BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

SPECIAL SECTION: ABSTRACTS

Bianchi, Francesca

THE SOCIAL TRICKS OF ADVERTISING: DISCOURSE STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING TOUR OPERATORS IN FACEBOOK

The current paper is intended to provide a description of the linguistic and discourse strategies displayed by generalised and budget tour operators in Facebook, with particular emphasis on the techniques employed to promote destinations. To this aim, a corpus including 326 posts was created. The posts were analysed by means of corpus linguistics methods – including POS tagging, keyword analysis, and analysis of collocations –, while the images accompanying the posts were analysed within the framework of visual grammar theory. Keyword analysis showed that the posts under investigation, despite being written texts, are closer to spoken communication rather than written informal communication. The analyses also showed ample presence of linguistic and rhetorical techniques typical of tourism promotion. Furthermore, the analyses proved that the tourism operators considered are expert conversation managers who have developed a range of strategies to influence conversation. Finally, comparison between the current results and previous empirical studies suggest that promotional strategies and thus 'the language of tourism' varies not only from culture to culture, but also depending on text type (e.g. website vs. Facebook page), tourism service provider (e.g. hotel chains vs. tour operators), and target (e.g. luxury vs. non-luxury tour operator).

Cesiri, Daniela

COMMUNICATING THE IMAGE OF VENICE: THE USE OF DISCOURSE MARKERS IN WEBSITES AND DIGITAL TRAVEL GUIDES IN ENGLISH

The study investigates a corpus of websites and digital travel guidebooks – collected in a corpus – that promote the city of Venice using English as a lingua franca to convey the promotional message. The study examines a corpus of texts already used in three previous contributions to conduct a more detailed analysis of the stylistic features present in the digital texts. The aim is to understand how the promotional message is conveyed to a varied audience who has different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In particular, it is here investigated the use of discourse markers (DMs), and their semantic and pragmatic relationships with respect to the context of occurrence. To do so, Bruce Fraser's definition and classification of DMs will be used to analyse the corpus. Results show that the DMs investigated share the common pragmatic function of 'topic orientation markers,' i.e., they signal an aspect of the organization of the ongoing discourse. Semantically, however, they have different – but very specific – relationships with the surrounding segments of discourse. More specifically, the authors of the texts preferably use DMs to signal that a warning, a reminder, or some advice, will follow in the next segment.

Chapman, Richard

NAMING AND SHAMING? PRESENTATIONS OF THE SELF IN SPECIALIZED WEBLOG DISCOURSE

During examination of data from a small, specialised corpus, unexpected elements were identified inviting further analysis. Characteristic instances of naming behaviour were observed, prompting deeper investigation into this aspect of web discourse.

A corpus of around 100,000 tokens was assembled over a single day in 2014 by collecting contributions to a weblog discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Research aims were to observe linguistic behaviour over a limited timescale and involving a specific, highly controversial topic. Examination of methodological issues concerned with small corpora and how they should be interrogated was a secondary aim. Data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, with a stated intention from the outset to employ a hands-on approach as much as possible.

Various problems emerged, the most suggestive being employment of names and highly pragmatic discourse features in curious ways. A rereading of data concentrating on names, other forms of self-presentation, and attempts to impose identities on others, suggested a need for discourse-level analysis of linguistic behaviour in weblogs, since naming devices often appear as phrases rather than individual words (although they present as a single token with no spaces) and presuppose a textual environment, pragmatic interpretation and a form of dialogue.

Costa, Francesca

THE USE OF POWER POINTS IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH IN THE SOFT SCIENCES

The Power Point programme (PPT) is increasingly used by academics for their presentations. Despite this fact, there have been few linguistic studies that have dealt with PPT, especially as regards the Soft Sciences. The present explorative study seeks to qualitatively investigate the use of PPT by using as terms of comparison universities and conferences, the use of PPT by native speakers as opposed to non-native ones, and the use of PPT in disciplines such as psychology and pedagogy, adopting several parameters present in the literature to see whether there are differences among these elements and, if so, of what kind. The corpus consists of 566 slides, and the results shed light on this type of digital genre, which takes on unique features when used in the Soft Sciences.

Hartle, Sharon

A GENRE-BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING AND ASSESSING B1 LEVEL EMAIL WRITING FOR THE WORLD OF WORK

In a professional world where communication technologies have become increasingly accessible and speed of delivery, as a result, is at a premium, it comes as little surprise that findings from a recent joint Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) / Cambridge Language Assessment study (2016) stress employers' insistence on developing English language email writing skills as a priority, and this is particularly true of Italian companies.

The implications of this need for specifically skill orientated, professional development in ESP writing are enormous but how far are they being reflected by the assessment criteria adopted by major examination boards and associations and, consequently, reflected in teaching practices? In Europe the ESP teaching field is increasingly informed by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) but these descriptors may neglect the central role discourse elements play in contributing to an effective text. An interesting question to consider, then, is what type of washback is being created and whether or not a genre based approach, such as is common in approaches to EAP (Bhatia 1993; Swales 1990; Hyland 2008) might be effective when teaching email writing skills at B1 levels. This article, therefore, looks at some areas that are perhaps neglected and explores practical ways in which applying a genre based approach may foster awareness and improved production skills in B1 level email writing, focusing on how this has been carried out in undergraduate language courses with students studying Economics at Verona University.

Maglie, Rosita

CULTIVATING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE: THE CASE OF Q&A WEBSITES

Question-and-answer (Q&A) websites in health domains have become virtual places where information and advice can be sought and obtained. Such virtual encounters with different linguistic communities have increasingly become the norm for young people who rarely undergo regular medical examinations. For this category of people, the Internet is the electronic gateway to confidential advice and information on health issues. In this regard, Q&A websites, such as *Kinsey Confidential, Go Ask Alice!*, and *The Teenage Health Freak* offer a unique and novel vantage point from which to survey both how young people think and talk about their own health, and how health professionals engage in new modes of communication to provide health advice and information.

In order to scrutinize adolescents and health professionals' communicative behavior, this study not only has the potential to provide linguistic data for the expanding field of research in computer-mediated communication (CMC), but it could also prove meaningful to health professionals themselves and policymakers. It adopts a corpus-based approach to discourse analysis to provide quantitative evidence of the occurrence of qualitative patterns of discourse and language use in *Kinsey Confidential, Go Ask Alice!* and *The Teenage Health Freak* corpora, particularly in Q&A posts on health issues such as birth control and pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and gender and sexual orientation. Findings show how unfamiliar young people still are with regards to sexual health. While some misconceptions and prejudices can be ascribed to popular myths and rumors, much of this lack of knowledge is due to a scarcity of successful 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.

Spinzi, Cinzia

FRAMING PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN THE SPECIALIZED FIELD OF DIPLOMACY: A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Relevant international issues, such as terrorism, immigration, climate change, human security, cybersecurity and so on, imply the construction of complex ideological and axiological discursive positions, which stem from a web of unavoidably superimposed emotional and moral evaluations, often interwoven with logical observations (Spinzi 2016). All transactions whether promoting ideologies and values or selling products are a way of profiting from the general representation of a nation, and strategic communication contributes to this by increasing appreciation and influencing people's behaviour.

Embracing the perspective that transformations in social life are led by discourse (Fairclough 2006), this study explores the specialized 'realm' of diplomacy that expresses the foreign policy of a country. This research is an enquiry into the communicative and, more particularly, persuasive strategies used by British foreign ministers to pursue their ideological design and to construct a positive image of their country's policy by claiming unity. In the context of foreign policy, language choices, which carry significant communicative intent, are regularly made "to galvanize the audience to achieve a commonality of purpose" (Burhanudeen 2005) through the enactment of specific linguistic frames.

This study assumes a cognitive perspective on the language of diplomacy outlining the ways in which speakers negotiate solidarity with their audience by 'naturalizing' a variety of ideological positions through the particular frames chosen. Frames are conceptual structures reproducing particular areas of knowledge and experience

(Fillmore 1982, 1985). Data come from an ad-hoc corpus which includes online speeches by the British foreign ministers from 1997 up to the present times and online interviews published in different online newspapers.

In this work, I will focus on those framing devices which appeal primarily to the power of reason, from assertion to typecasting and semantic categories (Scott 2013). When considering such mechanisms, the present work has two main areas of interest: linguistic and institutional. From the linguistic point of view, our interest concerns those lexical and grammatical patterns which express the point of view of the speakers (Stubbs 1996), namely their way of projecting the world, their way of persuading and positioning their audience to accept what they say. From the institutional point of view, it is crucial to determine "how is discourse organized" in order to "appear factual, literal, objective, authoritative" (Partington 2003; Stubbs 1996) and persuasive.

GENERAL SECTION: ABSTRACTS

Accattoli, Nicola

IL GANGSTER MOVIE POSTMODERNO E LA DECOSTRUZIONE DELLA MASCOLINITÀ TRADIZIONALE IN *ANALYZE THIS* (1999), *ANALYZE THAT* (2002) E *THINGS TO DO IN DENVER WHEN YOU'RE DEAD* (1995)

This paper focuses on the deconstruction process Italian American masculinity has sustained for the last three decades in American cinema and television. For this essay, we will take into account three underrated movies: *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead* (1995), *Analyze This* (1999) and *Analyze That* (2002). After a brief theoretical introduction, intended to present a new model of masculinity called "mascolinità contemperata", the essay will proceed with the analysis of the texts, aimed to show how Italian American masculinity in movies has changed, adapting to a social reality where gender equality, although far from being fully achieved, is slowly becoming a reality. In this scenario, the *Hegemonic Masculinity* model theorized by Raewyn Connel is no longer viable, hence the shift towards "mascolinità contemperata".

Finally, by examining *Analyze That* in detail, it will be made clear that another deconstruction process, simultaneous to that of the masculinity, is taking place: that of the gangster movie as a genre.

Cuozzo, Gianluca

RUBBISH CITY AND THE UTOPIA OF THE RESIDUAL: *IN THE COUNTRY OF LAST THINGS* BY PAUL AUSTER

In his novel *In the Country of Last Things*, Paul Auster paints the picture of a rubbish city situated on the margins of the world of production. It is the wretched dwelling of outcasts, where garbage is the unsuspected and virtual repository of the fragments of collective desire. Yet, from the margins of this dystopian world rises a remnant of hope, which becomes an ontological principle – in other words, a new Utopia of marginality. In a kind of new *ars combinatoria* of the residual, the rubbles of the existent, i.e. the tiny intact islands of reality, can, in fact, be united with other similar ones "to create new archipelagoes of matter". Thus, the "remnant of that which was" becomes a part of a constant strategy of delay, the last remnant of salvation, which procrastinates indefinitely the *finis mundi*.

Elia, Adriano

FORMAL EXPERIMENTATION AND TIME TRAVEL AS A RECONCEPTUALIZATION STRATEGY IN ANTHONY JOSEPH'S *THE AFRICAN ORIGINS OF UFOS*

Anthony Joseph's groundbreaking novel *The African Origins of UFOs* (2006) is a challenging example of Afrofuturist speculative fiction. Divided into three interweaving sections set in space in the future, on land in the present and in water in the past, this eccentric novel draws on time travel as a means to reconsider notions of race, identity, exile and collective memory. Charged with innumerable allusions, Joseph's experimental style, blending poetry and prose, is an ideal counterpart to the richness and variety of content, whereby the conflation of past, present and future brings about a reconceptualization of hegemonic discourses on the black diaspora.

Fusco, Serena

"BLACK SPACE IS TIME:" INTERMEDIALITY, NARRATIVE, AND COMMUNITY IN MICHAEL ONDAATJE

This essay proposes to explore some aspects and implications of intermediality in three novels by Michael Ondaatje: *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The English Patient* (1992), and *Divisadero* (2007); more specifically, my focus is on the exchange involving literature and the two visual codes of painting and photography. I especially underline two possible configurations of a reiterated light/darkness interplay which traverses Ondaatje's oeuvre. On the one hand, light and darkness mirror each other as extreme poles which blend, in concrete, in infinite shades of grey, mirroring a photographic process; on the other hand, darkness surrounds, in a Caravaggesque fashion, pools of light illuminating fleeting moments in time; the latter configuration is also, to an extent, *ante litteram* photographic. What should be crucially emphasized in reading Ondaatje is the complex *temporal quality* of the dark spaces inevitably surrounding the moments of light. In a meta-literary and meta-narrative fashion, intermedial gestures appear to be necessary to the very possibility of *narration*, to its onward movement in space and time; at the same time, these gestures always entail a level of "fecund invisibility". In Ondaatje's literary narrative, the possibility, for various beings (human as well as nonhuman), events, and medial codes to exist next to each other, without one forcefully assimilating the other, is predicated on a Benjaminian kind of historical materialism in which darkness is the indispensable space/time wherein the actions of the present resonate and acquire (historical) meaning.

Iuliano, Fiorenzo

THE TRAGEDY THAT DARE NOT SPEAK ITS NAME: A READING OF ARTHUR KOPIT'S *OH DAD, POOR DAD, MAMMA'S HUNG YOU IN THE CLOSET AND I'M FEELING SO SAD*

Arthur Kopit's *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* (1962) has received so far limited scholarly attention, and the studies on the play have mostly focused on the text's psychoanalytic overtones. The play features the relationship between its bizarre protagonist, Mme. Rosepettle, and her son Jonathan, who is completely subjected to her despotic and repressive will. The Oedipal complex foreshadowed in the play, however, does not exhaust the complex matter of the text, whose references to Cuba and South American countries strongly ask for a political reading.
This article paper, consequently, reads the play as instancing the impossibility of an American national tragedy

in the Cold War era. The play, in fact, assaults the US chauvinist and anti-communist ideology of the 1950s, and displays its consequences upon individuals and society. The post-war paranoia is acted out in the hidden corpse of Mr. Rosepettle, which Mme. Rosepettle preserves in her closet. The corpse, as a fetishistic object (for Mme. Rosepettle) and a source of fear and anxiety (for Jonathan), signals the impossibility, for the US of the time, to identify with tangible models and positive values (despite the materialistic ethos of the culture of the 1950s, as witness Mme. Rosepettle's obsessive need for fun and self-gratification). On the contrary, only death and loss, as overhanging threats and macabre horizon of collective expectation, paradoxically provide the nation with a unifying sense of identification. The Cold War, as a conflict that was never directly waged or fought, but nevertheless informed American identity, politics and culture, thus functions as the 'void center' of the play. By instancing the lack (or the loss) as a site of affirmative identification, this fantasmatic war is what turns the play into an impossible tragedy.

Pireddu, Nicoletta

DECOLONIZZARE L'IDENTITÀ: ITALIA E AMERICA ALLO SPECCHIO

As it is often the case with countries where mass immigration is intense, ethnicity is one of the most evident expressions of identitary politics in the United States, and the community of Italian immigrants is undoubtedly characterized by a strong sense of ethnic identity. In fact, Italian American culture had to manage conflictual needs, and still needs to do so; on the one hand the search for a sense of belonging and participation to the adopted culture, on the other the struggle against mostly negative or diminishing stereotypes. Starting from recent and significant contributions to the debate, the essay analyzes the limits of categorizations, and calls for multiple perspectives in conceptualizing and representing Italian American culture in the context of diaspora and transcontinental immigration studies. Migration emerges thus as a model for mobility and flexibility, as a reinvention of the self and as a way of negotiating the other.