploration of L2 structural and stylistic features, is also a meaning-based exercise in authentic and pragmatically adequate communication (Sewell and Higgins 1996). As such, it is not incompatible with communicatively oriented FLT/L methodologies, and in fact it can complement them in many ways. This approach has emphasized the act of translating as a language ability in its own right, and one with a real-life and professional dimension as well, which can contribute to the development of all-round L2 competence.

These shifts have been recorded in an ever-expanding body of literature, which presents strong theoretical and increasingly evidence-based arguments in favor of translation in language education, along with a wealth of methodological suggestions. Beyond clearly attesting to an impressive change of attitude towards this curricular component within the scholarly community, this extensive literature has clearly shown that translation has undergone a radical reconceptualization in terms of a teaching activity with multiple identities which can fulfill multiple functions along the whole learning process. These different identities can be situated along an ideal continuum “between the extremes of hyper-literal, explicative translation [...] and that of communicative translation as it takes place in the professional world”, with both extremes being “mutually enhancing rather than exclusive” (Carreres 2006: 14, 15) and therefore equally legitimate in language curricula (Cook 2010).

2. Implications, problems, proposals

As a result of this reconceptualization, some traditional divides have begun to shrink or be challenged, notably the one between translation as a means and translation as an end, or that between language learner and translator trainee (cf. Ulrych 2005; Carreres 2006; Whyatt 2012). Applying these considerations to tertiary foreign-language curricula – which are the specific focus of this paper – what emerges is an overall scenario where language learning, translation education, and the training of translators are no longer separated as discrete entities as was

once the case. While certainly stimulating and refreshing, this shifting situation may also be interpreted as a significant intellectual challenge, which might generate possible confusion of purpose (cf. Di Sabato 2007, 2011; van Geertruyden 2008; Mazzotta 2010 for the Italian higher education context). A possible sign of such disorientation is that, despite the messages coming from the literature in terms of a broader and more fine-grained translation concept, actual instruction seems to be informed by rather narrow and partial understandings, more precisely those situated at the opposite extremes of Carreres's continuum mentioned above: on the one hand, a predominantly form-focused exercise, stretching with little variation along the curriculum and, on the other, a form of vocational training focused on the 'nuts and bolts' of the translator's job in response to pressing calls for more professionally relevant higher education (Peverati 2014). These approaches are not intrinsically negative or entirely unjustified. They simply risk not realizing the full pedagogical potential of translation activities or even offering a type of training whose import is somewhat limited.

Based on these observations, the authors have grown particularly interested in possible ways of mitigating such a polarized view of translation teaching in foreign-language curricula. A way that appeared particularly intriguing is that of thinking of translation as a form of 'transferable learning'. Simply put, this label refers to a body of knowledge and skills that is expected to extend beyond the initial context of acquisition to affect new learning and performance in multiple situations inside and outside education.

The transferability of translation-related learning can be articulated at three different, increasingly wide-ranging levels, which largely depend on the way translation is conceptualized and taught:

1. Transferability of translation skills to employment settings;
2. Transferability of mediation skills to settings that include but transcend employment in order to embrace the private, public, and educational domains;
3. Transferability of translation-related generic skills to the broadest range of settings.

Due to constraints of space and pertinence, we will only discuss the first level, which has informed the writing of the textbook *Translating for Progress* (Agorni and Peverati 2015) presented in the following sections.

The vocational training mentioned above, in connection with the opposite extremes that appear to characterize translation teaching in higher education, rests on the partial understanding of translation as a preeminently specialized and technical skill-set used by professional translators, and seems to be premised on the assumption that if translation teaching is not primarily for language learning, then it must be for training professional translators, in ways that are similar to what happens in institutions that form translators and interpreters. Some translator training may be justified in foreign-language curricula. Yet, instead of organizing it around the concept of translation as a 'professional type of knowledge', this training might be better organized around the concept of translation

as a “transferable type of knowledge” in the terms discussed by Calvo (2011: unpaginated). With the latter notion, Calvo refers to an adaptable, multi-purpose ability, that is deployed by, among others, “intercultural mediators, foreign trade experts, international marketing professionals, global content managers, multi-lingual secretaries or diplomats” (2011: unpaginated), as a more or less frequent component of their tasks and duties in the workplace.

From this perspective, translation corresponds to the ability to communicate interlingually in a variety of employment settings, at various levels of competence and acceptability, and not necessarily to the specialized activity performed by professional translators. This ability, Calvo claims, is required in many more contemporary jobs than in the past. She goes on to argue that translation skills “at different expertise levels” (2011: unpaginated) can be required in a range of curricula that are not devised for the professional translation market as such. This is the case of foreign-language curricula. In these contexts, the design of a mode of translation pedagogy that is responsive to employability issues and social demands should adopt a flexible approach, which “responds to the question of who needs or will be likely to need translation skills, apart from professional translators” (Calvo 2011: unpaginated), in what situations, and of course what might be their educational needs.

Pertinent to the present concerns as it may be, Calvo’s argument may leave one wondering what exactly distinguishes translation as a “transferable type of knowledge” from translation as a “professional type of knowledge” (2011: unpaginated). Blini, for example, quite rightly asks “why call ‘linguistic mediator’ the person who translates the webpage of a small business, who helps draw up a report at the police station, who writes an informative notice in a hospital in different languages?” (2008: 136), where his concept of ‘linguistic mediator’ can be seen as approximating the idea of a person who translates ‘at a transferable level’. He suggests that this person should be called ‘translator’ and should be formed as such. Calvo’s (2011: unpaginated) answer to this question is the following:

While the common core of skills at the different levels of translation expertise can be considered to be the same (interlinguistics, interculturality), there is a clear distance between intercultural translational performance in general and the skills needed to produce high-quality 350-word technical translations, within an hour and with a specific translation memory.

It can thus be assumed that the design of translator education in foreign-language programs should focus on the ‘core’ of translator skills, what is acknowledged to be common to all translator activity, from a basic to a top level of expertise. Possible blueprints might be found in works similar to Colina’s (2003) or Laviosa and Cleverton’s (2003) handbooks, which offer sample activities and methodological guidelines grounded in *Skopos* theory and functionalism. This type of resources may be expected to provide the essentials of competent translation performance in terms of general approach and basic procedures. In a sense, this approach can be seen as conceptually analogous to the basic training that Mossop advocates as

a sort of springboard for future training in translator-training institutions, an approach that focuses on “general abilities [...] which take a very long time to learn: text interpretation, research, and checking/correcting” (2003: 20).

Mossop’s approach embodies a more humanistic interpretation of translator training, one that leans more towards ‘education’ than vocational ‘training’. The type of skills transferability suggested by Calvo actually comes close to the concept of vocationality, as it implies the relevance of the acquired skills to one’s functioning in the occupational domain. However, it can be interpreted as a “milder”, orientative form of vocationality – not “front-end loading”, to use Hager and Hyland’s terminology (2003: 274) – which conveys a flexible idea of the links between skills learnt in education and career paths, links that are not governed by a logic of professional predetermination, or “professional typecasting”, as Calvo (2011: unpaginated) calls it.

This approach clearly requires a number of essential considerations that go beyond the identification of a ‘common core’ of translation skills, considerations that range over central issues like directionality, text selection, pedagogic progression and situational analysis. All these aspects have been taken into consideration while planning the instructional activities that make up the textbook *Translating for Progress*, as illustrated in more detail in what follows.

3. A case study: a handbook for translation as a multi-purpose ability

As mentioned above, the textbook *Translating for Progress* is underpinned by a notion of translation as an adaptable, multi-purpose ability that can be performed, at different levels of expertise and specialization, by a wide range of professionals variously involved with intercultural communication. This encompasses, along with professional full-time translators, language experts trained in foreign-language curricula. This teaching resource was intended for use over a two-semester course at a postgraduate level at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, at the Università Cattolica in Brescia, Italy, and was specifically developed with a view to providing language students with a learning tool that could guide them in the transition from a predominantly language-focused approach towards a semi-professional, or ‘transferable’, approach to translation.

This transition is not an easy one: after three years where translation is mainly practiced as a language-learning activity, students seem to be obsessed by a sort of ‘fidelity complex’ that undermines their confidence. It takes time and a lot of practical work to bring into focus the complex set of skills and processes that revolve around the act of producing a translation that is usable in a context outside of the classroom. The main skills and processes that are particularly focused on in the textbook are:

1. Reading comprehension skills, which will be improved by a careful analysis of the ST in each translation assignment. Time and exercise will gradually expand ST comprehension, making it more accurate and nuanced, so as to enable students to recognize linguistic phenomena such as double meanings, connotations, polysemy, etc.

2. Problem spotting and solving. The reflexive ability necessary to identify those elements which may become a tough nut to crack in the translating process (at different levels: linguistic, textual, cultural) will be enhanced by submitting texts displaying an increasing level of difficulty, both at a semantic/terminological and communicative/textual level. Students will be gradually led to see “problems” not as single textual events or stumbling blocks in the ST-decoding process, but they will rather learn to conceive them as “problem/solution pairs” generated in the course of the translating process (Toury 1995: 77-81).
3. ST-related information retrieval and management skills. Students will learn to look for reliable and relevant sources and resources both in the S and T systems. They will also apprehend how to evaluate sources and assess information available on the internet and other resources.
4. Evaluation of the cultural and communicative contexts of the ST and juxtaposition with an equivalent TT. This is a thorny subject, as culture-specific elements require a careful process of knowledge acquisition at the initial level of the ST analysis, and then skillful mediation based on T linguistic and cultural presuppositions and resources.
5. Analysis of the translation commission, according to the principles of *Skopostheorie*. Questions such as who is commissioning the translation, to whom, what for, when and why it is needed are at the basis of a functional approach (Nord 1991, 1997), which emphasizes the aim, or *Skopos*, of the TT realisation. The analytical skills necessary to tackle these questions will be developed thanks to a situational approach to translation, which grounds each translation task within a specific context.
6. TT-oriented research abilities. Students will learn ways to verify their translation proposals against relevant reference material and check the appropriateness and frequency of use of specific linguistic and textual features. To this purpose, a number of sources will be employed, ranging from mono- and bilingual dictionaries, comparable texts and corpora, and the internet itself, which is one of the main reference resources for translators today.
7. Reformulation skills. This is one of the principal objectives of the kind of translation proposed in this textbook. Students will experiment with the variety of ways in which a ST message can be conveyed into a TT in a situational approach, the basic premise being that different situations require different translating strategies and hence different solutions.
8. Revision skills. Both intralingual reviewing and interlingual revision will be practiced. In the first case, the TT will be evaluated as a relatively independent textual unit and assessed in terms of conformity to the *Skopos*/function envisaged. In the second case, ST and TT will be compared and the translation checked for completeness, correct transfer of concepts/contents and terminology, etc. Collaborative work and elements of self-evaluation can also play a crucial role in this phase.

This list, which is by no means to be considered exhaustive, provides the guidelines for all classroom activities in our teaching context, yet it seems to correspond to the skill-set that is normally exercised in more or less traditional translation

courses. The specificity of a semi-vocational approach to translation teaching, however, is represented by two main factors, that is the selection of texts and the directionality of the translation tasks.

4. Directionality in translation

The question of directionality is a central issue at methodological level in most translation handbooks (Beeby 1998; Campbell 1998; Kelly *et al.* 2003; Pokorn 2005; Stewart 2008, 2011, 2012). As native speakers are normally assumed to be more proficient in their native language, translation into the native language, or L1 translation, has been taken for granted as the “natural” directionality (Newmark 1988; Hatim 2001). Yet, the advent of the communicative approach to language learning, together with the digital revolution that has made linguistic resources accessible in real time, has encouraged the practice of translating into a foreign language, i.e. L2 translation. In recent years, the latter has attracted much scholarly attention. Contrary to general assumptions on the subject, results surprisingly point to just a slightly higher degree of effort involved in translating towards a foreign language, as the problems reported by subjects working in the two directionalities seem to be very similar, both in terms of type and frequency (Pavlovic T. 2013; Fonseca 2015; cf. also Pavlovic N. 2007 and Pavlovic N. and Jensen 2009). What seems to uniquely characterize L2 translation, though, is the fact that it takes more time (reformulation appears to be the most difficult task) and requires a higher degree of revision (Pavlovic T. 2013). In conclusion, it would seem that, with adequate training, translators could “produce L2 translations of equal quality as L1 translations” (Pavlovic T. 2013: 63).

The problem is that, in foreign-language curricula, a number of constraints (e.g. time, staff, curriculum structure) do not always make it possible to achieve such quality of training. Yet, while designing *Translating for Progress*, an attempt was made to familiarize students with translation into L2 as well as the more ‘conventional’ one, i.e. translation from the foreign language. This handbook, in fact, offers students a practical focus on both directions, that is English into Italian and Italian into English. As for the latter, the overall objective was to raise students’ awareness of its challenges in a gradual way by means of guided revision and rewriting tasks of existing L2 (English) translations. We opted for intralingual rather than interlingual activities, in the conviction that these somehow simplified tasks may enable students to produce better-quality texts and, at the same time, keep up with the times, as there is a great need for revision of low-quality translations today.

5. Methodological framework

From a procedural point of view, all the translation activities contained in the textbook *Translating for Progress* are devised in such a way as to develop the re-

search skills needed to obtain functional target texts (TTs): students are given instructions on how to effectively browse the internet in search of comparable texts or to check the appropriateness and frequency of use of specific linguistic and textual features, as well as to experiment with some of the translators' resources available on the web.

Another aspect that was paid special attention to was text selection. Source texts (STs) were chosen from three main categories: informative texts, promotional material and tourist literature, as they are the genres students are most likely to deal with both in their present educational context and in their professional future as language experts employed in a variety of sectors. The specific choice to focus on tourist texts was dictated by two main factors: first of all, the town where the university is located, as well as its surrounding area, boast a thriving tourist industry thanks to a fortunate combination of unique cultural and natural heritage; secondly, tourism is a highly labour-intensive sector when it comes to intercultural and interlinguistic mediation. Oftentimes, interactions with foreign visitors and all kinds of heritage communication are not necessarily entrusted to figures who have been trained as professional translators, but rather to professionals with knowledge of foreign languages. These may well be people who have graduated from a modern languages program, that is people who would carry out translation work at a transferable level, as explained above.

Informative texts are tackled at the beginning of the course as they do not generally require sophisticated reformulation skills. At that stage, the focus is in fact mainly on reading comprehension and problem spotting and solving activities. Examples of this category include course descriptions and job ads. As the course unfolds, the students are introduced to an increased level of difficulty of texts with the analysis and translation of promotional material, for instance product advertisements. Here, they are encouraged to bring the addressee into focus as a potential customer and to practice skills such as adaptation to readers' needs and reformulation of literal, ineffective renditions. Finally, tourist texts are proposed: with their mix of vocative and informative functions they may seem to be rather easy, accessible text-types, and yet they enable students to face the problems of intercultural transfer, thanks to the presence of the culture-specific elements that abound in the language of tourism in fields such as cuisine, folklore, geography etc.

Each ST is contextualized by means of a detailed explanation of its communicative situation. Every single activity focuses on aspects of vocabulary, structure or style, related to ST or TT-oriented research. These aspects are brought to the attention of the students, together with suggestions about the strategies to be applied to produce translations that are suitable for each situational context. External references, such as useful website links and comparable texts, are provided in order to foster further research by students.

6. Conclusion

Translation is a multi-faceted practice that can be performed in multiple stages of

a language learner's learning path as well as in a wide variety of real-life contexts in a language user's life to fulfill personal, civic, social and employment-related purposes. It is not to be exclusively interpreted as the specialized activity around which the career of a professional translator revolves. In this paper, this particular notion of translation has been conceptualized in terms of 'transferability'.

It is not easy to find an appropriate definition for the type of translation competence we consider to be 'transferable' to a range of employment settings. It has been argued that it might be seen as a rather general set of core translation skills, to be trained and applied to a repertoire of prototypical texts from diverse professional sectors. This particular conceptualization has informed the design and realisation of a textbook for post-graduate students attending a modern languages degree, entitled *Translating for Progress*.

Rather than discussing different approaches in translation teaching in an either/or perspective, thus primarily opposing a pedagogical to a vocational kind of training, our research appears to point to a promising third path, which is especially beneficial to Modern Language graduates who want to develop full-fledged interlinguistic and intercultural mediation competence.

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Biosketches

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From the university classroom to the TED stage: Exploring research promotion as professional practice¹

Giuditta Caliendo, Antonio Compagnone

Abstract

This paper explores ways in which academics construct their image as experts and promote their research to achieve their professional objectives (e.g. disseminating knowledge and getting their projects funded) by drawing on the web-mediated genre of TED talks, popularizing speeches that are freely available online and delivered by experts in different fields. For the purpose of this study, a contrastive discourse analysis is carried out by comparing a corpus of TED talks delivered by academics (TED_ac) to a corpus of university lectures (MICASE_lect) drawn from the *Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English*. More precisely, consideration is given to the use of the pronoun *we* in the two corpora. Previous research shed light on the saliency of *we* in academic TED talks demonstrating that, unlike university lecturers, academic TED speakers make use of *we* mostly with an ‘audience-exclusive’ value, thereby presenting and marketing themselves as members of a group of researchers. Against this backdrop, drawing upon the notion of “lexical aspect” or *Aktionsart*, the verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac and MICASE_lect are analyzed on the basis of the four main lexical categories of activities, states, accomplishments and achievements to explore the discursive functions performed by the pronoun *we* in the two genres under scrutiny.

Keywords

Academic discourse, professional practice, TED talks, Critical Genre Analysis, lexical aspect.

1. Introduction

University lecturers have recently started to inhabit new discursive settings with the aim of disseminating knowledge to a wider and more varied audience. This is mainly due to the need, on the part of academics, to promote their research and get their projects funded (cf. Fairclough 1993). In light of this, the present paper sets out to investigate instances of discourse where academics and experts

¹ The authors discussed and conceived this article together. Giuditta Caliendo is responsible for sections 1, 4, 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 and 5; Antonio Compagnone is responsible for sections 2, 3, 4.2 and 4.3.

advertise their research in order to achieve their professional objectives. Going beyond its traditional boundaries, academic communication undergoes a process of recontextualization and resemioticization, which is increasingly framed within emerging web-mediated genres. A case in point is TED, a global set of conferences available via an online platform² hosting speakers from different academic disciplines.

Drawing upon previous research on the genre of TED talks (Caliendo 2014; Caliendo and Compagnone 2014; Compagnone 2014; Partington 2014; Scotto di Carlo 2014; Compagnone 2015; D'Avanzo 2015; Compagnone 2016), this study looks at the changes that academic discourse undergoes when migrating from the traditional context of the university classroom to the new pragmatic space of TED. The investigation reaffirms the centrality of the pronoun *we* in the discursive construction of TED speakers (Caliendo and Compagnone 2014; Compagnone 2015; Compagnone 2016) and brings the state of the art a step further by focusing on the distribution of the main verb collocates of *we* on the basis of the four lexical-aspectual categories of activity, state, accomplishment and achievement. The aim is to single out the ways in which academics introduce themselves as part of a community of experts and describe their research while promoting their scientific achievements. This scrutiny implies a contrastive methodological approach whereby a corpus of TED talks delivered by academics (TED_ac) is compared to a corpus of university lectures drawn from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). Qualitative analysis is combined with a corpus-assisted one in order to discuss analogies or dissimilarities between the two genres and relevant emerging traits.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents the theoretical framework; section 3 describes the selected corpora and the followed analytical procedures; section 4 and relevant subsections illustrate the results of the analysis obtained by looking at the distribution of pronoun *we* in combination with activity, state, accomplishment and achievement verbs in TED_ac and MICASE_lect; in closing section 5 the most significant findings are summarized.

2. Theoretical framework

This paper finds its place within the theoretical framework of Critical Genre Analysis (hereafter CGA), a multidisciplinary approach aimed at “investigat[ing] why and how professionals create, disseminate and consume specialized knowledge and exploit available semiotic resources and modes of communication to achieve their professional goals” (Bhatia 2015: 14). In line with CGA, the present study explores how academics make use of language in the university classroom and on the TED stage to achieve their professional purposes.

To investigate how speakers use the pronoun *we*, in combination with verbs,

² <http://www.ted.com> (last accessed: July 2017).

to represent themselves and situations in the settings of university lectures and TED talks, we have drawn on the notion of *Aktionsart* (Vendler 1957 [1967]; Van Valin and LaPolla 1997; Croft 2012) or “lexical aspect” (Croft 2012) – a theoretical framework aimed at understanding the way in which states of affairs and phenomena in the world are semantically represented through verbs and their arguments in terms of their inherent temporal properties³.

Referring back to Vendler (1957 [1967]), Van Valin and LaPolla (1997: 91-102) identify four main verb classes on the basis of their different inherent temporal properties (or *Aktionsart*): “states”, “achievements”, “accomplishments” and “activities”⁴.

3 As Croft observes, “aspect is manifested both grammatically and lexically” (2012: 31). Sasse (2002: 2-3) draws a basic distinction between a “unidimensional” and a “bidimensional” approach to aspect, the former conceiving of grammatical and lexical aspect as being the same thing, the latter conceiving of grammatical aspect as distinct from lexical aspect. For the purposes of this study, a unidimensional approach to aspect was adopted as our aim was to explore whether differences in the distribution of the lexical aspectual verb categories in the two genres under scrutiny may help highlight distinguishing features of academic TED talks.

4 In his recent monograph on *Verbs*, Croft argues that “Vendler’s four-way categorization of aspectual types [...] is incomplete” (Croft 2012: 37) and adds a series of “new aspectual types” to the list proposed by Vendler (1957 [1967]), which is revised and extended. As regards states, a basic distinction is drawn between “transitory states” (e.g. *be ill*, *be angry*) and “permanent states” (e.g. *be Polish*), while permanent states are further grouped in two sub-categories, “inherent permanent states” (e.g. *be Polish*) and “acquired permanent states” (e.g. *the vase is cracked*). Furthermore, referring back to Mittwoch (1988), emphasis is placed on “point states” (e.g. *it is 5 o’clock*, *the sun is at its zenith*, *the train is on time*). With reference to activities, a distinction is drawn between “directed activities” and “undirected activities”, the former being distinguished from the latter as representing “an unbounded but incremental directed change on a scale, i.e., an aspectual type distinct from (undirected) activities” (Croft 2012: 44) (e.g. *The soup cooled (for/in an hour)* vs. *Mark ran*). As far as achievements are concerned, a distinction is drawn among four sub-types: “reversible achievements” and “irreversible achievements” (e.g. *the door opened/closed twice* vs. **the mouse died twice*), “cyclic achievements” (or “semelfactive”), which denote “a punctual event that does not lead to a different resulting state” (Croft 2012: 39) (e.g. *Harriet coughed for five minutes*, *Harriet was coughing*), and “runup achievements”, which denote “a non incremental process leading up to an instantaneous transition to a resulting state” (Croft 2012: 41) (e.g. *Harry was repairing the computer*). Croft (2012: 44) summarizes his verb-types categorization as follows: (a) Four types of states: *inherent (permanent) states*, *acquired permanent states*, *transitory states*, and *point states*; the last could be seen as a sub-type of transitory states; (b) Two types of activities: *directed activities* and *undirected activities*; (c) Two types of achievements: *reversible achievements* and *irreversible achievement*; (d) *Accomplishments*; (e) *Cyclic achievements* (semelfactives); (f) *Runup achievements* – not punctual like other achievements, but not incremental like Vendlerian accomplishments.

TABLE 1

Verb type properties (Adapted from Van Valin and LaPolla 1997: 93)

States	[+static], [-telic], [-punctual]
Activities	[-static], [-telic], [-punctual]
Accomplishments	[-static], [+telic], [-punctual]
Achievements	[-static], [+telic], [+punctual]

These four verbal categories are more specifically defined in terms of three basic features: [\pm static], [\pm punctual] and [\pm telic] (see Table 1 above). Static verbs are those which do not code a ‘happening’, e.g., “John believes the world is round” (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997: 93). This is the main distinguishing feature of states. Telicity has to do with verbs depicting states of affairs with an inherent terminal point. Unlike states and activities, both accomplishments and achievements have terminal points, e.g., “the clothes are drying on the line” (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997: 93). Punctual verbs are those which depict instantaneous changes of state. This is a distinguishing feature of achievements, whereas states, activities and accomplishments all involve temporal duration.

3. Corpus and methods

For the purposes of this study, we built up a corpus of 207 transcribed TED talks delivered by academics (hereafter TED_ac) and compared it to a corpus of 35 university lectures (hereafter MICASE_lect) drawn from the *Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English* (MICASE), a spoken-language corpus consisting of different academic speech events available online⁵.

The TED_ac corpus totals 552,345 tokens and spans a period of ten years (2002-2012). Academics in the TED_ac corpus are either native speakers of American English or have received their education in the US. The MICASE_lect corpus totals 348,005 tokens and spans a period of four years (1998-2001).

The difference in time spans between TED_ac and MICASE_lect is due to the availability of research materials. To the best of our knowledge, MICASE is, in fact, the only spoken corpus of academic American English available online.

Although the two corpora differ in the number of speakers (207 speakers for TED as opposed to 35 speakers for MICASE), they do not differ too much in size as MICASE lectures are, on average, longer than TED talks.

⁵ <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase;page=simple> (last access: July 2017)

The MICASE interface allows users to select speech events on the basis of different contextual attributes (e.g. event type, speaker's role, interactivity rating). For this study, MICASE lectures were collected according to the attributes "highly monologic" and "mostly monologic" in order to increase their comparability with monologic speech events like TED talks.

In order to observe the extent to which changes in discourse in the two communicative settings under scrutiny are determined by the type of discipline the speaker deals with, TED_ac and MICASE_lect have been divided into two subcategories, separating the 'hard' disciplines from the 'soft' ones (see Table 2). To do so, we relied on four macro subject areas proposed by the authors of MICASE, i.e. Biological and Health Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering, Social Sciences and Education, and Humanities and Arts.

	MICASE_lect		TED_ac	
	'hard' disciplines	'soft' disciplines	'hard' disciplines	'soft' discipline
speech events	18	17	125	82
tokens	167,680	180,325	332,224	220,121

Given the salient role of *we* in the discursive construction of the speaker's identity as an expert in the TED context, (see Caliendo/Compagnone 2014; Compagnone 2015; Compagnone forthcoming), a search was made of all the verb collocates of this pronoun in TED_ac and MICASE_lect (see Appendices A and B). The count included all the lexical verbs occurring with *we* in the two corpora (except for *be*, *do* and *have* when used as auxiliaries, the semi-modals *be to* and *have to* and the modals *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*) in a +4 span (e.g., *we think*, *we don't think*, *we have always thought*, *we would have never thought*). Moreover, the verb collocates of *we* were sorted⁶ on the basis of the main four

⁶ For the purposes of the quantitative search carried out for this study, verbs have been sorted on the basis of their basic semantic properties. However, as will be highlighted by

lexical verb categories, i.e. activities, states, accomplishments and achievements, found in the literature (Vendler 1957[1967]; Van Valin and LaPolla 1997; Croft 2012), also taking into account the distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ disciplines drawn in the two corpora.

4. Results and discussion

In the remainder of this study, we will illustrate the results of our analysis. In section 4.1, attention is paid to the distribution of the verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac and MICASE_lect on the basis of the four lexical-aspectual categories. In sections 4.2-4.5, consideration is given to the analysis of the discursive functions of some of the most frequent activity, state, accomplishment and achievement verbs, respectively, used by academics in combination with the pronoun *we*.

4.1. Verb collocates of *we*

As shown in Tables 3 and 4 below, the four lexical verb categories in TED_ac and MICASE_lect rank nearly the same (except for achievements, negligibly more frequent than activities in TED_ac, while the opposite is true in MICASE_lect). However, as far as their distribution in the two corpora is concerned, while the occurrences of states, activities and accomplishments in TED_ac double those in MICASE_lect respectively, quite interestingly, the occurrences of achievements in TED_ac are nearly three times more frequent than those in MICASE_lect (30.5 per ten thousand words vs. 11.3 per ten thousand words).

TABLE 3

Distribution of the verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect

Verb class	MICASE_lect ‘hard’		MICASE_lect ‘soft’		Whole corpus TOT
	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	
states	426	25.4	415	23	24
activities	301	18	228	12.6	15.2

means of the qualitative analysis illustrated in sections 4.4.2-4.4.5, the construal of predicates is also contingent upon other constraints such as tense-aspect constructions and the addition of specific PPs or Adverbials to the clause (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997; Croft 2012).

accomplishments	21	1.2	11	0.6	0.9
achievements	234	14	162	9	11.3

TABLE 4

Distribution of the verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac

Verb class	TED_ac 'hard'		TED_ac 'soft'		Whole corpus
	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	
states	1,654	51	1,051	47.7	49
activities	1,071	32.2	498	22.6	28.4
accomplishments	253	7.6	128	5.8	6.8
achievements	1,241	37.3	444	20	30.5

As far as the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' disciplines is concerned, in TED_ac achievements are significantly more frequent in the 'hard' science sub-corpus (37.3 per ten thousand words) than in the 'soft' science one (20 per ten thousand words).

4.2. Activity verb collocates of *we*

In both MICASE_lect and TED_ac, the verb *do* is the most frequent activity verb collocating with the pronoun *we* (except for the 'soft' science sub-corpus of MICASE_lect, where the verb *talk* is slightly more frequent than *do*) (see Tables 5-6 below).

TABLE 5

First ten activity verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect

Lemma	MICASE_lect 'hard'		Verb	MICASE_lect 'soft'	
	Occurrences	Freq. pttw		Occurrences	Freq. pttw
do	72	4.2	talk	49	2.7

talk	67	4	do	44	2.4
look	40	2.3	call	30	1.6
call	31	1.8	look	22	1
use	28	1.6	use	10	0.5
measure	27	1.6	discuss	9	0.4
go	17	1	go	9	0.4
write	8	0.4	try	9	0.4
cover	6	0.3	read	8	0.4
compare	4	0.2	live	7	0.3

TABLE 6

First ten activity verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac

Lemma	TED_ac 'hard'		Verb	TED_ac 'soft'	
	Occurrences	Freq. pttw		Occurrences	Freq. pttw
do	272	8.1	do	151	7
call	94	2.8	go	58	2.6
look	89	2.6	look	56	2.5
use	89	2.6	use	41	1.8
go	50	1.5	call	28	1.2
talk	35	1	try	20	1
live	33	0.9	live	17	0.7
try	31	0.9	tell	15	0.6
work	30	0.8	design	12	0.5
study	26	0.7	watch	11	0.4

According to Biber *et al.* (1999: 430), as a main verb, *do* is commonly found in idiomatic expressions in combination with specific noun phrases (e.g. *do the job*, *do the dishes*, *do some work*, *do the wash*, etc.), as well as in the function of a “proverb, substituting for some lexical verb” (e.g. *Well that’s why he did it; That really hurts my ears when you do that*). As shown by means of the qualitative analysis that ensued, these are the two functions performed by *do* while collocating with *we* in MICASE_lect and TED_ac.

In MICASE_lect the verb *do*, in combination with *we*, is mostly (86.4%) employed to describe an activity where the role of the instructor and that of the students can be roughly distinguished from each other. This is mainly due to the fact that, especially in ‘hard’ disciplines, more often than not, the instructor employs the pronoun *we* to depict activities that are performed either by him or her only (36%), by his or her students only (20%), or by whomever is interested in the subject matter (30.4%):

(1) And here are my three acidic protons, so I have three different P-K-A values for them, this one is <WRITING ON BOARD DURING NEXT :08 OF UTTERANCE> two-point-one-eight...this one is eight-point-nine-five <PAUSE:04> and this one is ten-point-five-three. Okay? So this one is almost like methylamine, this one is more acidic than en- methylamine and this one is definitely more acidic than acetic acid. So I’ve drawn the form that exists at low P-H...and *we can do* the same thing we did, with alanine, add base and explore what happens, at each stage. (MICASE, Chemistry)

Unlike in MICASE_lect, in TED_ac, as a collocate of *we*, the verb *do* is often used to depict research activities and experiments that are performed by the speaker and his or her expert colleagues. This happens especially in the ‘hard’ science talks, where a more frequent reference to experiments may be accounted for by the strongly empirical character of the subject matters dealt with:

(2) So how can we take this incredible capacity of plasticity of the brain and get people to experience their world differently? Well, one of the ways *we do* in my lab and studio is we translate the light into sound and we enable people to hear their visual world. And they can navigate the world using their ears. (TED, Neuroscience)⁷

(3) So we started playing around with this. And as *we did* it, we realized this was the basic problem – that taking the sip of coffee – that there were humans doing this complicated process and that what really needed to be done was to automate this process like an assembly line and build robots that would measure proteomics. And so *we did* that, and working with David, we made a little company called Applied Proteomics eventually, which makes this robotic assembly line, which, in a very consistent way, measures the protein. (TED, Engineering)

⁷ Underlining added for emphasis in examples (2) and (3).

With reference to the management of the information, functioning as a pro-verb and in combination with *we*, the verb *do* is used by the speaker either to rhematize an activity performed by him or her and his or her research team, by drawing the hearer's attention to the information contained in the subordinate clause following the *we + do* collocation as in (2), or to thematize it, by drawing the hearer's attention to the information preceding the *we + do* collocation as in (3). In both cases, the speaker places emphasis on the activity he or she describes, either by presenting it as new information (through rhematization) or recovering it (through thematization) as a starting point from where information is further developed.

However, in TED_ac, as a collocate of *we*, the verb *do* also occurs with noun phrases functioning as direct objects:

(4) And finally, *we did MRI and MR spectroscopy scans* on some of these patients, and the tumor activity is shown in red in this patient, and you can see clearly it's better a year later, along with the PSA going down. (TED, Public Health)

(5) So this study, which I did with my graduate students, especially Craig Haney – we also began work with an ad. We didn't have money, so we had a cheap, little ad, but we wanted college students for a study of prison life. 75 people volunteered, took personality tests. *We did interviews*. Picked two dozen: the most normal, the most healthy. Randomly assigned them to be prisoner and guard. (TED, Psychology)

As shown in examples (4)-(5) above, in TED_ac, both in the 'hard' and 'soft' science subcategories, the noun phrases combining with the *we + do* collocation often refer to the research activities and the investigations that are performed by the speaker and his/her research team.

By and large, the way in which the verb *do* is used by academic TED speakers, in combination with the pronoun *we*, confirms that one of their main concerns is to promote scholarship by making reference to their research activity while addressing mass audiences.

4.3. State verb collocates of *we*

Compared to the verbs belonging to the other three lexical aspectual categories, states are the most frequent verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect and TED_ac (see Tables 3-4 above). Among the states co-occurring with *we* in the two corpora, the verb *have* ranks first both in the 'hard' and 'soft' subsections of MICASE_lect and TED_ac (see Tables 7-8 below).

TABLE 7

First ten state verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect

MICASE_lect 'hard'			MICASE_lect 'soft'		
Verb	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	Verb	Occurrences	Freq. pttw
have	173	10.3	have	169	9.3
see	61	3.6	see	80	4.4
know	60	3.5	know	53	3
need	32	2	want	28	1.5
think	25	1.5	think	27	1.4
want	24	1.4	be	17	1
be	15	0.8	need	17	1
assume	12	0.7	like	11	0.6
consider	7	0.4	believe	4	0.2
expect	4	0.2	expect	4	0.2

TABLE 8

First ten state verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac

TED_ac 'hard'			TED_ac 'soft'		
Verb	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	Verb	Occurrences	Freq. pttw
have	404	12	have	232	10.5
know	261	7.8	see	122	5.5
see	259	7.7	be	110	5
think	148	4.4	know	109	5

be	140	4.2	need	104	4.7
need	138	4	think	103	4.6
want	116	3.4	want	78	3.5
like	23	0.6	like	23	1
hear	20	0.6	feel	17	0.7
be able to	18	0.5	believe	16	0.7

As Biber *et al.* (1999: 429) point out, as a lexical verb, “*have* can be used with various meanings marking many different kinds of logical relations”: (a) physical possession (e.g. *They had three tons of sugar*); (b) family connection (e.g. *Jim is aged 40 and has two children*); (c) food consumption (e.g. *The kids had “superhero sundaes” which turned out to be merely ice cream*); (d) existential (e.g. *But it really would be nice to have a young person about the house again*); (e) linking a person to some abstract quality (e.g. *You’re gonna have problems with your feet*); (f) linking an inanimate subject to some abstract quality (e.g. *Stylistics can have other goals than this*); (g) marking causation (e.g. *The problem continues to be that a religious-fascist state wishes to hire professional terrorists to have me killed*). Given its meanings, as a main verb, *have* is always found in the pattern *subject + have (got) + direct object*.

With the pronoun *we* in subject position, in both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ science subsections of the MICASE_lect corpus, this pattern always displays an “existential meaning” (Biber *et al.* 1999: 943), i.e., it predicates the existence or occurrence of something (including the no-existence or no-occurrence of something):

(6) [...] and so *we have* an equilibrium, where the proton is mostly on the nitrogen, and only a little bit on the oxygen atom of the amino acid. (MICASE, Chemistry)

(7) [...] and, when we, write that chemically, *we have* different ways we can symbolize it, uh we can write P-P-T, rather than spelling out that long precipitation word, or you can put next to H-G-I-two which is the precipitate an arrow pointing down showing it’s coming out of solution, or also another synonym, is to put next to the H-G-I-two, brackets S, close the brackets meaning a solid is being formed. (MICASE, Chemistry)

As shown in examples (6)-(7) above, in MICASE_lect the pattern *we + have (got) + direct object* performs a metadiscursive function and is used by the instructor in order to guide the student through the speech event in an instructional and informative way.

Instances of the pattern *we + have (got) + direct object* with an existential meaning can also be found in TED_ac, especially in the ‘soft’ science sub-corpus:

(8) And in our society, *we have* a strong belief that synthetic happiness is of an inferior kind. Why do we have that belief? Well, it's very simple. (TED_ac, Psychology)

(9) Vision is one of the best things we do. *We have* a huge part of our brain dedicated to vision – bigger than dedicated to anything else. We do more vision more hours of the day than we do anything else. And we are evolutionarily designed to do vision. And if *we have* these predictable repeatable mistakes in vision, which we're so good at, what's the chance that we don't make even more mistakes in something we're not as good at – for example, financial decision making: something we don't have an evolutionary reason to do, we don't have a specialized part of the brain, and we don't do that many hours of the day. (TED_ac, Economics)

As shown in examples (8)-(9) above, in TED_ac, the pattern *we + have (got) + direct object* often marks a link between an abstract (e.g. “a strong belief”) or a concrete entity (e.g. “a huge part of our brain”) and a “larger group of people” (Fortanet 2004: 57) which, besides the speaker and the addressee, also includes other participants outside the speech event. This referential function of the pronoun *we* confers a value of ‘universality’ on TED talks, in that it places emphasis on states of affairs regarding individuals in general as either ‘human beings’ or ‘members of society’. Additionally, in the ‘hard’ subcategory of TED_ac another distinguishing discursive function of the pattern *we + have (got) + direct object* can be shown. Here, it has also been found to refer to the speaker’s colleagues and collaborators (e.g. “Alex Norton”, “oncologists” in examples (10)-(11) below). This is one of the ways in which academic TED speakers mark their connection with a specific scientific community and its members:

(10) Behind the scenes is a working lab at Stanford University partnered with the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Here, for over 14 or 15 years, we've actually brought in both bluefin and yellowfin in captivity. We'd been studying these fish, but first we had to learn how to husbandry them. What do they like to eat? What is it that they're happy with? We go in the tanks with the tuna – we touch their naked skin – it's pretty amazing. It feels wonderful. And then, better yet, *we've got* our own version of tuna whisperers, our own Chuck Farwell, Alex Norton, who can take a big tuna and in one motion, put it into an envelope of water, so that we can actually work with the tuna and learn the techniques it takes to not injure this fish who never sees a boundary in the open sea. (TED_ac, Biology)

(11) So David and I applied to this program and created a consortium at USC where *we've got* some of the best oncologists in the world and some of the best biologists in the world, from Cold Spring Harbor, Stanford, Austin – I won't even go through and name all the places – to have a research project that will last for five years where we're really going to try to build a model of cancer like this. (TED_ac, Engineering)

Finally, as shown in examples (12)-(13) below, in TED_ac the pattern *we + have (got) + direct object* is also used by speakers to express “physical possession” of

an object (Biber *et al.* 1999). The object is usually shared with a whole group of experts and is instrumental to the achievement of specific outcomes (e.g. “instruments” and “samples”) or to the promotion of the research activity conducted by the speaker and his or her community. This specific use has been detected in both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sub-categories of TED_ac:

(11) *We have instruments* on Cassini which can see down to the surface through this atmosphere, and my camera system is one of them. (TED_ac, Astronomy)

(12) So how are we doing on the project? *We’ve got about 25,000 samples* collected from indigenous people around the world. The most amazing thing has been the interest on the part of the public; 210,000 people have ordered these participation kits since we launched two years ago. (TED_ac, Biology)

By referring to resources, tools and research materials, TED speakers place emphasis on the research activities they are directly involved in. This is also a way through which they can state their affiliation to a group of experts and discursively build their professional identity. This use of *have* could not be detected in MICASE_lect. This may be accounted for by the fact that in university lectures, the instructors’ needs and concerns are not to promote findings nor to build up a credible image of themselves as experts. In the classroom their role is, in fact, already well established, while their main concern is rather to train a group of novices in a specific discipline.

Together with the epistemic lexical verbs *know*, *see* and *think*, another frequent state verb collocating with *we* in MICASE_lect and TED_ac is *be*. The verb *be* ranks fifth and second in the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ science sub-corpora of TED_ac, respectively and is slightly less frequent in MICASE_lect, ranking seventh and sixth in the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ subcategories of the corpus, respectively.

According to Biber *et al.* (1999: 428), “*be* is the most important copular verb in English, serving to link the subject noun phrase with a subject predicative or obligatory adverbial”. In MICASE_lect, the pattern *we + be + subject predicative/adverbial* plays a metadiscursive role and depicts a situation involving both the speaker and his or her audience of students:

(13) Also you will see on the syllabus that, just before exams occur, there will be a review session that I will do and some others will do, where I will highlight what the major findings were for the labs, to make sure that *we are* all in agreement. (MICASE, Chemistry)

(14) The other thing that *we are* really interested in, especially when you get into biochemistry, medicine, is what is the form of the amino acid, at physiological P-H? What is the form in which it exists, the cells and the tissues, enzymes things like that? So that is the second P-H value that *we’re gonna be* interested in. (MICASE, Chemistry)

As can be clearly evidenced by examples (14)-(15) above, unlike the TED audience, students are semi-lay hearers and, more often than not, are personally involved in the activities of a scientific community as practitioners who are being trained in a specific discipline. This is especially true in the ‘hard’ science domains and clearly marks a substantial difference between university lectures and TED talks which has to be taken into account when comparing these two genres.

As shown by examples (16)-(17) below, in the MICASE_lect corpus, the pattern *we + be + subject predicative* is also used by the speaker to describe a quality shared not only by him or her and his or her addressee, but also by a “larger group of people” (Fortanet 2004) outside the speech event, as members of a category (e.g. “vertebrates” and “mammals”, “capitalist society” in example (17)). This use can be detected in both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ science sub-corpora of MICASE_lect:

(16) In other words *we are* a mass of regulated systems, and those regulated systems are designed to provide a buffer, between, desirable conditions inside the animal for the biochemical aspects of metabolism, and the all too variable environment, which can, vary in ways that are not always predictable. How many people were expecting a storm this morning? (MICASE, Biology)

(17) For us, as homo s-uh ourselves, we of course get placed, in the animal kingdom, he had us in the phylum vertebrata *we are vertebrates, we are, vertebrates, we're* in the class mammalia *we're mammals*, and Linneas recognized all of this, and he put us in the order primates. (MICASE, Biology)

This use of the pattern *we + be + subject predicative* can also be detected in TED_ac. A “larger group of people” (also including the speaker and the hearer) is, in fact, the second most frequent group referred to by means of *we* (after the referential category “speaker + other people”) in TED_ac, especially in the ‘soft’ science sub-corpus:

(18) We humans have many varieties of religious experience, as William James explained. One of the most common is climbing the secret staircase and losing ourselves. The staircase takes us from the experience of life as profane or ordinary upwards to the experience of life as sacred, or deeply interconnected. *We are* Homo duplex, as Durkheim explained. And *we are* Homo duplex because we evolved by multilevel selection, as Darwin explained. (TED, Psychology)

(19) We know so much about global warming and climate change, and yet, we have no concept of what I’ve been calling internal environmentalism. We know what we’re putting out there, we have a sense of those repercussions, but *we are* so ignorant of this sense of what happens when we put things, or things are put into our bodies. (TED, Biology)

(20) Let’s remind ourselves that cells are not an abstract concept. Let’s remember that our cells sustain our lives in a very real way. “*We are* what we eat,” could easily

be described as, “*We are* what our cells eat.” And in the case of the flora in our gut, these cells may not even be human. But it’s also worth noting that cells also mediate our experience of life. Behind every sound, sight, touch, taste and smell is a corresponding set of cells that receive this information and interpret it for us. (TED, Engineering)

As shown in examples (18)–(20) above – although presenting themselves as members of a scientific community has been revealed to be a prerogative of academics speaking at TED – the description of situations in which TED speakers and their audience are discursively constructed as part of a ‘larger’ category (e.g. “human beings”, “citizens”, etc.) is also important. This discursive move denotes, in fact, the attempt on the part of TED speakers to contextualize their presentations and link them to people’s daily life.

4.4. Accomplishment verb collocates of *we*

Among all the verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect and TED_ac, those belonging to the class of accomplishments are the least frequent ones in both corpora. However, a qualitative analysis of some of the accomplishments collocating with *we* in TED_ac has been revealed as useful to highlight some of the main purposes of academics speaking on the TED stage as opposed to academics lecturing in a university classroom.

As shown in Tables 2 and 3 above, accomplishments collocating with *we* in TED_ac are more frequent than those in MICASE_lect⁸. Interestingly enough, although the gap between the frequencies of accomplishments in the two corpora is not wide enough to assert that this lexical category is significantly more frequent in TED_ac than in MICASE_lect, in TED_ac it was possible to detect some types of accomplishments used in combination with the pronoun *we* which could not be found in MICASE_lect and which signal the attempt on the part of the speaker to emphasize his or her role as an expert and promote scholarship:

(21) And *we built software* that’ll link functional magnetic resonance imaging devices up over the Internet. I guess we’ve done up to six machines at a time, but let’s just focus on two. (TED, Neuroscience)

(22) Ten years ago was a seminal trip, where we explored that big iceberg, B-15, the largest iceberg in history, that broke off the Ross Ice Shelf. And *we developed techniques to dive inside and under the iceberg*, such as heating pads on our kidneys with

⁸ The accomplishments collocating with *we* in TED_ac in a +4 span are: *make* (152 occ.), *learn* (68), *change* (37 occ.), *create* (33 occ.), *build* (27 occ.), *develop* (17 occ.), *produce* (9 occ.), *become* (7), *divide* (7 occ.), *calculate* (6), *generate* (6 occ.), *kill* (6), *record* (4) and *process* (2). The accomplishments collocating with *we* in MICASE_lect in a +4 span are: *make* (21), *change* (5) and *construct* (2).

a battery that we dragged around, so that, as the blood flowed through our kidneys, it would get a little boost of warmth before going back into our bodies. (TED, Biology)

(23) One of the things that *we've developed* in the lab – *we've developed several vehicles* – is what we believe is the world's first autonomously drifting car. (TED, Engineering)

Accomplishments always describe a dynamic process during which a patient in the object position (in transitive constructions, e.g. *John broke the window*) or in the subject position (in passive or intransitive constructions, e.g. *The window was broken, The window broke*) undergoes a change of state or condition. As shown in examples (21)-(23) above, the noun phrases in object position in combination with the accomplishment verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac often represent the final outcome of a process during which the agent (i.e. both the speaker and his or her colleagues) brings something into existence (e.g. “a chip”, “software”, “techniques”, “several vehicles”). This tendency to place emphasis on tangible ‘products’ supports the idea that the TED space is used by academics to ‘sell’ their research as well as disseminate knowledge.

4.5. Achievement verb collocates of *we*

As far as the verb class of achievements is concerned, in TED_ac verbs belonging to this category collocate with the pronoun *we* significantly more frequently than in MICASE_lect (see Tables 2-3 above). Among all the achievements co-occurring with *we* in TED_ac, one of the most interesting ones is the verb *find*, which ranks second in both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ subsections of the corpus among the first ten achievement verb collocates of *we*, whereas it ranks third in the two subsections of MICASE_lect (see Tables 9-10).

TABLE 9

First ten achievement verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect

MICASE_lect ‘hard’			MICASE_lect ‘soft’		
Verb	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	Verb	Occurrences	Freq. pttw
get	50	3	get	50	2.7
say	35	2	say	19	1
find	25	1.5	find	12	0.6

start	21	1.2	start	12	0.6
take	18	1	mention	9	0.4
put	17	1	begin	8	0.4
define	10	0.5	take	8	0.4
get into	8	0.4	ask	6	0.3
add	7	0.4	put	5	0.2
get to	6	0.3	understand	5	0.2

TABLE 10

First ten achievement verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac

Verb	TED_ac 'hard'		TED_ac 'soft'		
	Occurrences	Freq. pttw	Verb	Occurrences	Freq. pttw
take	214	6.4	get	56	2.5
find	171	5	find	43	2
get	134	4	start	38	1.7
start	84	2.5	take	37	1.6
understand	56	1.6	ask	27	1.2
put	54	1.6	understand	18	0.8
say	42	1.2	choose	12	0.5
figure	31	0.9	decide	12	0.5
ask	24	0.7	pay	12	0.5
get to	24	0.7	get to	11	0.4

The verb *find* belongs to the subcategory of “irreversible achievements” (Croft 2012: 43), i.e., it denotes a punctual and instantaneous change of state which cannot be reversed. In the case of *find^P*, there is a mental change of state involving an “experiencer” (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997: 85).

In MICASE_lect, the verb *find* co-occurs with the pronoun *we* to describe an event which involves an “indefinite *you* or *one*” (Fortanet 2004), and everybody interested in the subject matter dealt with. In general, this referential use of *we* proved to be the most common in this corpus of lectures – especially in the ‘hard’ discipline sub-corpus:

(24) Now there’s another interesting uh, density dependence that *we can find*, and that has been found, and this is where we have our birth or death rate, and let’s just look at birth rate, and what happens is we have inverse, density dependence... (MICASE, Natural Resources)

This use of *we* co-occurring with *find* can also be detected in TED_ac. However, in TED_ac the verb *find*, in combination with the pronoun *we*, is mostly used by speakers in order to make reference to their and their group of experts’ discoveries. This use is particularly frequent in the ‘hard’ science sub-corpus:

(25) In just over two years of operations, *we’ve found* over 1,200 potential new planetary systems around other stars. To give you some perspective, in the previous two decades of searching, we had only known about 400 prior to Kepler. (TED_ac, Astronomy)

Although this use of *find* is particularly frequent in the ‘hard’ science sub-corpus, references to discoveries made by the speaker and his or her research team can also be detected in the ‘soft’ discipline sub-corpus of TED_ac:

(26) So, several years ago, I decided to look into the brain and study this madness. Our first study of people who were happily in love has been widely publicized, so I’m only going to say a very little about it. *We found* activity in a tiny, little factory near the base of the brain called the ventral tegmental area. (TED, Anthropology)

Instances of *we* co-occurring with the verb *find* to report discoveries in MICASE_lect were only detected in a single lecture contained in the corpus. However, making reference to one’s own research findings in a university classroom cannot be seen as serving the same purpose it does on the TED stage. In fact, while reporting about a research finding in a classroom is meant to provide students with information which is functional to the furthering of the lecture, in the popularizing setting of TED talks this is instead one of the ways in which academics promote

⁹ Occurrences of *find* semantically overlapping with *think* and *believe* were not included in the count.

their research and build up their identity as experts. As shown in examples (27)-(29) below, other achievement verbs (e.g. *discover*, *come up with* and *come away with*) – which could not be found in MICASE_lect – are used by academic TED speakers to accomplish the same purpose as that of *find*:

(27) So there was the COBE satellite, which was launched in 1989, and *we discovered* these variations. (TED, Astronomy)

(28) Over time we got a little bit better at it, and *we came up with* this really sophisticated-looking rig with four scuba tanks and five regulators and all the right gas mixtures and all that good stuff. (TED, Biology)

(29) We've flown the Cassini Spacecraft by this moon now several times, flying closer and deeper into these jets, into the denser regions of these jets, so that now *we have come away with* some very precise compositional measurements. And *we have found* that the organic compounds coming from this moon are in fact more complex than we previously reported. (TED_ac, Astronomy)

Another interesting achievement verb collocate of *we found* in TED_ac is *start*, which ranks fourth both in the two sub-corpora of MICASE_lect and in the 'hard' discipline sub-corpus of TED_ac, whereas it ranks third in the 'soft' discipline sub-corpus of TED_ac. Biber *et al.* (1999: 364) place the verb *start* in the category of "aspectual verbs", as this is thought to "characterize the stage of progress of some other event or activity, typically reported in a complement clause following the verb phrase".

As shown in example (30) below, the verb *start* is used by academic TED speakers to place emphasis on the beginning of activities which have led the speaker and his or her team to specific discoveries:

(30) We also then went to look at what are these molecules – these were the red triangles on my slides before. This is the *Vibrio fischeri* molecule. So then *we started* to look at other bacteria, and *these are just a smattering of the molecules that we've discovered*. (TED, Biology)

In MICASE_lect, the *we + start* collocation always performs a metadiscursive function, signalling the beginning of an activity either only involving the instructor, who tries to engage his or her students by means of an inclusive *we*, or whomever is interested in the discipline dealt with.

In addition to activities, states and accomplishments, the qualitative and quantitative analysis of achievement verb collocates of *we* in TED supports the idea that academics make use of this pragmatic space not only to inform and provide a 'smart' form of entertainment, but also to advertise the results and the outcomes of their research projects. The salience of research promotion within and, above all, outside academia, is undeniable and the observation of such practice from a communicative perspective is deemed to be suitable for understanding the evolution of the roles of academics as professionals.

5. Conclusions

The contrastive analysis illustrated in this section placed special emphasis on the semantic representation of states of affairs and on the role that university lecturers and TED speakers play in them. More specifically, also in an attempt to investigate the discursive use of *we* in TED_ac in more detail, consideration has been given to all the verb collocates of this pronoun in order to understand the way in which academics speaking at TED present themselves on the stage while describing situations involving them.

The results of the corpus-based analysis show that, sorted on the basis of the four lexical aspectual categories found in the literature (Vendler 1957 [1967]; Van Valin and LaPolla 1997), the verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect and TED_ac show different distributions in the two corpora. While activity, state and accomplishment verb collocates of *we* in TED_ac double the occurrences of those found in MICASE_lect, it is interesting to see that achievement verb collocates of *we* are significantly more frequent in TED_ac than in MICASE_lect (30.5 pttw vs. 11.3 pttw).

The results of the qualitative analysis aimed at exploring the usage of some of the most salient verb collocates of *we* sorted in relation to the above-mentioned lexical aspectual categories show that, as far as activities are concerned, in TED_ac verbs such as *do* and *use* – among the first ten activity verb collocates of *we* in the two corpora – are mostly used, in both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ subcategories of TED_ac, in order to depict activities which involve the speaker and his or her research team. In MICASE_lect the same kind of activities involve, instead, both the instructor and his or her students, the latter often participating in the speech event, while being trained in a specific discipline.

As regards states, unlike in MICASE_lect, where they metadiscursively describe situations involving the instructor and his or her students, in TED_ac some of the most frequent verb collocates of *we* belonging to this category (e.g. *have* and *be*) are mostly used by the speaker to depict situations in which some qualities which link him or her to his scientific community are marked.

With reference to accomplishments, although the verb collocates of *we* belonging to this category are the least frequent ones compared to those belonging to the other three categories in both corpora, in TED_ac accomplishments co-occurring with *we* (e.g. *build*, *develop* and *create*) which cannot be detected in MICASE_lect have been found and are used by the speaker to depict processes culminating in outcomes he or she and his or her expert colleagues share as a result of their research activity.

Finally, as far as achievements are concerned, verb collocates of *we* belonging to this category are significantly more frequent in TED_ac than in MICASE_lect. In TED_ac, different achievements co-occurring with *we* (e.g. *find*, *discover*, *come up with*) are used by academic TED speakers to place emphasis on their and their collaborators’ research findings, especially in the ‘hard’ subsection of TED_ac, where achievement verb collocates of *we* are more frequent than in the ‘soft’ subsection of the corpus.

All in all, the analysis of the verb collocates of *we* in MICASE_lect and TED_ac has proved suitable for further exploration of the pragmatic value of this pronoun in the two settings under investigation and has provided evidence which shows that academic TED speakers show a special concern in building up their image as professionals while promoting scholarship, expertise, results and outcomes. Given the salience of research promotion on the part of academics to get their projects funded, self-promotion is thought to be one of the main, if not the main, objectives of academic TED speakers as opposed to academics speaking in a classroom. The comparison of two genres (i.e. university lecture and academic TED talks), whose inherent communicative purposes are different, aimed to provide an account of how the profession of the academic has evolved and point out that academics appropriate new genres, such as that of TED, to achieve their professional objectives.

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