ESP Across Cultures

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ESP Across Cultures

ESP Across Cultures is a refereed international journal that publishes theoretical, descriptive and applied studies on varieties of English pertaining to a wide range of specialized fields of knowledge, such as agriculture, art and humanities, commerce, economics, education and vocational training, environmental studies, finance, information technology, law, media studies, medicine, politics, religion, science, the social sciences, sports, technology and engineering, tourism, and transport. The journal addresses a readership composed of academics, professionals, and students interested in English for special/specific purposes particularly from a cross-cultural perspective. The aim of the journal is to bring together scholars, practitioners, and young researchers working in different specialized language domains and in different disciplines with a view to developing an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach to the study of ESP.

ESP Across Cultures is covered in *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* (including *IBSS Online* and *IBSS-Extra*), *Linguistics & Language Behaviour Abstracts*, *MLA International Bibliography*, *Translation Studies Abstracts* and *Bibliography of Translation Studies*.

Foreword

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *ESP Across Cultures*! Our aim in choosing the title of our journal was to bring together two burgeoning areas of scientific research in the English language field, namely those of specialized discourse and cross-cultural studies. Our approach will be an eclectic one which does not privilege any particular theoretical framework, in the belief that intellectual insights may come from an infinitely wide range of perspectives. We shall also attempt to find a balance between publishing papers by authors whose academic credentials are well-known and younger authors who are in the early stages of their academic career.

Setting up a new journal is always a challenge, but doing so from a small and recently-established university such as that of Foggia, situated in the deep south of Italy, only enhances that challenge. But in a sense it seems entirely appropriate that this new venture should come from one of Italy's youngest universities, since there is a tangible sense of enthusiasm and desire to experiment that may sometimes be lacking these days in some of the historically more established centres of academic learning. We are therefore extremely grateful to all those at the University of Foggia who have so warmly encouraged us in setting up this journal. We also wish to express our sincere thanks to the members of our editorial board for their support and encouragement, and we are proud that many illustrious names have agreed to be part of this new undertaking.

This being the inaugural issue of *ESP Across Cultures*, we decided to put Rosita Maglie's paper first by way of an introduction, since it provides a succinct summary of ESP studies seen from a historical perspective.

We hope you will enjoy the papers selected for this first issue, and we welcome any comments or suggestions about how to improve our journal for future issues.

The Editors

Sara Laviosa
Denise Milizia
Christopher Williams

From ‘une langue une’ to linguistic varieties: an overview of ESP studies

Rosita Maglie

Abstract

This paper attempts to provide an introduction to the evolution of linguistic studies from the idea of language as one system (de Saussure 1916) to the acknowledgement of linguistic specialization (Firth 1957: 29). The necessity of recognizing and studying language in relation to the variables person-environment-context of communication laid the foundation of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). In particular, this paper focuses on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), a more specific field of inquiry since English has become the accepted medium for cross-linguistic professional transactions.

This paper considers what ESP is, how it has developed and how it can be classified according to the linguistic co-ordinates: vocabulary and discourse. Finally, it shows the most important trends of this discipline in international and national domains. In the international context, important areas within ESP-oriented studies (needs analysis, register analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis, rhetorical analysis and corpus-based analysis) have provided helpful material for ESP writing and teaching and continue to influence Italian research. Moreover, the valuable contribution of Italian scholars to ESP is investigated.

Given recent developments in ESP there is every reason to believe that research into professional discourse will continue to deepen our knowledge of many aspects and strategies of specialized communication in the future.

1. From ‘une langue une’ to linguistic varieties

During the nineteenth century, Romanticism showed a lively interest in language as a field of study. However, only the written or hypothesized language was studied as a system which was not under the influence of human beings. It was during the twentieth century that an interest in spoken language began. The static and impersonal view of language was replaced by a dynamic and relatively personal one. This change was due to scientific developments in different areas of human knowledge.

F. de Saussure (1857-1913) was the conceiver of the theory of *une langue une*, (language as one system), which is much criticized today. He was also the first to examine two aspects of language: *langue* (linguistic system as a social product) and *parole* (the real interpersonal use of language in a given situation).

Langue and *parole* became, then, the real main characters of every communicative linguistic exchange. Before de Saussure nobody had underlined the function of *parole* in linguistic description. However, the dichotomy between *langue* and *parole* has aroused controversy: most scholars find de Saussure's definition paradoxical because in it "*langue* is presented as a social fact which is in some way independent of social use" (Widdowson 1979: 10) and consequently not without a degree of abstraction. Nevertheless, his *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (1916) can still be appreciated, also given that the Geneva scholar could not have relied on the contributions of the new sciences interested in language, which stress the close relation between context and communication.

In the Soviet Union, de Saussure's attention to social interaction in language was attractive to **M.M. Bakhtin** (1895-1975) and his followers such as **V.N. Vološinov**. But they felt that he gave too much credence to the formalized code – hence to the grammar of proper usage – and too little importance to the fluidity of vernacular dialogue. Vološinov directly criticized de Saussure for his ignorance of the reality of the utterance over the dead codes of proper usage. The vernacular for Vološinov was "directly social"[1], without the mediation of written rules, and part of the ebb and flow of ordinary language.

Bakhtin, too, was interested in the fluidity of language, or what he called its dialogical character. Bakhtin took de Saussure's emphasis on the incompleteness of language and made it the defining feature. Meaning for Bakhtin was never fixed or exhaustive in a single interpretation because language was dialogical, with heteroglot meanings reacting with one another. Bakhtin's linguistic and literary work was later popularized outside the Soviet Union by **R. Jakobson**.

The evaluation and practical use of the contents of the aforementioned statements were delayed both because of political and cultural obstacles and because of the predominance of other theories in the linguistic field, such as **structuralism**, **behaviourism**, **functionalism** and **mentalism**[2].

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[1] The Soviet scholar also underlines the reciprocal influence between men and language since they are both produced and influenced by social factors (Vološinov 1976: 152).

[2.] Even today the Introduction of *The Linguistic Encyclopaedia* (2002), which provides a view of the history of linguistics, makes no reference to these studies carried out in the Soviet Union (Malmkjaer (ed.) 2002: xxv-xli).

Among structuralist and behaviourist linguists, the Americans **L. Bloomfield** (1887-1949) and **B.F. Skinner** (1904-1990) are worth mentioning. The former studied language by analysing the position and concordance of the different elements of discourse in a sentence at the grammatical-structural level. The latter analysed a subject's linguistic behaviour in terms of a reaction to personal and/or environmental stimuli. However, their investigation of language was not exhaustive insofar as they limited their inquiry to the analysis of single sentences which were 'built in a lab' outside real contexts[3].

Structuralism was combined with functionalism by the **Prague Linguistic Circle**, and a frame to analyse communicative situations was provided by the distinction between the addresser, message, addressee, context, code, and contact (channel or connection), made by **Jakobson** (1960).

Before this important differentiation, during the 1920s and 1930s the scholars belonging to this circle began to be interested in 'functional style', a peculiar feature of language for science and technology; but their initial stance was conservative in that they considered such language as inferior and clearly separated from general language. In the words of **Dubský**: "Some conservative linguists were puristically evaluating and condemning certain features in Czech technical, journalistic, and other specialized texts, assuming that these features contradicted or violated the norm of the language" (1972: 112).

N.A. Chomsky (1928-) also maintained that linguistics was not interested in linguistic variation, which should be excluded from linguistic study, but in structure (Chomsky 1957: 15). He distinguishes two fundamental aspects in the analysis of language, namely 'competence' (the ideal language user's knowledge of the rules of grammar) and 'performance' (the actual realization of this knowledge in utterances) which represents the problem with the system. Chomsky's theories have been criticized because, according to some experts, the most natural properties of communication are neglected in his linguistic analysis. This is founded on the study of grammar, idealized as an abstract system whose personal, socio-cultural, geographical and contextual factors are ignored.

The change from an idea of language as a non-contextualized system, typical of the Chomskyan mentalistic school, to the concept of language as a means of communication that is highly flexible and easy to use in several contexts was due to studies carried out mainly on register by the **London School** during the period after World War II.

J.R. Firth (1890-1960), exponent of the London School and a scholar interested in the cultural background of language, was one of the first to be concerned with register for special purposes. For Firth a 'restricted' language can be defined as "serving a circumscribed field of experience or action and can be said to have its own grammar and dictionary" (1968: 57).

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[3] In order to explain the discursive event, Bloomfield uses the example, which is now a classic, of a boy, Jack, and a girl, Jill, who walk along a path (Rossini Favretti 1998: 32-33). Skinner's theory on human verbal behaviour derives from experiments carried out on rats placed in a box.

In contrast with other theoretical models, the object of linguistic inquiry was, above all, the observable and the attested, embedded in the immediacy of social intercourse, and also the human being who, immersed in his/her culture, gradually accumulates roles:

> The multiplicity of social roles we have to play as members of a race, nation, class, family, school, club, as sons, brothers, lovers, fathers, workers, churchgoers, golfers, newspapers readers, public speakers, involves also a certain degree of linguistic specialization. Unity of language is the most fugitive of all unities whether it be historical, geographical, national, or personal. There is no such thing as 'une langue une' and there never has been" (Firth 1957: 29).

In other words, the actors in any communicative exchange play several roles according to the situation and functions to which they are linked. All this is possible thanks to language as an instrument that adapts itself to specific situations. It is in this process that language is influenced and enriched by the social environment which makes it acquire specialized variations.

The Firthian framework is the background to **M.A.K. Halliday**'s systemic functional grammar and study of registers. Halliday's theory of language is part of an overall theory of social interaction where language is seen as the exchange of meanings in interpersonal contexts. A Hallidayan grammar is therefore a grammar of meaningful choices rather than formal rules. By saying that language is part of the **social system**, Halliday means that language is subject to two types of variation: variation according to the *user* and variation according to *use*. The first type of variation is in accent and dialect that does not, in principle, entail any variation in meaning. Variation according to use, or **register variation**, produces variation in meaning. A register is the language you are speaking at a particular time, determined by what you and others are doing there and then, that is, by the nature of the ongoing social activity. The notion of register is a notion required to relate the functions of language to those aspects of the situation in which it is being used. According to Halliday, the relevant aspects of the situation are what he calls, respectively, **field**, **tenor** and **mode**. In other words, the functional organization of language in Halliday's theory reflects the structure of its context, the ideational level of language being related to the **field** of discourse, the interpersonal level related to the roles of **tenor**s, and the textual level related to the **mode** of communication.

We are a long way away from the Saussurean concept of *langue* and *parole* and the Chomskyan dichotomy between competence and performance, where individual usage had been dismissed as idiosyncratic, unobservable and too chaotic to be taken as the basis for a sound theory of language.

As we have seen, linguists began to feel the necessity to study language in relationship with the variables person-environment-context of communication, and lay the foundations of LSP study:

> [...] we now recognize that many technical and professional occupations give rise to special 'registers' usually with vocabularies outside the range of the ordinary

> educated man and with distinctive sentence patterns often of a restricted kind. The tendency of 'literary' people was formerly to scorn these 'languages' under such terms as jargon. Now we are more willing to accept their existence, particularly because modern methods of investigations and operations produce numerous concepts, materials and processes. […] It must be recognized that technical registers provide a swift, economical, efficient, impersonal, sometimes international means of exposition and discussion of specialized issues (Moody 1970: 50).

In this quotation, Moody identifies the cornerstones of linguistic differences in LSP concisely and efficiently: vocabulary, sentence pattern, impersonality of presentation, conciseness, economy, swiftness and adaptability of speech. He highlights the factors that have created these linguistic differences: endless changes in everyone's lives and jobs introduced by the advancement of scientific research and new discoveries. He points out the aims of such differences, i.e. to express new concepts and illustrate new processes. Finally, he postulates their international nature.

The definition and description of specialized varieties continues to characterize the research and study of modern linguistics and language teaching both internationally and nationally according to a number of approaches which are examined in the two following sections.

2. ESP linguistics in the international domain

ESP is a branch of LSP, a more general practical discipline, which has focused mainly on helping students learn the linguistic peculiarities of languages for specific purposes (from the grammar to the lexis of LSP, to certain discourse features of spoken and written texts and, finally, to the genres used within the LSP domain) which they must master in order to be considered competent members of the discourse communities they aspire to join. The separation of ESP from the more general movement is due to the ever-increasing importance of English as a lingua franca in cross-linguistic professional negotiations.

An exhaustive review of the history of ESP (Dudley & St. John 1998: 19-33) reiterates the expansion of English as the predominant language of world commerce and scholarship in the last half of the twentieth century and defines this phenomenon as a "naturally occurring and inevitable occurrence" (Benesch 2001: 25):

> The original flourishing of the ESP movement resulted from general developments in the world economy in the 1950s and 1960s: the growth of science and technology, the increased use of English as the international language of science, technology and business, the increased economic power of oil-rich countries and the increased number of international students studying in the UK, USA and Australia (Dudley & St. John 1998: 19).

ESP has traditionally been split into two main parts: EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes). The classification is generally presented in a tree diagram which separates EAP and EOP according to the field of study or profession, as in Figure 1.

The peculiarities of ESP in comparison with common language and other linguistically specialized varieties

> are conspicuous above all on a lexical level, e.g. terminology; and additionally in the usage of certain grammatical categories, e.g. passive voice as a sign of depersonalization; syntactic constructions, e.g. omission of phrasal elements within noun phrases; and textual structures, e.g. research article (Hoffman 1998: 20).

The activity of needs, register, discourse and genre analysis as well as the results of rhetorical and computer-based analysis has provided the ESP scholar with a fuller understanding of how terminology, selective syntax and specialized texts – both written and spoken – aim to prepare learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study or job situation.

Since the 1960s this type of activity has been carried out, with some variations, to the present day. The idea is that the first task of an ESP scholar in any setting is to carry out a 'needs analysis', i.e. a linguistic deconstruction of genuine texts written by experts for real-world purposes. This model of ESP research, together with the tradition of 'register analysis' (Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998: 21), helps the scholar/teacher identify and prioritize aspects of textual genres that students must learn to join the discourse communities of their choice. For example, Barber's 1962 article on the grammatical and lexical features of 'modern scientific prose' is cited by Swales (1988) as a groundbreaking text for ESP. Barber's article used the descriptive modus operandi of linguistics (Halliday et al. 1964) to provide a lexicostatistical profile of a very broadly construed 'scientific register' based on a corpus drawn from several disciplines (Dudley & St. John 1998: 20). The main findings of Barber's study were that the continuous tense forms were so rare in scientific prose that "they could virtually

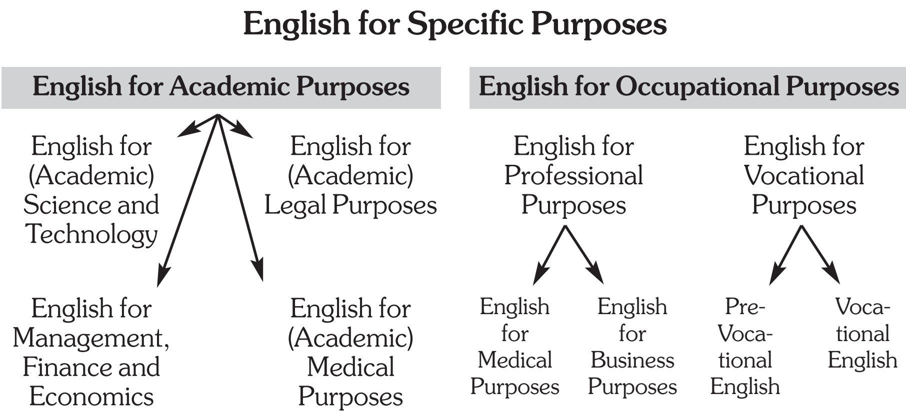

Figure 1. ESP classification by professional area (Dudley & St. John 1998: 6)

be discounted" (Swales 1990: 2) and that the passive voice occurred much more significantly in scientific than in non-scientific discourse.

Thus Huddleston (1971) analysed the occurrence of verb forms in scientific English (as cited in Swales 1990: 2). Those early inquiries were stimulated by the reasonable goal of "provid[ing] (within their limitations) a descriptively adequate account of distributional frequencies in the target language variety and thus offer[ing] a basis for prioritizing teaching items in specialized ESL materials" (*ibid*.).

The research article and its sub-parts are among the more well-researched genres as Swales's list of studies shows (Swales 1990: 131-132). These studies can be characterized along three dimensions: fundamental *linguistic or rhetorical feature(s)*, the *field* (e.g. physics) and the *corpus* on which the analysis was performed. Representative in this regard are the studies of tense in engineering texts (Lackstrom *et al.* 1973), lexis (Inman 1978), modals (Ewer 1979), and topic sentences (Popken 1987) in research articles across a range of disciplines. Linguistic, especially grammatical, features are of particular interest, e.g. 'tense and aspect' (Ard 1982), 'NP-development' (Dubois 1982), and 'active' or 'passive voice' (Tarone *et al.* 1981). From the perspective of later research, insufficient attention was paid to variables such as task and target audience influencing text structure. On the practical level "[…] investigations into sentence length, voice, and vocabulary" have had little to contribute to the process of teaching academic writing skills (Swales 1990: 3). This is because the final research reports culminated in "discrete item surface feature assemblies of data" which lacked adequate context to "[…] be of much interest to those concerned with L1 (or for that matter L2) composition" (*ibid*.).

ESP-type investigations became both *narrower* and *deeper* in the 1980s (*ibid.*). This swing in research reflected a contemporary trend in the Human Sciences generally characterized by severe criticism of many 'common sense' distinctions between disciplines (see the Foucauldian perspective on this change of direction in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; a socio-rhetorical approach can be found in Geisler 1994; for a post-process writing perspective on disciplinarity, see Kent 1999). In this case, broad register labels like 'medical', 'legal'or even 'newspaper' English were shown to be "too wide", i.e. they assume that the content of the discourse must be the controlling variable of textual form. Those early studies did not consider how textual forms responded to "variation in communicative purpose, addresser-addressee relationships and genre conventions" (Swales 1990: 3).

As Dudley-Evans & St John (1998: 21) note, the first significant ESP (really EST, or English for Science and Technology) textbook by A.J. Herbert *The Structure of Technical English* (1965) represents both the promise and the limitations of register analysis. While teachers appreciated the treatment of technical vocabulary, they found the book "difficult to use". Moreover, theoretical objections were raised as follows: "[that] the concentration on a restricted range of grammar and vocabulary was an insufficient basis for a textbook on EST and that this concentration on form needed to be replaced by a concentration on language *use* and *communication.*" (Dudley-Evans & St John 1998: 22).

This complaint acted as a stimulus to the next stage of research in ESP. The field became increasingly open to include analyses of texts that extended to the rhetorical and discourse levels (in contrast to earlier quantitative studies which concentrated only on lexico-grammatical elements at the sentence level or below).

Representative of the rhetorical shift occurring in ESP is a contrastive study focusing on when and how writers use *we+active verb* as opposed to its passive alternative for rhetorical effects in two astrophysics papers (Tarone *et al.* 1981). This study has since been updated and replicated with a cross-cultural comparative twist (Tarone *et al.* 1998). Tarone's (1998) research staff observed that:

> (1) *We + active verb* indicates the author's procedural choice, whereas the passive indicates the standard procedure; (2) *we* is used to describe the author's own work and the passive in the work of others unless the other's work contrasts with that of the author in which case the active is used; (3) the passive is used for the author's proposed studies. And (4) the use of the active is determined by focus due to the length of an element or the need for emphasis (*ibid*. 113).

These results lend support to the idea of a comparable corpus from Russian astrophysics articles. Once such 'mysteries' of academic textual construction are uncovered, they can guide discipline-based writing construction in a way that context-free lexicostatistics or mere frequency counts of various grammatical features cannot (Bronson 2001). Similar rhetorical or discourse-level analyses include those concentrating on paragraph development (Weissberg 1984), authorial comment (Adams-Smith 1984) or overall rhetorical structure (Hill *et al.* 1982).

Thus, as models of language in the 1980s emphasized 'communicative competence' (Hymes 1974), the overall efficacy of the writer's message was highlighted at the expense of more prescriptive formulations of style. Recent issues of the journal *English for Specific Purposes* show that this line of rhetorically-inspired research continues into the present. A recent study of the Acknowledgements sections taken from various domains (biology, economics, mathematics, medicine, linguistics, and sociology) is a case in point: "Though apparently only a minor part of research literature, such sections encode a wide range of communicative strategies, whose socio-pragmatic constraints can be interpreted in terms of "generic meaning potential" (Gianoni 1997: 1).

Applying a method of rhetorical analysis similar to that originally developed by Swales (1981) and elaborated in Swales (1990), the Acknowledgement macrostructure is divided into three rhetorical units or 'moves', consisting of several sub-steps. Underlining the interpersonal nature of scientific discourse, the study concludes that "like linguistic politeness, Acknowledgements are affected by the relative status and social distance of participants, with senior academics earning more credits for the same type of support" (Gianoni 1997: 1).

Other analogous research studies have focused on the use of pronouns in scientific journal articles. Regarding written text as interaction, Kuo (1998) investigates how the usage of personal pronouns may show the writers' perceptions of their own role in research and their relationship with expected readers as well as the scientific-academic community. The findings reveal that

> [...] first-person plural pronouns are used far more frequently than other types of personal pronouns. A further analysis of first-person plural pronouns suggests that they can have a number of semantic references and perform multiple functions in the journal article. Examples from sampled texts show how writers use strategically the exclusive *we* to refer to writers themselves or the inclusive *we* to refer to either writers and readers or the discipline as a whole for different communicative purposes. The use of second-person, third-person and indefinite pronouns also reflects a writer's intention to secure cooperation from, and stress solidarity with, the readers (Kuo 1998: 121).

Such findings draw on a simultaneous examination of linguistic features (pronouns in this case) and the underlying rhetorical rationale for the use of them. This study and its findings are representative of the rhetorical/discourse analysis approach to ESP needs analysis which, having gained impetus in the mid-1980s, is still very vital in ESP.

As mentioned earlier, the focus of ESP narrowed during the 1980s to descriptions of particular linguistic or discourse features within specific disciplinary genres like the research article Introduction (Swales 1990) or the Acknowledgements section (Gianoni 1997). This narrowing has been accompanied by a concomitant "deepening" (Swales 1990: 2) or, perhaps more precisely, "thickening" (Geertz 1973) of the research record to embrace the consideration of authorial purpose and social context, thereby aspiring to a "multi-layered" rather than "one-dimensional" account of textual form (Swales 1990: 3). Thus, as in Tarone *et al.* (1998), an increasing focus has been placed upon *why* authors decide to use a particular lexis and grammar (c.f. Bhatia 1993; Swales and Najiar 1987; Samraj 2002). A typical recent study (Holmes 1997) analysed the Discussion sections of thirty social science research articles, ten each from the disciplines of history, political science and sociology. The articles were investigated in terms of the sequence and structure of their rhetorical moves. "It was found that, although there were fundamental similarities to the natural sciences, social science Discussion sections also displayed some distinctive features. History texts were particularly distinctive, and of the three disciplines bore the least resemblance to those of the natural sciences" (Holmes 1997: 321). Such studies record the ways in which academic genres can vary significantly across disciplines, having important implications for ESP needs analysis.

"Work in ESP was by the middle 80s, not merely interested in characterizing linguistic *effects*; it was also concerned to seek out the determinants of those effects" (Swales 1990: 4). Thus, ESP was to be concerned with discourse as communication and interaction in a social context. The route of ESP toward a sociocultural orientation can be perceived in the researchers' changing ideas about the objects of their study. For example, a text and its genre are viewed as “autonomous” (Olson 1994), i.e. as “conduits” (Reddy 1979) for pre-existing and autonomous meaning in earlier register analyses. The *discourse community* in these studies is an unexamined ‘constant’, a monolithic space of expert readers. Whether based on register or discourse/rhetorical analyses, studies of this type are based on the common sense idea of disciplines as distinct and varied ‘fields’ which are, in turn, embodied in canonically shaped texts. Similarly, the *task* of the learner is reflexively construed: s/he must internalize through direct instruction and practice the textual norms of the discourse community which s/he wishes to join.

Work in the mid to late 1980s began to focus more on *text structure as a realization of the writer’s communicative purpose* and less on the morpho-syntactical elements of the sentence level (McKinlay 1984). Therefore, the previously monolithic images of the text-as-conduit and the discipline-as-discourse community were being interpreted in increasingly functional, contextual and social terms. The researchers’ notion of *genre* expanded from an unproblematic ‘type of text’ to include conventional purposes and aspects of social context associated with a given textual structure. Contemporary work in ESP, as exemplified in recent editions of the *ESP Journal*, includes an increasing number of ethnographically-oriented studies which replace after-the-fact intuitions about intended meanings with empirical investigations of how real people in real settings produce and interpret textual genres *in vivo*.

Another aspect of note that can be inferred from the evaluation of contemporary issues of the *ESP Journal* and the update on ESP studies carried out so far, is the use of corpora of specialized texts as an invaluable research and teaching methodology/tool to devise more accurate descriptions of English in professional domains. This trend was evident in the 25th International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English Conference on *Corpus Linguistics: The state of art twenty-five years on*, held at the University of Verona, 19-23 May 2004, which dedicated a whole session to ESP.

3. ESP linguistics in the national domain

In Italy, descriptions of subject-specific language are relatively recent. The first academic publication on this topic dates back to 1980 by L. Jottini (ed.) *Il Ruolo delle Lingue nelle Facoltà di Scienze Politiche. L’insegnamento dell’Inglese per Scopi Specifici*.

ESP linguistics in Italy has embraced different approaches from the level of word to the level of communication, which are influenced by international trends in LSP studies. Italian linguistic research into specialized texts has been carried out within the pedagogic domain aimed mainly at the acquisition of second language skills and translation competence in specialized contexts. Evidence of this interest is provided by the long series of publications in these fields.

What is peculiar to Italian studies of LSP is the designation of specialized varieties which is still open to debate. There are different expressions commonly used to refer to this variety of language usage.

To begin with, there is the case of *lingua speciale* where, according to Cortelazzo (1994: 8) and Scarpa (2001: 1), speciality includes not only referential needs (specialized lexicon) but also the communicative needs of a restricted group of speakers. On the other hand, Gotti (1991) claims that this label should be reserved for those languages different from standard language which use proper rules and particular symbols and whose number of messages available for communication is fixed and finite (an example is the 'Q Code' used in the telecommunications field). Furthermore, Sobrero (1993: 239) considers this expression too general as it includes *linguaggi specialistici* (the language of physics, mathematics, information technology, etc.) and *linguaggi settoriali* (the language of newspapers, television, politics, etc.) where the former are different from the latter because of the higher level of specialization.

Sometimes the expression *microlingue* has been used, but this is said to be inappropriate because it inscribes LSP in a linguistic microcosm lacking expressive features typical of general language.

Another expression to denote LSP is that of *linguaggi settoriali* which embraces both language for advertisement, politics etc. and languages for science, information technology etc. (Beccaria 1973; Serianni and Trifone 1994; Dardano 1994). This term is rather vague since some of the *linguaggi settoriali* refer to the 'mode' used (for instance, newspaper and TV), others to the purpose (sport, literary criticism, advertisement) others to the social environment (underworld slang) (Gotti 1991: 7-8). It seems to imply a division within languages for special purposes hiding their interdisciplinarity at the lexical, morphosyntactical and textual level.

Perhaps the most correct term is *linguaggi specialistici* as it beckons to the use that specialists make of the language to refer to some typical realities within their profession. The term *linguaggi specialistici* focuses on three entities: the kind of user, the specific reality referred to, and the specific use of the language. In other words, only when these entities are present at once does a *linguaggio specialistico* manifest itself (Gotti 1991: 8).

Proof of this heterogeneity concerning the definition, in the Italian debate, of the variety of languages used in specific fields belonging to social and professional life (Berruto 1987: 14) is the text *Tradurre i Linguaggi Settoriali* (Cortese 1996). Notwithstanding the title showing a linguistic choice on this matter, some of the authors use different expressions according to their stance: Evangelisti Allori uses *linguaggio settoriale*, "language for specific purposes", *linguaggio specialistico* as synonyms, Merlini Barbaresi even accepting the denomination of *linguaggio settoriale* recognizes its vagueness and uses a more precise term to refer to economic discourse, namely "special discourse", and Cecioni calls the language for law a *lingua speciale*.

At the heart of Italian LSP studies is CERLIS. This centre, directed by M. Gotti, was founded in 1999 at the University of Bergamo to promote research in the area of languages for specific purposes both at a synchronic and a diachronic level, along two main methodological lines: one focusing on description and theoretical issues, the other on application and teaching perspectives. Within the Centre several interdisciplinary research lines have been identified, such as the use of modality in specialized texts, the characteristics of the language used in the tourist industry, the features of legal texts and the teaching of languages for specific purposes.

CERLIS organized two international conferences which mirror the recent interests in LSP: the first, held on 5-6 May 2000, focused on the semantic and pragmatic values of modality in specialized texts. The success of the first event encouraged the organization of a second CERLIS Conference on *Conflict and Negotiation in the Language of Specialized Texts* which included political, scientific, academic, economic, and legal discourse. At the moment, the centre is organizing the 15th European Symposium on Language for Special Purposes about *New Trends in Specialized Discourse*. These currents underline the most recent and prevailing European interests in ESP: a) Linguistic features of specialized discourse; b) Textual and genre analysis of specialized discourse; c) Multilingualism and cultural aspects of specialized communication; d) Cognitive aspects of specialized languages; e) Pedagogical aspects of LSP; f) The translation of specialized discourse; g) LSP and multimedia communication; h) Terminology and terminography; and i) Diachronic perspectives on LSP.

Finally, the launch of the new journal *ESP Across Cultures* further attests to an increasing interest towards cross-cultural variation in Italian ESP academic and professional settings.

4. Conclusion

The range of ESP-oriented studies analysed in this paper, including needs, register, discourse and genre analysis as well as the results of rhetorical and computer-based analysis, has played an important role in developing ESP theory and practice. There are very good reasons to believe that this trend will continue since in many cases the ESP practitioner as researcher, translator or teacher is not in the position of being the 'primary knower' of the carrier content of the material. It is thus essential that s/he takes an interest in the disciplines and the professional activities s/he is involved in, adopting the stance of the linguistic expert who has a knowledge of communication skills and linguistic accuracy, but needs to 'negotiate' with specialists in the field, glossaries, corpora resources, and findings of previous ESP studies on how specialized texts work, how they are used within a particular discipline or profession, and how they attempt to persuade their audiences of the validity of their claims and arguments.

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Language at work: the first ten years

Francesca Bargiela-Chiappini

Abstract

This article is a personal account of a decade of research and a subjective perspective on the evolution of the field of business discourse. In my first paper on this subject, I argued against the use of simulated, decontextualized business language data (Bargiela-Chiappini 1991). Through the subsequent ethnographic approach to the language of business meetings, I came to an understanding of language as action which we have recently reframed as 'business discourse' (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 2002). All this reflects the evolution of a potentially multi-disciplinary endeavour that is attracting scholars from diverse disciplines. In the article I trace this development back to studies of the language of negotiation, through institutional discourse and business communication, to organizational discourse. I go on to describe the progressive shaping of business discourse through cross-fertilization between social sciences. Collaborative research between disciplines is a prerequisite for the testing of a multi-methodology that draws on, among others, sociolinguistics, ethnography, discourse analysis, cross-cultural pragmatics and organizational analysis. Unresolved differences in approaches are very often attributable to unconsciously held epistemological and ontological assumptions, which effectively separate researchers engaged in the same enterprise. In the concluding paragraphs, the article touches on the most recent challenges to business discourse arising from its engagement with social theory and postmodernity.

1. Introduction

A bird's eye survey of the literature on negotiation since the Seventies reveals little of interest to linguists, who would have to wait until the early Eighties for the first timid acknowledgements of the role of verbal and non-verbal behaviour in the negotiation process (Scott 1981; Atkin 1983; Wall 1985). In many contemporary linguistics circles, the word 'negotiation' was almost entirely associated with business negotiations, that is, sales interactions. Accordingly, when in 1990 I embarked on research in language at work[1], my first recordings were simulated sales. This was a compromise at a time when breaking into the 'real world' of corporations was still reserved to few privileged researchers, usually sociologists.

At the beginning of the Nineties, in the rest of Europe, colleagues from the Scandinavian countries had established themselves as the founders of research in the discourse and the pragmatics of business negotiations, especially inter-cultural negotiations, for which they have become deservedly well-known. In Britain, I was among the first few to pioneer the shift to authentic business discourse, after realizing that the gap between simulated and 'natural' language could not and would not be filled by resorting to methodological acrobatics. My first fieldwork experiences in Italy and Britain brought home the isolation and the challenges of the linguist turned 'organizational ethnographer', struggling for access to precious and sensitive real-life data.

2. Discovering organizational ethnography

Disciplinary as well as physical dislocation characterized ethnographic research in companies. Away from the cosiness of the well-worn university landscape, I had to measure up with often conflicting expectations imposed by my multiple role as an academic and a company-based researcher. In the latter context, my linguist's identity could become a double-edged sword. I remember being given access to British companies because I was seen as a harmless 'linguist'. In business settings, a linguist was understood to be a person fluent in modern languages, hardly a relevant credential for the type of work that I had in mind. Admittedly, this misunderstanding only arose during my early fieldwork in Britain. In Italy, when I conducted the second part of my comparative study of meetings (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris 1997), my academic identity was unquestioned but at times the microphone still generated suspicion, especially among the 'powerful'.

While wearing my linguist badge, the analysis of language at work soon required familiarity with a broader disciplinary spectrum than I had been trained in: sociology was resurrected from the dust of undergraduate studies; ethnography and social psychology, as well as management and organization studies offered insights for a more comprehensive interpretation of situated language action. Social constructionism and the interpretative approach known as 'sensemaking' (Weick 1995) seemed then to meet both my personal and professional need to penetrate the workings of corporate language beyond its surface manifes-

[1] I am using the 'language at work' banner inclusively, aware of the varied membership gathering under it.

tations. The daily observation of managers led me to conclude that they were engaging in sense-making through language in pursuit of some sort of coherence, a sense of order within themselves and with the others and the world.

On this point, we wrote:

> To insist on sense-making is to acknowledge its fundamental role in the interpretation of organizational dis-order where meetings perform the function of public fora that enable individuals to confront and to adjust to multiple realities, i.e. weave the threads of interpersonal and social coherence (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris 1997: 57).

This realization represents the first epistemological shift that I experienced on engaging with corporate language analysis. My earlier, rather limiting discourse analyses of simulated data revealed their inadequacy when compared with the new pragma-linguistic approach to language at work that analysed language as a contextualized process, rather than an end product. The richness of pragmatics married quite happily with a mild social constructionism in the cross-cultural study of meetings in Britain and Italy. Researching the Italian companies posed a further challenge to my hybrid identity: the psychological shock of re-immersion into what was my native culture forced me to question taken-for-granted assumptions and stereotypes about individual and group identities and their cultural context. It was then that I turned to social and cultural psychology, and linguistic anthropology, for further enlightenment. I have been in touch with these disciplines ever since, to identify potential links between a deeper understanding of the workings and interplay of culture and the new reflexive and self-reflexive individual.

My position on language and work by the end of the Nineties is captured in the following quotation, where "language" replaces "writing" in the original text: "Language *at* work and *for* work is equivalent to language *as* work; that is language is seen as an activity that shapes organizational and social structures" (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 1999: 2, original emphasis).

3. The contemporary scene

During the 1990s, research on 'language at work' witnessed a momentous evolution from language needs analysis and the study of language of intra-cultural and inter-cultural negotiations to organizational discourse, through business discourse and computer-mediated communication, and from institutional language, mainly medical and legal, to professional discourse (see the extensive bibliography in Geluykens and Pelsmaekers 1999). The increased variety of perspectives on language at work has attracted contributions from sociologists, psychologists, ethnographers, anthropologists and communication scholars. In fact, this potential multi-disciplinarity has translated into colleagues from sister disciplines working on organizational communication. This begs the question: is language at work going multi-disciplinary? The trends just mentioned, which continue in the current decade, seem to suggest just that.

Arguably, the variety of disciplinary approaches available in language at work research are both a strength and a dangerous weakness. It is a strength because if a certain degree of (multi)disciplinary consolidation can be achieved in the next few years, the next ambitious horizon may be the formation of an inter-disciplinary field. On the other hand, it is also its greatest weakness: lack of communication between (some) disciplinary languages may eventually prove an insurmountable obstacle to a more coherent identity. Elsewhere (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 2002; Bargiela-Chiappini 2004), I have dealt with the issue of inter-disciplinarity in some detail. Here I will only mention the case of another discipline, business communication, as an illustration of the limitations of multi-disciplinarity. Business communication, a well-established discipline in American academic programmes, is marred by the notorious competition between theory and application, i.e. the conflict of interests arising between research and teaching/training priorities. This situation typifies much of the current discussion on disciplinary identity and the status of researchers in the broad field of language at work.

The literature also laments the disparate assembly of disciplinary interests that are uncomfortably accommodated under the umbrella of business communication. Against the perils of 'multi-disciplinarity', Rogers (2001) proposes a twofold remedy, namely: 'convergence' and 'commonality of purpose'. A practical response to her call for disciplinary consolidation is a new model of collaborative research across disciplines, or 'partnership research' (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 2001). However, speculations about theoretical convergence and commonality are unlikely to break new ground if researchers from various disciplines are reluctant to talk to each other. Both the humanities and the social sciences should be heavily implicated in this multi-party dialogue[2].

In Europe, discourse analysis, with its more recent offshoots of critical discourse analysis and anthropological discourse analysis, has been at the forefront of the study of language at work. Admittedly, earlier work (in the Eighties and early Nineties) had tended to concentrate on what would now be labelled 'institutional or professional discourse', especially in educational, legal and medical settings. Research on business discourse, i.e. managerial, corporate and organizational discourse, only gained prominence later in the Nineties. These belated beginnings are probably attributable to a certain reluctance to enter the worlds of business and management and to the objective difficulties of access to companies. Unlike conversation analysis, discourse analytic approaches offered the availability of a concept of 'context', which could bridge the gap between micro and macro dimensions (but see also the seminal work of Boden 1994).

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[2] The prestigious journal *Human Relations* has made it its policy to work for the integration of social sciences by actively encouraging multi-disciplinarity, multi-method and multi-dimension research.

It could be argued that contextual engagement reached a climax when discourse analysis took a 'critical' turn, i.e. it began to claim active engagement with the social, the political and the cultural by underwriting an agenda for social change and against inequality (whether derived from gender, class, race or status). In the Nineties, the editorials of *Discourse & Society*, the first journal that eagerly opened its pages to critical discourse analysis, testify to the status granted to the critical discourse analytical paradigm by politically committed scholars. In the words of its editor:

> D&S represents a 'transdisciplinary' approach, which tries to fully reconceptualize the analysis of both discourse and society. Traditional analytical and disciplinary boundaries, e.g. those between macro and micro, between the cognitive and the social, or between system and use, may turn out to be less relevant in such an approach, or at least require new forms of integration (van Dijk 1997: 5-6).

'Transdisciplinarity' and the reconceptualization of discourse were rather slow processes in the domain of language at work. 'Organizational discourse' (Mumby & Clare 1997), 'professional discourse' (Gunnarsson *et al.* 1997), 'business discourse' (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris 1997) finally achieved their sub-disciplinary status in the second half of the Nineties. Of course, their best known forerunner, institutional discourse, boasted by then a twenty-year-long tradition (e.g. Odell & Goswami 1985; Agar 1985; Drew & Heritage 1992).

Conversation analysis (CA) has continued to remain immune from the critical bug, although it has already begun to wonder about the soundness of total 'decontextualization'. One of the most noteworthy studies of language at work carried out within the CA tradition is probably Deirdre Boden's *The Business of Talk*. In it, multi-disciplinary insights from social and organizational theory, ethnomethodology, sociology and management, are channeled into a fine-grained study of "meetings […] as the very stuff of management" and instrumental to "the accomplishment of the organization" (Boden 1994: 82). Boden's fascination with the "fine distinctions that actually make the organization come alive" (*ibid.* 52) was not intended to change the corporate practices that she observed. The CA tradition that Boden's work so eminently represents is totally removed from the political engagement position held by critical discourse analysts.

4. Concurring disciplines and emerging issues

That research should be 'applied' to the understanding and resolution of the problems under examination is a widely accepted tenet of the critical analytical approach (van Dijk 1997: 451). Norman Fairclough's manifesto (Fairclough 2000) is an apt example of a call to action with a very specific political target, namely neo-liberalism. The critical dimension is likely to thrive within organizational discourse, a multi-disciplinary approach to corporate discursive practices which now boasts an international virtual organization[3], the creation of which is arguably an indicator of an emerging (sub)discipline. The new association's remit is a continuing challenge to the business discourse studies agenda in a number of ways.

Firstly, the International Centre for Research in Organizational Discourse, Strategy and Change (ICRODSC) is unashamedly multi-disciplinary and applied. Scholars working under its banner are likely to be specialists in one or more branches of management, with a social science background and they may never have undertaken systematic language studies as part of their academic formation. For some of them, the 'ultra-applied' membership, discourse is a means to practical ends. For example, discourse accesses corporate symbolism, a powerful tool for company re-engineering or organizational culture change. Metaphorical language can be manipulated in internal company documents to increase (the perception of) effectiveness of top-down communication. Among the research-oriented membership, the discovery of discourse and its interdependence with organizational action and structure will have opened up new theoretical vistas that embrace postmodernism and the French social theorists (Westood & Linstead 2001).

The critical label has become attached to a whole array of disciplines and fields of study that had earlier been considered 'orthodox', or politically 'neutral'. There may now be the danger that the critical paradigm becomes *the* paradigm, hence the challenge to young academics "to criticize the language and rhetoric of the established critical writers – even to expose the self-interest and political economy of the sign 'critical' " (Billig 2000: 292). Michael Billig's critique is only one of the voices raised against a certain complacent lack of self-reflexivity and self-critique. From elsewhere, a strong attack aimed primarily at the allegedly weak philosophical foundations of CDA brands the discipline with 'excessive ambition': "Not only does it claim to offer an understanding of discursive processes, but also of society as a whole, of what is wrong with it, and of how it can and should be changed" (Hammersley 1997: 245).

As mentioned earlier, diverse conceptualizations of context often underpin methodological preferences. One of the outcomes of a more self-critical application of critical analysis could generate a more sophisticated understanding of context, adding to descriptive delicacy and interpretative impact. In his research on asylum seekers, Blommaert employs three sociolinguistic contextual dimensions, namely linguistic-communicative resources, text-trajectories and data histories, which enable him to map power exercised "*in* language and not only *through* language" (Blommaert 2001: 29). It is no mere chance that these new insights should arise from disciplinary cross-fertilization as it is no mere historical accident that within the social sciences and, to a lesser extent, the humanities, we are witnessing a robust movement towards multi-disciplinary research.

[3] The association is known as International Centre for Research in Organizational Discourse, Strategy and Change (ICRODSC for short) and can be visited at www.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/mgtwww/icrod/icrod.html.

Mature disciplines like sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, ethnography, are naturally seeking to forge new alliances that will not only guarantee their survival as individual disciplines through knowledge import, but will contribute to the formation of new disciplinary branches through knowledge grafting. Traditional disciplines, and their recent 'offshoots', have been at the forefront of new research focusing on situated discourse, including language at work. Ethnography, linguistic anthropology and pragmatics come readily to mind, and, more recently, critical sociolinguistics, interactional sociolinguistics and feminist studies. Ethnography boasts probably the most varied selection of language at work studies, as testified by articles in dedicated journals (e.g. *The Journal of Ethnography*) and monographic works (e.g. Mintzberg 1973; Jackall 1988; Watson 1994; Schwartzman 1989).

The emphasis on the 'interpretative' power of ethnographic research (Denzin 1997) has shifted the attention from the object of observation to its agent, i.e. to the observer/researcher and her role in the production of interpretative narratives. The role of emotions has finally been acknowledged, not only in the actual data analysis, but also as a variable affecting data selection and collection (Cylwik 2001). Interviews, particularly if on sensitive topics and/or with vulnerable subjects, are an ideal site for the examination of the interplay of language and affectivity. The tension between the objectivity of the research report and the subjectivity of the reporter's discourse is likely to remain unresolved, and perhaps rightly so.

Like ethnography, linguistic anthropology believes that "to understand the meaning of linguistic messages one must study them within the contexts in which they are produced and interpreted" (Duranti 2001: 30). When Dell Hymes first used the term 'linguistic anthropology', back in the 1960s, he was referring to a study of language within an anthropological framework (*ibid.* 5), where linguistic (i.e. structuralist) analysis was combined to ethnographic methods (*ibid.* 31). As Duranti notes, recent linguistic ethnography has subscribed to a constructivist understanding of social categories such as gender and status and privilege recordings of natural interactions as the primary source of data (*ibid.*).

Social variables, and social inequalities, continue to be the core concern of interactional sociolinguistics and of the new disciplinary offshoot known as critical sociolinguistics. Their analytical focus varies from macro (critical sociolinguistics) to micro (interactional sociolinguistics), with critical sociolinguistics taking a historically-grounded diachronic approach and interactional linguistics a local and synchronic approach to data interpretation. Both critical and interactional sociolinguists would agree that theirs is a 'political' take on situated discourses. Finally, gender features in an increasing number of language at work studies (e.g. Holmes 2000; Mulac *et al,* 2000; Kendall & Tannen 1997). The combination of feminist studies and the persistence of gender inequalities in the workplace will continue to provide theoretical insights and empirical material for this new but very active field of enquiry.

5. Pointers towards a future research agenda

In our book *Managing Language* we write about the need for pragma-linguistics analysis as an attempt to capture organizational complexity through discourse as action. Our contribution to this task is a multi-method research approach drawing on ethnography, discourse analysis, cross-cultural pragmatics and organizational analysis. Linguistic pragmatics is not without its critics. Jef Verschueren (1999) highlights some of the discipline's limitations with which the business discourse analyst must contend, namely:

(1) its focus on language functions rather than language functioning;

(2) its obsession with speaker's intentionality and with Grice's notion of conversational co-operation;

(3) the ambiguity of its understanding of context and 'culture';

(4) the insistence on treating face-to-face interaction as the prototypical and neutral mode of communication;

(5) the neglect of intertextuality, i.e. interacting voices and discourses.

Although a typology of language functions may be useful baggage for the organizational researcher, the mapping and interpreting of language 'functioning' in context must remain the objective of any sound piece of corporate fieldwork. Arguably, not all the 'social' is translatable in discourse[4] but discourse, e.g. language at work, is intimately related to its social and cultural surroundings. This realization was forcibly brought home during a cross-cultural study of an Anglo-Italian joint venture. Much of my Italian background that I had taken for granted and that had been superseded by English experience slowly became foregrounded again in conversations and interviews with Italian managers. Cultural sense-making was a response to the need to understand language functioning in its proper organizational, regional and historical context.

It is encouraging to see that the dominant cognitivist paradigm in traditional psychology has made room for social and cultural perspectives. Social and cultural psychology bridges the gap between the individual and the social in ways that illuminate areas of verbal communication that have been so far inaccessible. Agency and social structure thus become engaged with each other in a fruitful tension that does not seek mutual suppression but rather enhanced inclusive understanding. In corporate communication, the dialectic engagement of agency and structure is paralleled by intertextuality, that is the interdependence of written and spoken texts. Intertextuality introduces a diachronic dimension of analysis that is missing in linguistic pragmatics and that sits comfortably with a dynamic and multi-layered notion of context (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 2002).

[4] Of course the poststructuralist theory expounded by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe posits precisely the opposite (Philips and Jørgensen 2002). On the range between positivist realism and pure discursive social constructionism I would favour a much 'softer' position towards the constructionist end of the spectrum.

Finally, I would like to comment on the privileged status granted to face-to-face interactions in linguistic pragmatics research. Regardless of the far-reaching advances in IT, the ubiquity of the computer and facsimile, much corporate business is still transacted face-to-face (e.g. inter-firm or inter-functional meetings and sensitive or highly complex tasks). This is not to say that FtF communication happens in isolation from other forms of communication: intertextuality will have alerted us to the interdependence of organizational textualizations, be they written or spoken, and to their belonging to the wider domain of corporate semiotics. In this multifaceted domain, the defence of mono-method research is rapidly becoming unsustainable. It is for this reason that in our programmatic statement on the future of business communication (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 2001) we have suggested 'partnership research' as a model that goes beyond multi-method and into multi-disciplinary research.

In this article I wish to go one step further than methods and approaches and to touch upon theoretical possibilities. There is justified excitement among discourse scholars at the opportunities afforded by developments in social theory: the post-modern (with a hyphen) contributions, such as structuration theory (Giddens 1984) or the later work of the Frankfurt School (e.g Jürgen Habermas); or, some of the postmodern (one word) debates on agency and discourse, dominated by French philosophy. Interestingly, organization theory and management studies (e.g. Westwood & Linstead 2001) have been among the first to take on board Foucault, Lyotard and Baudrillard, sometimes with mixed results.

Inevitably, social theory and praxis have been drawn into the current debate on globalization and the ethics that should go with it. In his highly readable *Postmodernity*, David Lyon (1999: 105) writes that there is among sociologists "much agreement on the crucial analytical issues for sociology […]. Globalization is one such; and a desire to discover a new ethics, a new mode of critique, is another". How the discourses of economic globalization may be responsible for creating and sustaining (the perception of) the inevitability of an all-encompassing international trade system affords a linguistic analysis of this pervasive social phenomenon. However, and paradoxically, it may fall on ethnography, the study of the 'local', to illuminate the global: "Globalization is produced through a chain of (dis)connection and dissemination of ideologies […] Globalization is not a cause but an effect of processes in hierarchical chains that span the world" (Burawoy 2001: 156). As a locally-based method of interpretative action, ethnography can "restore history and agency to the reception and contestation of the global in the 'local', to give life to the local". Therefore we need "to regard the global as produced in the local" *(ibid.* 157).

The attempted restoration of history and agency runs counter to much post-modernism. From within post-modernism, critical theory posits the interdependence of the Self and Other, the outcome of which is a "dialectic subjectivity" (Hancock & Tyler 2001). Such social subjectivity is impeded by the "instrumentalization of the sites through which it is mediated inter-subjectively" (*ibid.*). In language at work research, the debate on subjectivity, objective reality and structures is highly pertinent and urgent. The way we consciously or unconsciously philosophize about these concepts affects our approach to situated discourse.

The intimate, if often unconsciously experienced, relationship between theory and research praxis points again to sense-making as the meta-theory that I turned to when confronted with the then unmapped reality of corporate life. Sense-making operates through reflexivity and self-reflexivity, i.e. monitoring and self-monitoring, thus enabling 'experiencing'. According to critical theorist Merleu-Ponty (quoted in Feather 2000: 3) "we construct the rationality of what we are doing rather than referring to 'rationality […] given beforehand', we make sense out of our experience from within it 'rather than from outside it'". Therefore "meanings are received from experience rather than given to it".

This phenomenological position posits the subject as immersed within the very field of perception that she observes (Feather 2000: 4). Unlike other sociologists, Merleu-Ponty does not see this intersubjective subject as operating within a paradigm of dyadic interpersonal relations. Instead, it is the *institution*, as the locus of conflictual interests and projects, that mediates encounters (Feather 2000: 5). These insights are particularly relevant to the reality of organizations with their tension between pre-existing and constraining structures and creative subjectivities. If we view organizations as 'sedimented praxis' (*ibid.* 9) within which 'communicative practices' intersect with the 'biographical trajectories' (*ibid.*) of their agents, the deriving conflictual dynamic is both contingent in the work practices that we experience and open to future possibilities. Therefore "it is possible to see an intersection between agency and institution rather than a reduction of the former to the latter. Roles may structure actions but on the other hand roles must make sense, that is, be interpretable as part of wider structures" (*ibid.* 10).

6. Conclusion

The implications of these theoretical insights for language at work research are potentially far-reaching. It seems to me that the twofold notion of: (a) the 'embeddedness' of the creative subject in an institutional context that mediates her encounters whilst she retains her unique position within it, and (b) the intersubjectivity of her 'being situated', opens up vast horizons for business discourse scholars. At this point, we are ready to replace the rather cumbersome language at work with the slimmer and more meaningful 'organizational discourse', where organizational is synonymous with institutional (the assumption being that all institutions are organizations but that not all organizations are institutions). This first adjustment may free some of us from the terminological tangle in which 'business discourse' and 'business communication' are currently caught up, possibly together with a few others such as institutional discourse, professional discourse, management communication and organizational communication.

Secondly, I propose that we look at organizations as texts (Thatchenkery 2001: 114), a direct result this of the 'linguistic turn' of the Nineties, which has gained wide acceptance also among organizational and management scholars. As linguists, our contribution to the study of work sites as textual sites is significant and distinctive. We have the background knowledge and the methodological expertise which, enriched by new theoretical insights, make us ideal partners in the upcoming multi-disciplinary dialogue between the humanities and the social sciences. The scope of this dialogue must include key issues such as historicity, contextuality, agency, structure and power and the definition of the self-other boundary (Westwood and Linstead 2001). The notion of 'organizational discourse' encompasses them all and embodies them all. This is the first significant stage in the process of multi-disciplinary 'commonality of purpose' that anticipates interdisciplinary 'convergence'.

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Investigating the perception of translated Verbally Expressed Humour on Italian TV

Delia Chiaro

Abstract

Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) is a specific variety of language which has been largely ignored by scholars despite its widespread use in numerous text types. Apart from the use of VEH for purely entertainment purposes (humorous literature and film, sitcoms, stand-up comedy, variety shows etc.) numerous mediatic genres such as advertisements, newspaper articles, headlines and even political discourse are also renowned for their frequent use of VEH. Yet despite the existence of a global village in which the same text is often proposed in a variety of languages, VEH has received even less attention in issues regarding how it is mediated across cultures and languages.

This essay sets out to explore the sphere of VEH and how it is perceived when it is mediated linguistically, in other words when it is inter-lingually translated in one way or another. In order to do this, a small corpus of situation comedies and cartoons dubbed into Italian was extracted from a larger corpus of television programmes. A web-based self-reporting questionnaire aimed at exploring people's reactions to translated humour was prepared based on instances of VEH contained in the corpus. The questionnaire was administered to a random sample of Italians and the qualitative data which emerged provides insight not only into how audiences actually perceive VEH on screen, but also on the quality of the translations themselves.

1. Introduction

The Forlì Corpus of Screen Translation (FORLIXT) contains over 300 hours of dubbed programmes recorded over a period of three months in 2002 from all Italian terrestrial channels, across all fictional genres and from all source languages available[1]. This electronic corpus was designed to be utilized together with a Web questionnaire created with the aim of determining Italian audiences' attitudes, reception and perception of dubbed products. Respondents, who were contacted randomly, were invited to visit a website[2], asked to watch four short mpg* video-files extracted from the corpus and reply on a number of features such as their understanding of specific sociocultural references and their perception of the likelihood of incidence of certain items of dubbese[3] in naturally occurring Italian (Antonini & Chiaro 2004).

Twenty-five hours of the FORLIXT consists of dubbed situation comedies and cartoons imported from the USA and consequently translated from US English. A specific section of the questionnaire was dedicated to questions on a number of clips containing examples of dubbed features which were considered especially difficult to translate precisely because of the fact that they cross-cut the divide between language and culture. These features included rhymes, songs and carols, poems as well as examples of VEH. With regard to the VEH, respondents were asked firstly to rate their understanding, and subsequently to explain precisely what they had understood of each clip.

It would appear from respondents' answers that it is very often the case that occurrences of VEH either pass by unnoticed or else are totally misunderstood. This response, in fact, raises two issues:

1) whether Italians and Americans find different things funny and are therefore unable to understand and consequently appreciate each other's humour and

2) whether non-appreciation of VEH by Italians might depend upon the quality of the translations in question rather than the existence of a national sense of humour which is oblivious to the humorous discourse of other speech communities.

Our research hypothesis is that Italians did not understand the VEH to which they had been exposed because the examples in question had been inadequately translated.

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[1] For a more detailed description of how the corpus was constructed and the experimental design of the research project see Antonini & Chiaro 2004.

[2] The questionnaire can be located on the University of Bologna's Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Languages, Translation and Culture (SITLEC) server at http://www.sitlec.unibo.it/dubbingquality.

[3] The term 'dubbese' is the translation of the much used Italian term *doppiaggese* which refers to the variety of spoken Italian which appears to be quite distinct from naturally occurring Italian speech and is adopted in translated texts for both cinema and TV products. The literature on this phenomenon in Italy is fairly extensive: see Alfieri 1994; D'Amico 1996; Chiaro 1996, 2000a and 2000b; Pavesi 1994 and 1996. However, although when used by operators in the field of multimedia translation the term often has negative connotations, in this essay it is used simply to describe a specific variety of Italian used for a specific purpose, i.e. that of dubbing a filmic product.

1.1. *Humour and multimedia translation*

The field of humour and translation has certainly not received the attention it deserves in either Humour Studies (HS) or in Translation Studies (TS). Interestingly, these two disciplines are both new and, by nature, well and truly interdisciplinary. In HS, a discipline which spans from medicine and psychology to literature and film studies, one of the most fascinating issues is whether or not, and if so, how far, humorous discourse, which is naturally impeded by linguistic and social barriers, actually succeeds in crossing geographical frontiers. As for TS, surely the translation of humorous discourse concerns the most complex types of language to translate owing to the fact that it needs to come to terms with the very tenets of translation theory, those of equivalence and (un)translatability. Yet despite such engaging issues, both disciplines have largely shied away from the subject, almost as though it did not exist.

VEH immediately brings to mind lingua-specific rhetorical features such as puns. As it is highly unlikely that two languages will be so similar as to possess, for example, exactly the same homophonous, homonymous or polysemous items upon which to create puns, formal equivalence is extremely difficult if not impossible in translation. Furthermore, much humorous discourse pivots around highly culture-specific features, which also create thorny translational problems especially when Source culture and Target culture do not share either the same linguistic or sociocultural knowledge. In fact, the complexity of the translation of VEH has often been compared to that of conventional poetry. In poetry linguistic deviation is very high. As well as the presence of unusual lexical collocations and irregular word order, poetry relies on patterns of repetition at all levels of sound, syntax, lexis and meaning. Furthermore, the visual impact of a poem is also essential (Jakobson 1959), and this is even more the case with regard to more unconventional poetic forms such as concrete poetry. However, the difficulty in the translation of poetry and VEH is caused by different reasons. In fact, the two types of discourse behave in opposite ways as the former is restrained by rhyme, metre, stanzaic forms, genre-bound rules and conventions while the latter is totally unrestrained by rules.

Of course VEH, like poetry, is translated because it has to be, thus the concept of untranslatability refers more to the complexity of the task and the resulting lack of formal equivalence rather than to the physical impossibility of translation. In fact, many studies exist on paronomasia and the strategies adopted for their translation (notably Redfern 1984 and 1996; Delabastita 1996a and 1996b; Henry 2003), while very few studies exist which take humour as the focal point of translational strategy (Laurian and Nilsen 1989; Chiaro 1992; Vandaele 2002).

Laurian's challenge (1989: 8) regarding the impossibility of translating the following joke into any other language well exemplifies the issue of equivalence and untranslatability:

> The world is so full of problems that if Moses came down Mount Sinai today, two of the tablets he would be carrying would be aspirins.

The untranslatability of the text lies, of course, in the item 'tablets' which, it would seem, only in English can refer both to slates of stone, rock or marble as well as to medicines.

What Laurian together with many others probably means by the term 'untranslatable' is based on the fact that the item 'tablet' is only paranomastic in English and that consequently a semantically *identical* translation into another language would be impossible. Thus the following translation into Italian and is simply not a joke:

> *Il mondo è talmente pieno di problemi che se oggi Mosè scendesse dal Monte Sinai, due delle tavole che porterebbe sarebbero aspirine.*

However, a feasible Italian translation below ignores the pun on 'tablet' but creates another by replacing 'tablets' with the term 'command' which clearly plays upon the term 'commandments/*comandamenti*'. Although the quip has been transformed into a political joke, a significant slice of the invariant core[4] of the Source Text (Popović 1976) remains, i.e. insufficiency:

> *Se il popolo ebreo fosse stato organizzato militarmente a Mosè non sarebbero bastati dieci comandi*[5].

> If the Jewish people had been organized in military terms, for Moses ten commandos wouldn't have been enough.

Substitution is a frequent translational strategy for VEH. When the going gets tough and even remote equivalence is hard to find, many translators opt for substitution with a semantically similar text which works in terms of VEH in the target culture, thus obeying the rules of *Skopostheorie* (Vermeer 1989) which advocates placing the intended function or *Skopos* of a text in pole position regardless of equivalence. This can be seen as a very convenient approach as far as the translation of VEH is concerned.

1.2. *VEH on Italian TV*

As is the case in most European countries, Italy imports most of the products broadcast on both its terrestrial and satellite TV stations from the United States.

[4] According to Popović if a dozen translators were given the same poem to translate they would come up with twelve different versions yet all would have something in common. These shared elements are the stable, constant, basic ingredients of the Source Text, the existence of which can be proven through experimental semantic condensation.

[5] I would like to thank Gianfranco Porcelli for coming up with this Italian translation.

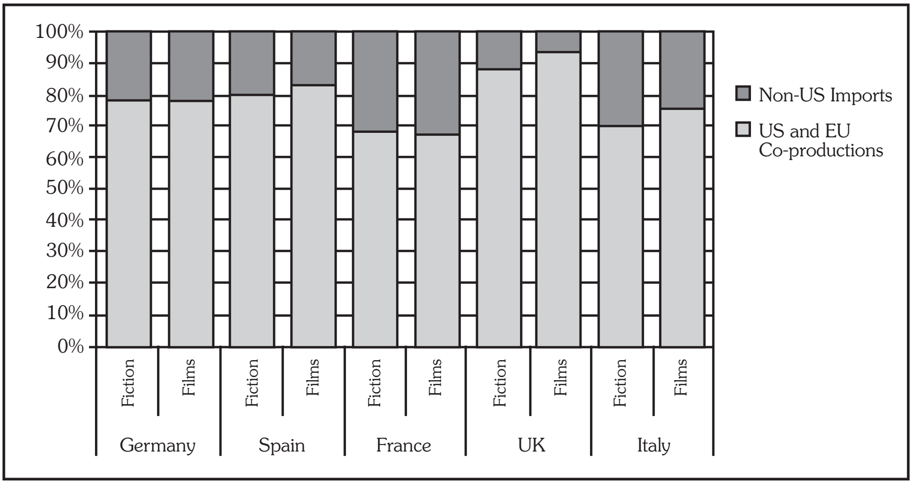

Figure 1. Volume of US-originated fiction and films broadcast on television channels in the five principal European markets (2001) as a percentage of the total volume of fiction and film imported and broadcast.

Source: European Audiovisual Observatory; Press Release 28 January 2003.

In fact, all genres of fictional products ranging from films and TV series to sitcoms and soap operas are imported. A total of over 40 hours of fictional products screened on weekdays each week are, in fact, of North American origin. Before being aired, these television programmes undergo the process of dubbing, the dominant form of screen translation in Italy at present[6].

The channel which broadcasts most sitcoms in Italy is ITALIA UNO, a privately owned channel belonging to the MEDIASET group which is dedicated to screening series and sitcoms.

In fact, many of the most popular US sitcoms are aired on this channel late afternoon and early evenings on weekdays. Interestingly, no British sitcoms are screened at all by ITALIA UNO. Despite the large production of UK sitcoms, Italy seems to purchase almost exclusively from the United States, as it does with most

[6] Europe is, in fact, traditionally considered to be divided into two major screen translation blocks, the UK, Benelux and Scandinavian countries, which are mainly subtitling nations, and central and southern European countries stretching from Germany down to Spain, which are mainly dubbing nations. Both translational methods present advantages and disadvantages, not only of a practical nature, but particularly of a sociolinguistic and political kind. In other words, countries which originally favoured dubbing tended to do so for protectionist reasons and it is not surprising that the 1930s saw the birth of dubbing in Italy and Germany both to inhibit English, but above all to exalt national languages. Conversely, a preference towards subtitling in Scandinavia reveals a more open attitude towards other languages (especially English), but a relatively inexpensive way to develop screen translation for small populations.

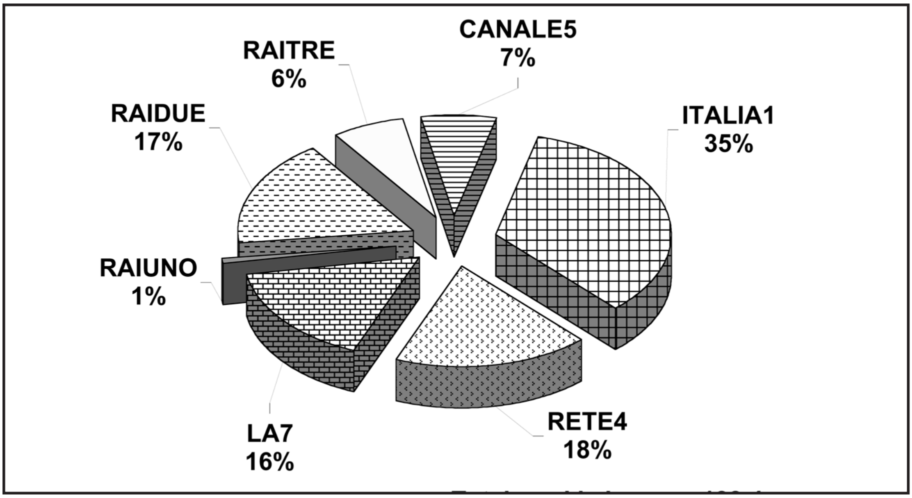

Figure 2. Percentages of dubbed programmes broadcast on main national Italian terrestrial channels per week.

fictional products *tout court.* In fact, highly successful UK sitcoms such as *Absolutely Fabulous* and *Fawlty Towers* are unheard of in Italy, while US *Friends*, for example, was purchased and broadcast by state-owned RAI DUE and gained great popularity. Satellite channel CANALE JIMMY, which is specialized in sitcoms and series, broadcast two popular UK sitcoms *Goodness Gracious Me* and *The Office* in 2003; however, such programming is the exception rather than the rule.

1.3. *Translation for the Italian screen*

Since the 1990s Multimedia Translation (MT), a sub-discipline of TS, has been exploring the complexities of language transfer which occurs via two or more technological means and is received via two or more senses. Therefore conference interpreting, sign languages and Web translation as well as Screen Translation (ST) are all typologies of MT. Films (and all products for both big and small screen) are complex semiotic entities which communicate verbal signs acoustically (dialogue) and visually (written texts, such as letters, newspaper headlines etc.) while at the same time they also transmit non-verbal signs acoustically (music, background noises etc.) and visually (actors' movements, facial expressions, setting of the film etc.). The field of ST specifically explores the field of translation for cinema and TV. Translating a film interlingually is an extremely intricate process precisely because of the fact that the verbal codes it contains are inextricably linked to the visual code. So far, various aspects of subtitling and dubbing, both processes of which present advantages and disadvantages of a practical nature, have been investigated. Dubbing presents manifold problems, ranging from the basic difficulty of the synchronization of lip movement in the Source Language with lip movement in the Target Language. Moreover, dubbing translators have to contend with sociolinguistic markers such as accent, variety, slang and taboo language (Pavesi 1996; Chiaro 1996 and 2000), language-specific pragmatic features such as politeness and forms of address and endearment (Pavesi 1994), highly culture-specific references (Leppihalme 1997), allusions, songs, rhymes, metaphors, idiomaticity and, of course, VEH (Chiaro 2000a).

The process of subtitling VEH is no simpler. Clearly, great losses occur through the transfer of the verbal code into the written code; in fact, the dialogue is condensed in order for it to fit into short captions which appear on the screen (32/35 characters per line including spaces for two lines) and can only be left on display for a limited time (six seconds per two lines of subtitling). Such condensation coupled with the short time the utterance remains on the screen is naturally damaging to the desired effect of VEH. Moreover, a spectator may be so taken with reading the caption that he or she might well miss the action upon which the verbal gag is based.

1.4. *The perception of translated VEH on screen*

In economic terms, dubbing in Italy is an important public service which largely escapes any kind of quality control – as is indeed the case in the entire European 'dubbing block' of countries. Data is needed regarding both producers and consumers of this facility, yet research so far has been almost exclusively based on contrastive studies between original and dubbed versions of dubbed products in a wide range of language combinations (e.g. Baccolini *et al.* 1994; Gambier 1998; Gambier & Gottlieb 2001). Unfortunately, studies on viewers' opinions and perception of ST are sadly lacking. The only studies we are aware of in this regard are Karamitroglou (2000) who has researched the reception of subtitled programmes for children in Greece; Fuentes Luque (2001) who has investigated audience perception to subtitled and dubbed films in Spain, Chiaro (2002) on audience perception of *ad hoc* interpreting on Italian TV, and Antonini, Bucaria & Senzani (2003) on the perception of subtitled VEH in British sitcoms – the only study which actually looks at translation and humour perception.

We would like to suggest that research on the perception of translated VEH on screen, precisely because it is considered by many to be the most difficult translational problem, can shed much needed light on how viewers see dubbed products in general and consequently possibly help improve quality in other less problematic areas of ST too.

1.5. *Translating VEH on screen*

In a survey carried out on a sample of 96 screen translators in Italy, the respondents unanimously ranked translating VEH as the hardest problem they had to face in the entire dubbing process (Benincà 1999). Translational problems which regard VEH on screen are similar to those which regard written texts but multiplied several times owing to the restrictions which the visual code imposes upon the translation.

> Selbst jene Übersetzer, die in der absoluten Treu zum Original (wie auch immer definiert und praktiziert) ein Dogma sehen, müssen in solchen Fällen entweder kampflos das Feld räumen (und damit auf Komik verzichten) oder ihren Prinzipien untreu werden und selbst neue, andere komische Elemente erfinden und einbringen, über die auch das ZS-Publikum lachen kann. (…) Gerade bei der Bearbeitung gemacht worden ist, sollte die vielbeschworene'treu zum Original'hinter dem Bemühengen zurück stecken, auch das Zielpublikum lachen zu machen.
> (Müller quoted in Whitman-Linsen 1992: 141).

> Those translators who see absolute translation as a dogma must, in such cases, either abandon the field (and give up translating comicity) or betray their principles and find humorous ideas elsewhere in the text so that the target audience can laugh too. […] it is indeed in the elaboration of a screen text, created to amuse the public that 'fidelity to the original' should be relegated to second place behind attempts to make the target audience laugh.
> (My translation)

Let us consider a typical example of what happens when a translator is faced with a humorous utterance which is totally dependent on the actual action which is taking place on screen. In a scene from *The Big Chill* (1983, Lawrence Kasdan) Harold (Kevin Kline) is asked by Meg (Mary Kay Place) to father her child:

> KLINE: "You're giving me a massive headache!"
> PLACE: "You're not gonna use that old excuse, are you? You've got genes!"

In response, Harold, typecast as a good-looking imbecile, looks down at his trousers and touches them bemused. The joke obviously plays on the homophonic pun created by the juxtaposition of 'jeans' and 'genes'. The Italian version becomes *perché hai dei buoni geni* but the word *geni* is monosemous and can only refer to genes, i.e. chemically patterned information and not to denim trousers. Thus Italian audiences must have wondered why Kline should touch and glare at his jeans as he does (see Chiaro 1992: 85-87) while more discerning audiences were left speculating whether the translator had actually got the joke in the first place. Although this example is typical of the kind of problems faced by screen translators, not always is the pun ignored. Fortunately, it is more usual for translators to adopt one of the three following strategies:
(1) The substitution of VEH in the Source Language with an example of VEH in the Target Language;
(2) The replacement of the Source Language VEH with an idiomatic expression in the Target Language;
(3) The replacement of the Source Language VEH with an example of VEH in the Target Language elsewhere in the text.

1.5.1. *Substituting the VEH in the source language with VEH in the target language*

The Italian translations of Marx Brothers' films are a never-ending source of inspired solutions to VEH on screen. In *Monkey Business* (1931, USA, Norman McLeod) we find the following exchange:

> GROUCHO: Columbus was sailing on his vessel…
> CHICO: On his what?
> GROUCHO: Not on his what, on his vessel. Don't you know what a vessel is?
> CHICO: Sure I can vessel (He whistles a tune).

The pun, which is based on the weak homophony between 'vessel'and 'whistle' is hard enough to translate into Italian, but to complicate the translator's job, in the case in point Chico is seen unambiguously whistling in a lengthy close-up shot. In Italian a vessel is a *caravella* phonetically similar to *caramella* denoting a sweet or a candy.

> GROUCHO: *Ma Colombo, bordeggiando con le sue caravelle…*
> CHICO: *Le sue cosa?*
> GROUCHO: *Bordeggiando con le sue caravelle. Non sai cosa sono le caravelle?*
> CHICO: *Cioccolate, caravelle* (whistles).

"Cioccolate! Caramelle!" (literally "Chocolate! Candies!") followed by whistling was the familiar cry of vendors in Italian cinemas in the thirties and forties. Thus Chico actively whistling into the camera creates no mismatch between the visual code and the dialogue.

1.5.2. *Replacing the Source Language VEH with an idiomatic expression in the Target Language*

It is not at all unusual to substitute an example of VEH with an idiomatic expression rather than another pun. In *Blame it on the Bellboy* (1991, UK, Mark Hermann) Orton (Dudley Moore) turns up for an appointment with a group of henchmen who think he is a professional killer out to shoot their boss. Sawn-off shotguns in hand, the villains declare that he is "Bang on time" and compliment each other on their ability of having produced such an appropriate pun. Italian scriptwriters chose to substitute the pun with the idiomatic expressions *puntuale come un orologio svizzero* and *puntuale come la morte* ('as punctual as a Swiss watch' and as 'punctual as death'). Presumably this is a less satisfying solution for audiences than that of substitution with a fresh Target Language pun, even if it is a sensible solution.

1.5.3. *Replacing the Source Language* VEH *with a different example of* VEH *elsewhere in the Target Text.*

This translational strategy which is very common in written humorous discourse tends to be adopted less frequently in filmic texts. Basically, if the VEH is independent of the action taking place on screen, then displacing it with a totally fresh example to another position in the text where there was no VEH originally can be a sensible solution to a difficult problem.

2. The Experimental Design

The part of the corpus upon which the present investigation is based contains episodes from *Frasier*, *The Nanny*, *Sex and the City, Veronica's Closet, Spin City*, *Willy the Fresh Prince of Bel Air*[7] and from the cartoon series *Futurama, The Simpsons* and *South Park.*

After watching the recorded material several times, all examples of what were considered to be examples of VEH were noted. However this task was easier said than done. Firstly, researchers were frequently unaware that VEH had actually occurred as it was often unclear from the translation. However, cues given by canned laughter and attempts at back translation of odd-sounding utterances led us to check the translated scripts against the original versions. Secondly, at the end of the day, despite such a fairly robust sample of comedies, there were actually very few utterances which were clearly humorous in intent. What we were actually looking for were examples of VEH based on puns and/or on highly cultural-specific information in order to see not only how translators tackled the job of translating them, and above all, how respondents reacted. In other words, we were seeking utterances which were clearly humorous in intent and which displayed opposing script oppositions beneath their surface structures such as those outlined in Raskin's Theory of Semantic Scripts (1985) and later fine-tuned by Attardo & Raskin in the General Theory of Verbal Humour (1991). Yet most of the verbal comedy in our corpus appeared to be based on forms of VEH which we were unable to specify. There was indeed a fair amount of irony rather than straightforward puns, and certainly irony may well be cognitively difficult to decipher, in the sense that it is never quite clear when someone is being ironic, but it is surely simpler to translate than a pun. On the other hand, however, the difficulty of helping audiences resolve the cultural concepts upon which irony is often based is equally tricky. Over and above such considerations, punning certainly presents

[7] The popular *Friends* is not included in this corpus because it was not being broadcast during the three months chosen for recording. Because the researchers involved in the project wanted to be as rigorous as possible in its design, the series was omitted from the corpus together with other popular series which were not being broadcast during those months such as *ER* and *Charmed*.

more translational difficulties, so we were dismayed to find zero examples of puns in the corpus. Thus the clips finally chosen tended to be those considered to be most difficult for non-native speakers of English and/or those not *au fait* with US culture to understand. These clips were mostly based on cultural knowledge rather than pure linguistic play simply because of the lack of such examples despite our fairly robust corpus.

Of course, the term 'situation' comedy suggests that perhaps the humour in such programmes is based on the situation, yet these programmes are extremely 'language' as opposed to 'action' based. It is sufficient to consider how much misunderstanding upon which these programmes are frequently fashioned is caused by verbal confusion, not to mention the large amount of canned laughter which occurs after quips and remarks that are not always linguistically ambiguous. Most frequently canned laughter occurred at the point of a 'good line', a sharp and clever remark which was difficult to define in humorous terms. In fact, we decided to label such instances of VEH 'Non-Specific VEH'.

Having found such difficulty in locating examples of VEH from our sitcom corpus, three instances were extracted from programmes which were not sitcoms; in fact, the subcorpus of sitcoms itself only resulted in a disappointing five clear examples of VEH.

However, once the examples had been identified, each was separately selected and converted into a short mpg* file. A short text in Word format was created for each one which briefly described the series and what was happening at that point in the episode in question. This was done in order to help respondents understand what they were watching and prevent them from simply attempting to decipher the clip out of the blue. Both the questionnaire and the video-clips with their introductory texts were placed on a website which was developed using ASP and Java script programming languages[8].

The site was programmed in such a way that each respondent who accepted to complete the questionnaire was automatically given a clip containing an example of translational 'turbulence' or 'unease' (i.e. a song, an allusion, an example of VEH etc.) with its matching question. The clips were selected at random from a file containing all the clips pertaining to 'turbulence'. In other words, each respondent received a different file to evaluate.

Thus respondents who visited the site were requested to read the introductory text and watch a video-clip. Those who were given a clip containing VEH were directed to an electronic word pad where they were told that after watching the clip containing humour they were to explain what they had understood of the VEH in their own words. This qualitative information is what we shall discuss below.

[8] The author would like to thank Piero Conficoni, webmaster at the University of Bologna's Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Languages, Translation and Culture (SITLEC) for contributing to this project with his programming expertise.

3. Results

The questionnaire, which was administered to a random sample of Italians at the beginning of 2004, resulted in a total of 195 valid responses[9]. 65 respondents were presented with a clip containing an example of VEH (the other 128 respondents obtained clips regarding other types of 'turbulence' such as songs, idiomatic expressions and so on). This paper will discuss the results of the qualitative data pertaining to the sample's perception of VEH.

The questionnaire contained a total of eight clips which included an example of VEH. What follows is a description of respondents' perception of the VEH contained in the clips.

3.1. *The general perception of examples of VEH*

Eighteen respondents claimed that they were either unaware of any VEH in the clip they had watched or else that they were conscious that something funny had occurred because of canned laughter but simply did not understand it. A further twenty-six respondents provided interpretations of the VEH which were totally wrong. Thus, the VEH escaped forty-four respondents, which is almost three-quarters of the sub-sample.

3.1.1. *The perception of VEH based on encyclopaedic knowledge*

Twenty-six respondents were exposed to clips from an episode of the cartoon *Futurama* broadcast on February 28th 2002 by ITALIA UNO. This cartoon is about a young boy, Bender, who, after being hibernated in the 20th century, wakes up in the year 3000. In the episode from which four clips were extracted, election day is near but a disaster hits a titanium mine and 200 robots are trapped causing the price of titanium to rocket. Bender decides to get rich quick by selling his body to Richard Nixon.

• *Clip a)* '*The Washington Memorial*'

Seven respondents were exposed to a clip from the cartoon showing a spaceship landing between two obelisks in front of the White House. The shorter obelisk is labelled WASHINGTON MONUMENT and the taller one CLINTON MONUMENT.

Only three respondents got the joke and the allusion to Bill Clinton and the 'Sexgate' Scandal. They explained in detail the allusion created by the larger obelisk and Clinton's extramarital adventures. One respondent was way off mark claiming that the two obelisks referred to two fictitious presidents while the remaining respondents claimed that they did not see the humour in the clip.

• *Clip b)* '*Nixon and decency*'

Six respondents were exposed to a clip from the same cartoon in which the characters, including Nixon himself, are seen bursting out into peals of laughter

[9] These results are preliminary and thus only partial.

on hearing one of the characters appeal to Nixon's sense of decency: "*Forza Signor Nixon faccia appello al suo senso della decenza*".

Three respondents got the joke and understood the ironic comment and made sense of the laughter. They explained the irony involved in the "sense of decency" *senso della decenza* and recalled the Watergate Scandal. The remaining respondents completely misunderstood. One thought the laughter served to hide the comment on decency and another thought that Nixon was one of the regular characters in the cartoon series.

• *Clip c)* '*Nixon's tapes*'

Four respondents were exposed to a surreal clip in which a robot asks Nixon's 'head' if it knows how to use a tape recorder. Nixon replies to himself "Oh oh, I think I know what he's getting at" *So già dove vuole andare a parare*. Only two grasped the reference to the Watergate Scandal and explained the irony involved in the question and answer. One respondent understood that the allusion to a tape recorder referred to the fact that presidents always learn their speeches by rote and another that Nixon's 'head' wanted to "remain longer with the computer".

• *Clip d)* '*Fingerlicans*'

On election day in *Futurama* we learn that one of the political parties is named the 'Fingerlican Party', an obvious reference to the Republicans and at the same time, via the creation of a portmanteaux word, to 'Finger-Licking' and possibly even Kentucky Fried Chicken[10]. However, the term occurs throughout the clip in written form on a large banner, thus viewers had to notice and make sense of a word in another language. Subtitles were, however, provided at the bottom of the screen with the literal translation *DITOBBLICANI*.

Out of nine respondents exposed to this clip, none got the reference right. Seven respondents elaborated explanations of their own, but all were off target. None of them noticed either the word 'Fingerlicans' or the translation *DITOBBLICANI*.

• *Clip e)* '*Schwarzy*'

This clip was extracted from the series *J.A.G.* based on the Judge Advocate General division of the US Marines and broadcast on February 27th 2002 by state-owned channel RAI DUE. Ten respondents were exposed to a clip in which a group of students are enacting a courtroom scene. The 'witness' is mockingly called "Schwarzy" by the Counsel because of his marked pseudo-Teutonic accent. Only four respondents caught the allusion to the actor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The remaining six respondents gave a variety of answers, none of which was correct.

[10] The well-known KFC slogan is: "It's finger-lickin' good!"

3.1.2. *The perception of Non-Specific* VEH

• *Clip a) 'Duck and Dyke'*

This clip was extracted from an episode of the series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* broadcast on March 3rd 2002 by ITALIA UNO. In the original version Buffy recalls the legend of the Dutch boy who put his finger in the dam:

BUFFY: Like the boy who put his finger in the duck.
ANGEL: Dyke. It's like a dam.
BUFFY: Oh well that story makes a lot more sense.

BUFFY: *Ricordi il ragazzo che mette il dito nel buco della diga e…*
ANGEL: *Barriera*
BUFFY: *Uh?*
ANGEL: *Barriera. È sinonimo di diga.*
BUFFY: *Non è esattamente un sinonimo ma si può dire.*

The original script played on Buffy's misunderstanding of the famous story and the fact that she had thought that the boy had put his finger in a 'duck' rather than in a 'dyke'. The Italian translation is not only drastically different and un-funny, but also nonsensical. In fact, none of the five respondents exposed to the clip recognized any attempt at VEH.

• *Clip b) 'Coma'*

Selected from the same episode of *Buffy* mentioned in the previous example, Buffy tells an old man who is in a state of confusion that one day he would wake up in a coma; *Una di queste volte ti sveglierai in un coma.* What seemed to us to be a simple, straightforward clever remark passed by completely unnoticed to ten respondents.

• *Clip c) 'Country Boy'*

Taken from an episode of the sitcom *Spin City* (broadcast on March 7th 2002 by RETE 4) about the young vice-mayor of New York, this clip includes a quip of self-deprecating humour uttered by one of the characters. Having been mugged the previous day, he says "Have I got country boy 'come and get' me written all over my face?" *Ho forse scritto in fronte sono un ragazzo di campagna fregatemi pure?* He then opens his jacket to reveal a T-shirt which reads I LOVE WISCONSIN. This comment was simple to translate and we presumed easy to perceive yet only three respondents were able to explain it while the remaining five were not.

• *Clip d) 'Banana Flambé'*

This clip was extracted from the popular sitcom *Willy the Fresh Prince of Belair* regarding the life of a Black American family (*Willy il Principe di Belair* episode broadcast on March 4th 2002 by ITALIA UNO).

In the clip Willy accidentally burns down his uncle's kitchen. The black firefighter asks him what had happened and Willy explains that he was making Banana Flambé. At this point the firefighter bursts out laughing and tells him that black people shouldn't make anything flambé *I neri non dovrebbero fare mai niente flambé, che stupido!* This quip was followed by extensive laughter and applause from the studio audience. Three respondents understood that the remark was something to do with the colour of Willy's skin and burnt banana. Nobody identified the irony between the remark and the doings of the Klu Klux Klan. Furthermore, two respondents found the remark to be in bad taste. Three did not see it as being humorous at all.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Whether respondents did not see the humour in these clips owing to poor quality translations is highly debatable, above all because the type of VEH in the examples was mostly linguistically straightforward and required little or no particular translational dexterity. Certainly the episodes from *Futurama* necessitated knowledge of past and present US politics without which the scripts were meaningless. Presumably, native speakers with no knowledge of either Nixon or Clinton would have been equally confused. Thus blaming the translation in such cases is out of the question.

On the other hand, the 'Fingerlicans' example (**3.1.1.** *Clip d*) may have been accessible to more people with a more carefully thought-out subtitled gloss, so here the issue of quality does indeed raise its head. Deleting the allusion to 'finger-licking' does indeed create a significant loss in humorous meaning. Similarly, the clip regarding the misinterpretation of the words 'duck' and 'dyke' (**3.1.2.** *Clip a*) certainly called for a more thoughtful translational strategy. Indeed both these examples scored very low on recognition of VEH; in fact, nobody realized that VEH had even occurred. In this case translational quality certainly comes into play.

So, when humour depends on the recipient's encyclopaedic knowledge, sometimes it is successfully recognized as such and sometimes it is not. This appears to depend almost entirely on whether the recipient is *au fait* with a certain piece of knowledge or not. This is a variable which is entirely independent of the quality of translation. On the other hand, when it depends on a linguistic element ('duck' and 'dyke') or a combination of language and culture (Fingerlicans), then we suggest that the translation itself is indeed a significant factor for its recognition.

However, regarding the examples of Non-Specific VEH (*Clips* **3.1.2.** *b, c* and *d*) which were also largely misconstrued, perhaps we should also consider elements of state-trait and personality that influence humour response (for a detailed discussion see Ruch 1998). In other words, appreciating humour depends on a person's personality as well as the mood and state of mind they are in when they are exposed to a humorous stimulus. On the other hand, respondents were asked to *recognize* the VEH and not necessarily *appreciate* it which are two very different things.

Thus, although this experiment was, in a sense, impaired by an overall scarcity of concrete examples of untranslatable puns, the corpus does remain a good example of the type of translated VEH to which Italian viewers are exposed. After all, 25 hours of sitcoms were recorded and examined with a fine toothcomb and little evidence of VEH emerged. Nevertheless, what is apparent is that despite adequate translations, in the cases in question, the VEH does not come across very well at all.

To conclude, we would like to suggest two things. Firstly, that more care be taken in the actual control of translations. Although this sounds like an obvious remedy, it is by no means an easy one to enact. The Italian ST market is quite anarchic in that the translation of a filmic product is often given to the company that can complete the task at top speed rather than to the most experienced. Many products are sent to small make-do 'do it yourself' companies willing to comply to low fees and quick and dirty translations. According to Toni Biocca, a representative of AIDAC, Italy's association of dubbing translators, executives at RAI and MEDIASET are frequently heard to say "*della qualità non importa a nessuno*", literally "who cares about quality"[11].

Secondly, training is essential. It follows that the more highly qualified the various operators in the dubbing process are, the better the end product will be. Thus much responsibility lies in the hands of academia and in the planning involved in courses aimed at training future screen translators.

Interestingly, a few film directors (e.g. Stanley Kubrick and Woody Allen) personally select and supervise the dubbed versions of their films, going as far as choosing the actors who will voice the original artists. Highly sensitive companies like Buena Vista do likewise. The payoff in terms of box office success speaks for itself. We would like to suggest that similar care should also be taken for translations for the small screen. After all, television audiences have the right to good quality products too.

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[11] Gabriella Gallozzi, *Il silenzio dei doppiatori* (The silence of dubbing translators), *L'Unità* February 18th 2004.

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The language of tourism in English and Italian: investigating the concept of nature between culture and usage

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Abstract

This paper aims to propose an alternative approach to translation equivalence across cultures and languages using English and Italian corpora of farmhouse holiday web sites as cases in point. In order to do this, the methodology that has been used is the one suggested by Tognini Bonelli (1996b and 2001), Tognini Bonelli and Manca (2002) and Manca (2004). This kind of approach rejects a one-to-one correspondence between words and proposes to start by considering the collocational profile of a given node word in the source language (SL). In our specific case, although traditional reference books give more or less the same definition of the words *natura* and 'nature', the evidence of the corpora shows that in the context analysed and in the restricted language of farmhouse holidays, the two words cannot be seen as equivalents.

The data taken into consideration for this analysis are drawn from two comparable corpora assembled at the University of Lecce. These corpora are made up of texts taken from web sites of British Farmhouse Holidays and Italian *Agriturismi*.

If we compare the wordlists of these corpora we notice a dramatic difference in frequencies regarding the word *natura* and its *prima facie* English translation equivalent *nature*. And yet the two words referring to nature in English and in Italian are not usually perceived as problematic. This paper therefore sets out to investigate and highlight the differences in usage between these two terms, providing, at the same time, a new, hopefully useful, framework of analysis for other terms as well.

1. Introduction

This paper proposes a methodology that uses collocation in the identification of translation equivalents across cultures and across languages, in this case the English and the Italian ones. The data taken into consideration for this analysis are drawn from two comparable corpora in the language of tourism. Corpus evidence, therefore, yields insights into the different lexico-grammatical profiles of some seemingly equivalent words which, although they refer to the same concept (the idea of nature), are used differently by the two cultures. The basic assumption of the study presented here is that no equivalence can be posited *a priori* even when conventional resources or intuition suggest the existence of two or more apparently matching words in the source language (SL) and the target language (TL).

Our specific case – the word 'nature' in English and the word *natura* in Italian – provides a case in point. Our investigation brings to light important differences at the lexical, grammatical and cultural levels.

2. Methodology

What Firth (1957) called *meaning by collocation* provides the basis for developing our concept of translation equivalence and exploring it further following Tognini Bonelli (2000), Tognini Bonelli and Manca (2002) and Manca (2004). Indeed, what we are formulating here is a methodology that we would like to call *translation by collocation* (Manca 2004), a methodology that uses collocation, and in particular the notion of 'inter-collocation of collocates' (developed by Sinclair 1996), in translation.

Tognini Bonelli's approach (1996b; 2001) sees meaning as 'function in context' and sees the information provided by the context as being of fundamental importance. Her approach, both in language description and in contrastive work, postulates the interdependence of lexis and grammar and the existence of *functionally complete units of meaning*. These are above all units made up of an initial word as well as other contextual elements which are regarded as significant.

In this approach we can distinguish three steps towards contextualization and towards the definition of a network of equivalences between language 1 (L1) and language 2 (L2).

Step 1: The initial node in L1 is investigated in its lexico-grammatical profile in order to locate its most frequent collocates.

		L1 collocate
L1 node word	➠	**L1 collocate**
		L1 collocate

Step 2: For each collocate a *prima facie* translation equivalent (TE) is posited, which will be investigated in its right and left co-text.

L1 collocates ➠ L2 prima facie ➠ L2 collocates

Step 3: Within the collocational range of the *prima facie* TE we shall identify an adequate translation equivalent of the initial node word.

L2 collocates ➠ L1 node word TE

By adopting this methodology, the analysis of the co-text will enable us to consider the existence of patterns equivalent to those posited in L1, or their absence.

2.1. *The world of nature*

In this study we are going to investigate the concept of nature as realized by the words 'nature' in English and *natura* in Italian both in their nominal and adjectival functions; the correspondence between the two terms can only be assumed at this stage and is going to be validated in the light of the data. Therefore, we start from the assumption of a common denominator between the two fields, which is the product 'sold' by the two types of holidays.

Our first step, therefore, will be to identify and compare the lexico-grammatical realizations of these two words in English and Italian. Particular attention will be given to the contextual patterning that surrounds them hoping that this will reveal differences and correspondences at the textual and the cultural levels. However, before starting our actual analysis let us say a few words about the data we are analysing.

2.2. *The data*

The data we are considering are drawn from two comparable corpora[1] containing texts gathered from web sites of Italian *Agriturismi* and British Farmhouse Holidays. These texts advertise a relaxing holiday which, broadly speaking, offers visitors a combination of history, charming landscapes and unspoilt surroundings.

This type of holiday, we are told, makes you feel as if time had stopped: products are still grown with traditional methods, food is genuine, traditions are jealously kept alive and life turns around *the world of nature*. As we can imagine, the word *natura* is undoubtedly a key word in this type of text: nature is described as untouched and unspoilt; all its charming features are stressed. The message that is communicated to us is that nature is the ideal setting to abandon ourselves to peace and relaxation in a friendly atmosphere.

The Italian comparable corpus of *Agriturismo* (henceforth Agriturist Corpus) and the British corpus of Farmhouse Holidays (henceforth Farmhols Corpus) were assembled for contrastive analysis and can be considered comparable

[1] The comparable corpora were assembled at the University of Lecce during the years 2000-2002.

(Teubert 2000) in terms of register. The Agriturist corpus provisionally stands at 115,000 running words while the Farmhols stands at 203,000.

2.3. *The analysis*

Our first step in the analysis was to create a word list for both corpora in order to identify the most frequent words. In the light of the previous considerations, one would expect to find the words *natura* and 'nature' at the top of the list in both worlds of *Agriturismi* and Farmhouse Holidays.

The analysis of the wordlist of the Italian Corpus indeed confirms the central importance of *natura*, which proves to be very frequent: 147 occurrences. The word *nature*, however, behaves very differently. A quick look at the word list of the Farmhols Corpus shows that the word 'nature' has a very low frequency: only 27 occurrences.

Let us therefore proceed to investigate the patterns that accompany the two words in Italian and in English. In the section that follows we will consider the collocational patterning of *natura* in the Agriturist corpus.

2.3.1 '*Natura*' *in the Agriturist Corpus* The first thing we notice scanning the concordance of *natura* in the language of *Agriturismo* is that it is qualified by adjectives, in attributive position, in 25 occurrences out of 147.

The adjectives we observe are mainly emphasizers or what Sinclair (1992: 17) calls "focusing adjectives". Sinclair observes that focusing adjectives – unlike normal qualifying adjectives – cannot be considered as independent selections with respect to the noun they refer to, but they are co-selected with the noun. They do not give any new information, but share and emphasize part of the accepted meaning of the noun. The adjectives occurring in the co-text of *natura* define nature as intact, luxuriant, powerful and wild, where all these qualities pertain to it in its wholeness. Below are some examples:

... ideale per chi cerca le bellezze di **una natura incontaminata**...
... gli stupendi paesaggi di **una natura incontaminata**...
... il luogo in cui vivere a contatto con **la natura incontaminata**...
... Un tuffo nella **natura più incontaminata**...
... la costa del Gargano, con la sua **bella natura ancora intatta**...
... La fiaba della **natura intatta** diventa realtà...
... assaporare il fascino di **una natura intatta** ed autentica...
... scoprire i misteri della **natura intatta** che circonda...
... **La natura positiva**, pacifica fa da catalizzatore...
... un luogo sospeso tra il mito e **una natura rigogliosa**...
... silenzio che domina **la natura circostante** sarà sicuramente...
... l'incontaminata e **suggestiva natura circostante...**
... tra i profumi e la quiete della **natura circostante...**
... maremma sta tutta lì intorno con **la sua natura forte e selvaggia...**

The only adjective which cannot be specifically said to have a 'focusing' role in the examples above is *circostante* ('surrounding'). In the wider context, however, we always find other words that still relate to the wholeness and integrity of *natura* and the overall qualities that are associated with it: nature is seen as *suggestiva,* we talk about the *profumi* and *quiete* that we can enjoy.

All these adjectives belong to the semantic field of beauty and in particular the type of beauty that has remained untouched and unspoilt. The overall feeling is of a very positive connotation.

Analysing further the concordance, we note a very frequent structure referring to 'the close contact with nature' that visitors can enjoy on such a holiday. The structure involves several words:

	stretto			**la**	
a/in	**diretto**	**contatto**	**con**	**una**	**natura**
	pieno			**i ritmi della**	

Let us consider some examples:

... Una vacanza **a stretto contatto con la natura** non esclude momenti culturali...
... lo spirito **a diretto contatto con la natura** della nostra stupenda regione...
... confortevole **a pieno contatto con la natura** usufruendo del servizio ricettivo...
... tranquillità e pace **a contatto con i ritmi della natura...**
... Percorsi piacevoli, **a contatto con la natura**, per passeggiate a piedi, in bici...
... Completo relax **a contatto con la natura**, in un'atmosfera amichevole...
... in cui vivere **a contatto con la natura** incontaminata...

When we identify a phraseological pattern we are also bound to notice some "internal lexical variation" as pointed out by Sinclair in his discussion of the idiom principle or phraseological tendency in language (1991: 110-111). Here it is interesting to note that within the same semantic node, where the 'close contact with nature' is privileged, there are often lexico-grammatical variants. We notice, for example, the replacement of the noun *contatto* with some words belonging to the same semantic field such as *simbiosi* and *sintonia*:

... sentendosi **in piena simbiosi con la natura**. È incomparabile...
... **in piena sintonia con la natura** che circonda la nostra tenuta...
... vivere **in simbiosi con la natura** che ci circonda intatta...

In other examples the meaning which is conveyed is very similar to that of the instances examined above, but the sense of a complete contact is provided by different structures and grammatical elements. We should also notice the very frequent use of the metaphor related to water and to the concept of 'full immersion'. Consider:

... la serenità di **un'immersione nella natura** in un contesto incontaminato...
... **immersi nella pace della natura**. Una permanenza a Roma può...

... alle Stalle. **Un tuffo nella natura** più incontaminata...
... completo relax, **immersi nella natura**…
... una splendida vacanza **immersi nella natura**, nelle nostre comode camere...
... da Gubbio, **immerso tra storia, arte e natura**...

In these instances the pattern is:

immersione natura
tuffo nella pace
immersa/i nella natura

This is a very frequent structure, which occurs 22 times with some internal variations.

The connotation is positive and it is clearly visible in the words that are found in the co-text of *natura* and contribute to all sorts of pleasant associations.

Some of the most frequent collocates of *natura* have to do with the notion of pleasure and enjoyment. In particular the verb *amare* (‘to love’) in its inflected forms and the noun *amanti* (‘lovers’) are some of the most frequent collocates of *natura*. Other nouns such as *appassionati* (‘lovers’) and the noun *amore* (‘love’) go along with the same idea. As can be seen in the citations reported below, this has to do with the enjoyment and the pleasure one can derive from being in the countryside.

... bellezza ed armonia. Per **chi ama la natura**, la quiete e i paesaggi incontaminati...
... campagna toscana, **gli amanti della natura** e della cultura...
... passeggiate per **gli amanti della natura** e della storia toscana...
... per **gli amanti della natura**, della quiete e del riposo, lontano da...
... Se **amate la natura**, una vacanza tranquilla all’aria aperta...
... per sportivi e **appassionati della natura**. Basti pensare alla vicinanza di...
... Tutti gli **amanti delle tradizioni, della natura** e della storia di tutta...
... Per **chi ama la semplicità e la natura**, questo è il luogo...

The holiday proposed by the owners of the *Agriturismi* is addressed to people who really know what they want: they are nature lovers. Again this love is strictly linked to that for peacefulness (*quiete*), relaxation (*riposo*), beautiful views (*i paesaggi*), history (*la storia*) and traditions (*le tradizioni*). In the following instances the nouns associated with *natura* complete the overall picture:

... per chi cerca **le bellezze** di una natura ancora incontaminata...
... la bellezza e **la grandezza** della natura, riscoprendo la gioia di vivere...
... **gli stupendi paesaggi** di una natura incontaminata...
... **i semplici e magici momenti** che la natura offre...
... **La scoperta** di una natura incontaminata a soli 4 km da...
... **il fascino** inconfondibile della natura incontaminata...
... assaporare **il fascino** di una natura intatta ed autentica...
... di scoprire **i misteri** della natura intatta che circonda l’agriturismo...

The most important qualities of nature are expressed and exemplified by the collocates in the left co-text, as part of the nominalization. They are important in that they reflect what the owners felt it was essential to stress about nature; this is the reason why they talk about its beauty (*bellezza*), its rhythms (*ritmi*), fascination (*fascino*), lovely landscapes (*stupendi paesaggi*), and also its discovery (*scoperta*).

This type of nature shows some parallelisms with music and we are led to consider the rhythms and sounds associated with it.

... vita è ancora scandita dai **ritmi** della natura...
... Immerso nei colori e nei **suoni** della natura in un paesaggio incantevole...
... e delle **sonorità** rilassanti della natura...

Silence (*silenzio*), peace (*pace*) and peacefulness (*quiete*) are brought to our attention too:

... circondati dalla **pace** di una natura che invita alla riflessione...
... il **silenzio** che domina la natura circostante sarà sicuramente...
... tra i profumi e la **quiete** della natura circostante...

The discussion above entitles us to postulate the presence of a semantic node and this was identified and confirmed by the analysis of the concordance of *natura* in the Comparable Corpus of the Italian language.

If we consider the type of nature 'on offer' we can say that nature in the Italian Agriturist Corpus has a semantic preference for qualities that have to do with being 'unspoilt', 'intact', 'wonderful', 'luxuriant', 'powerful' and 'wild'. The cumulative effect is one of an extremely positive connotation.

What is at stake here is the phenomenon of co-selection, that is, when the choice of more than one element is made as a single choice. The main consequence of co-selection is that the meaning of a word becomes strongly dependent on the meaning of the words occurring in its co-text. This phenomenon, partly illustrated by collocation, is quite common in the examples analysed in this case study and indeed is postulated here as a fundamental assumption of how language works.

For this reason we claim that searching for the independent meaning of a word is impossible: the examples we have considered show that the word *natura* is part of an extended unit of meaning which cannot be considered according to every single constitutive element but as a whole.

2.3.2 *'Nature' in the Farmhols Corpus* Our starting point here is the word 'nature' as a *prima facie* translation equivalent of the Italian word *natura*. As we mentioned the word 'nature' occurs with a very low frequency compared with the 147 occurrences of *natura* in the Agriturist Corpus, as we find it only in 27 instances in the Farmhols Corpus.

Starting from this mismatch in frequency, we will investigate the differences in usage between the two terms. The results of the analysis of the corpus evidence are very enlightening. In the examples below, in the right co-text, the word *nature* is associated with the singular noun 'trail' and with the plural 'trails'. Other collocates which establish the same semantic preference are 'reserve' and its plural 'reserves':

... with its water supply. **The Nature Trail** continues up...
... The area has excellent walks, **nature and wildlife trails**...
... Commission have way-marked **nature trails** and forest walks...
... From the village **the Nature trail** goes through beautiful lakes...
... a garden nursery and **nature reserve**, a pub/restaurant called...
... beaches, cliff walks and **nature reserves**. In the spring...
... a wide choice of forest trails, **nature reserves**, coastal and...

The function of 'nature' within the sentence is that of an adjective. In English a noun can have an adjectival function, but this does not happen in Italian. For this reason we notice here two types of mismatches: a grammatical one, which originates from the grammatical differences in the two systems, as well as a (more important) semantic one due to the absence of this pattern in the co-text of *natura* in the Italian Agriturist corpus.

In the collocations below we notice that 'nature' is once again associated with a noun, even though its function here is not adjectival. The noun is 'lovers' in the plural and once in the singular form 'lover'. Here we find a match with the Italian expression *amanti della natura* observed in the previous section:

... on our land, ideal for **nature lovers**. Spring time and Autumn...
... countryside – perfect for **nature lovers** and walkers!...
... if you are a **nature lover** you can take...

As a conclusion we note that in more than 50% of the cases, 'nature' functions as an adjective: for this reason it would be limiting to define this word only as a noun without mentioning this preponderant adjectival function, at least in the language of tourism.

We clearly notice here that in terms of function we are a long way from an equivalent of the Italian *natura*. The word 'nature' is not associated with metaphorical and poetic language. Furthermore the semantic dimension of the contact, expressed by *pieno contatto*, *immersione*, *natura magica e incontaminata* does not exist in English. And even beauty, which was a quality very frequently associated with the Italian *natura*, is too rare in English to justify a functional correspondence between the two words.

2.4. *From collocate to function*

Our next step at this point, in order to define an appropriate translation equivalent to the Italian word *natura*, is to apply the methodology discussed and exemplified in the previous section. We posit a '*prima facie* translation equivalent' for each of the most significant collocates of the initial word.

We will start our analysis with 'contact' as a *prima facie* translation equivalent of the Italian collocate *contatto*. We will attempt to identify an equivalent for the expression *a stretto contatto con la natura* which was very frequent in the Agriturist corpus.

The word 'contact' occurs 264 times in the Farmhols Corpus – so we can say that it is very frequent – but only as a verb with the meaning *mettersi in contatto*. As such it never appears in association with *nature*.

The same procedure is applied to the other collocates of *natura*: a *prima facie* translation equivalent is posited for *simbiosi* and *sintonia*. The dictionary provides the terms 'symbiosis' and 'agreement' as equivalents. However, no entries for these words are found in the English Corpus. We are faced with a typical situation of non-equivalence.

If we consider the past participle *immerso*, the dictionary proposes 'immersed', 'plunged', 'sunk', but again no entries are to be found in the Farmhols Corpus.

The equivalents for the noun *immersione* are posited as 'dipping', 'plunging', 'diving' and 'immersion'; of these only 'diving' and 'immersion' occur in the English Corpus. Again we can exclude 'diving' as it refers only to the sport. 'Immersion', on the other hand, occurs 4 times but it is always associated with the noun 'heater'.

The same happens for the semantic area referring to the purity of nature where we find words such as *incontaminata* as frequent collocates of *natura*. As *prima facie* equivalents of *incontaminata* we take words like 'uncontaminated' or 'unpolluted', but again no entries are found for them in the English corpus. The same goes for 'intact', which is postulated as the equivalent of *intatta*.

On the other hand, some interesting results can be noticed with 'unspoilt', which occurs six times with 'countryside' and once with 'land' and 'location'. The adjective 'unspoilt' occurs only five times but more or less with the same collocates: 'area' twice, 'countryside' twice, 'views' once.

... family reunions. Wonderful **unspoilt countryside**...
... gardens with outstanding views of **unspoilt countryside**...
... and walks across 1000 acres of **unspoilt land**...
... the only building in this **unspoilt location**...
... very fortunate to live in a **totally unspoiled area**...
... Set in 4 acres of gardens with **unspoiled views** over the countryside...

In the same way, something interesting is found by looking at 'surrounding' as the equivalent of *circostante*: here we find 44 entries, 11 in association with 'countryside', 11 with 'area'. Consider the examples:

... on the Farm, the **surrounding area**, and details of what we...
... the edge of Eastwell Park, the **surrounding countryside** offers beautiful...
... It offers excellent views to the **surrounding countryside** and...

... In the **surrounding countryside** there are limestone...
... again has a balcony overlooking the **surrounding fields**...
... easily accessible via the M20. The **surrounding farmland** is...
... and cattle, it has **surrounding garden** and lawns...
... in dissolved limestone from the **surrounding hills**...

From the above instances we notice that the unit 'surrounding countryside' is the closest equivalent, among the collocates of 'surrounding', to the unit *natura circostante* identified for the Italian node word. Other words seem either too general ('area') or too specific ('fields', 'hills', 'garden'). This methodological step is quite important because we are positing a TE *in the light of a specific contextual patterning*. In order to generalize and to confirm that this word is an adequate TE for the word nature, *countryside* will be contextualized and its collocational profile will be scanned. This procedure will allow us to identify the presence or the absence of units of meaning functionally similar to those found in Italian around the word *natura*.

2.4.1 *'Countryside'* The word 'countryside' occurs 192 times in the Farmhols Corpus. The first thing we notice is that 'countryside' is frequently associated with adjectives denoting geographical locations as in:

... **beautiful and peaceful Pembrokeshire countryside**...
... **peaceful and tranquil Cornish countryside** with outstanding views...
... Enjoy **the beauty of the Welsh countryside** at our...
... and **stunning views of the English countryside**. You can walk...
... romance, **set in beautiful Exmoor countryside** with 10 miles of woodland...
... for exploring **the beautiful Kent countryside** or visiting...
... **panoramic views over Northumberland countryside**...
... **picturesque Tarka the Otter countryside** by bicycle...
... exploration of **the lovely Devon countryside** and shoreline...

The Italian word *natura* does not share the same pattern. In the above instances we should also notice – highlighted in bold as part of the same unit of meaning – the qualifying adjectives which are part of the noun group, such as *peaceful*, *tranquil*, *beautiful*, *lovely*. The theme of beauty is also associated with the word *countryside* without further geographical qualification.

These adjectives share the same semantic preference found in the co-text of *natura*. However, we should remember that these qualities were embedded in different grammatical structures in the Agriturist corpus: we had seen *la bellezza della natura*, *gli stupendi paesaggi*, and from a translational point of view it is interesting to note the different linguistic realizations of these concepts.

Other qualities associated with *natura* in the Agriturist Corpus had to do with the idea of peace and tranquillity (*pace*, *quiete*, *silenzio*) and the sounds associated with the countryside (*suoni, sonorità*). Among the collocates of *countryside* in the Farmhols Corpus we find some words that show analogies with the Italian collocates:

... the **peacefulness of the surrounding countryside**...
... seek the **peace and quiet of the countryside**...
... the **peace and tranquility of the countryside**...
... Enjoy the **peace in the countryside**...
... wake up to **the sounds of the countryside**, and enjoy the flavours of...

Other adjectives that are frequently associated with 'countryside' include 'surrounding' thus identifying the pattern 'surrounding countryside' as equivalent to *natura circostante*:

... beauty of **the surrounding unspoilt countryside** with its abundance of wildlife...
... heather garden and **the surrounding countryside**. The ground...
... duck pond and **surrounding countryside**. The Attic apartment...

Another frequent occurrence is the adjective *unspoilt* which can be considered as a match for *incontaminata, intatta* in the Italian Agriturist corpus:

... outstanding views of **unspoilt countryside**...
... **Wonderful unspoilt countryside**: Lakes, rivers, streams...
... most **beautiful unspoiled countryside** Ireland has to offer...

The translation pair thus identified is *natura incontaminata/intatta* and 'unspoilt countryside'. We should notice in this respect that although the adjective 'intact' exists in English and has a similar meaning, it is never used in association with *countryside* in this corpus.

In the context of 'countryside' we also notice some adjectives which refer to the physical aspect of the countryside:

... magnificent views over **open countryside**. Open plan living...
... Dale and **open countryside**. The cottages have been...
... of Devon, surrounded by **rolling countryside** equidistant...
... gaze at **the beautiful undulating countryside** and you will begin to think...

In this respect we should note that the word *natura* in Italian is more abstract in meaning than the English 'countryside': this is obvious if we consider the fact that in Italian *natura* is never qualified by adjectives that can be taken as equivalents for 'open', 'rolling' and 'undulating'.

Among the most frequent collocates of 'countryside' two verbs stand out: 'set' and 'situated' which refer to the place where the farm is located. Consider:

... the farm **set in picturesque countryside** on the edge of the...
... house **set in lovely Dylan Thomas countryside** offering...
... **Set in very peaceful open countryside**, the farm and holiday...

... farm **set in the beautiful unspoilt countryside** of North Devon...
... from the sea, **set in gently hilly countryside**, near the world...
... holidays. **Set in the delightful countryside** within the North...
... conveniently **situated in the quiet countryside** near to the...
... 300 years. **Situated in pleasant countryside** just off the M5...

These instances are quite interesting if we consider the overall pattern that becomes visible. The idea of 'immersion' which had found no realization in English (we had looked at words like 'immersion', 'dive', etc.) is realized here by 'set' and 'situated'. These verbs could therefore be considered as the equivalent of the Italian *immerso nella natura*. We notice however that the Italian *immerso* conveys a positive connotation using the metaphor of the immersion; the style is rather poetic. On the other hand the verbs 'set' and 'situated' are used to describe the physical setting of the farm in a more concrete way.

To conclude this section let us sum up the main points of our discussion. We have seen that, in the case of farm holiday brochures, the Italian noun *natura* shows more similarities with the English noun 'countryside' than the English translation equivalents provided by dictionaries. Of course some semantic fields find no correspondence. The table below will help us compare the collocational profile and semantic preference of both words. As has been seen, no equivalence could be found at the simple word level: *natura* can be said to be non-equivalent to the English 'nature' (apart from *amanti della natura* / 'nature lovers'). On the other hand by proceeding through collocates, in this case 'unspoilt' and 'surrounding', we have been able to find more than one equivalence with 'countryside'. This type of equivalence is therefore found at the collocational level and corresponds to functional equivalence.

Natura	**Countryside**
intatta / incontaminata	unspoilt / unspoiled
circostante	surrounding
'bellezza' (le bellezze / il fascino della natura …)	'beauty'(beautiful / lovely / picturesque… countryside)
suoni / sonorità / ritmi	sounds
pace / quiete	peace / peacefulness
a contatto / immerse / immersione / tuffo	set / situated

Table 1. Natura and 'countryside' translation pairs

3. Conclusion

This study has made an attempt to show that translation is strictly linked to the idea of function. Function is very difficult to pin down and even more difficult to transfer across different cultures; we maintain that it is mainly linked to (both linguistic and extra-linguistic) contextual realizations, and a systematic study of context and co-text will enable the translator to mediate better across languages and cultures.

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A contrastive analysis of English and Italian financial lexis: the pay-with-plastic system

Denise Milizia

Abstract

In this paper we investigate two linguistic and financial systems and consequently two cultures by analysing the pay-with-plastic system on both sides of the Atlantic, focusing our research on two expressions, i.e. *credit card* and *carta di credito* contained in EIFECO (English and Italian Financial and Economic Corpus), a bilingual comparable corpus assembled at the University of Foggia. The texts in EIFECO come from *The Economist* for the English data and from *Il Sole 24 Ore* for the Italian.

In this study we find unexpected and substantial differences in the behaviour of two supposedly 'true friends' usually believed to be direct equivalents from a denotative point of view.

After analysing the concept of equivalence and equivalent effect, we endeavour to find the best equivalent expression that might convey the spirit and manner of the source language and might produce a similar response in both users. Beyond the formal equivalence of the two payment systems taken into consideration, we try to find what Nida terms "dynamic equivalence", or the principle of "equivalent effect" (Nida 1964).

Our aim is to show that although some words sound and look the same, they convey different meanings, and traditional reference books do not seem to be suitable for capturing and relaying the nuances of meaning and function of given fixed expressions across languages and cultures.

1. Introduction

In this paper we investigate two linguistic and financial systems and the cultural backgrounds they imply. We show that meaning, even 'specialized' meaning, is a social phenomenon, amenable to change and negotiation by members of different communities. Our investigation is based on an analysis of the pay-with-plastic system contrasting Italian and English (USA and UK) data. This research focuses on two intuitively equivalent expressions, *credit card* and *carta di credito*, contained in EIFECO (English and Italian Financial and Economic Corpus), a bilingual comparable corpus assembled at the University of Foggia. The texts in EIFECO have all been downloaded from the Internet, the prime source of digital texts, more specifically from *The Economist* for the English data and from *Il Sole 24 Ore* for the Italian data.

After examining the context of *credit card* and *carta di credito*, we note that only by using corpora does it clearly emerge that *credit card* and its *prima facie* equivalent *carta di credito* are not direct equivalents, although traditional reference texts present these two concepts as a perfect match.

Our analysis of *credit card* and *carta di credito* shows unexpected differences in the contexts these two expressions are associated with.

When looking for one equivalent function in the target language, once we have detected a specific function in the source language, the outcome can be 1) more than one equivalent function, 2) a different function, 3) no equivalence at all, and 4) the likelihood of having empty areas of association. Our findings suggest the second outcome, although it has been claimed that in subject-specific vocabulary "there is exact equivalence across languages" (Godman and Payne, cited in Pearson 1998: 18).

This study is, at the moment, at a pilot stage, therefore we will studiously avoid any suggestion that this is a definitive and exhaustive treatment of our research question.

2. Data and method

This paper attempts to tackle the thorny problem of equivalence between words and lexical phrases in different languages, in this case between English and Italian, more specifically in the language of finance. Yet we need to specify that, although the language examined is that of finance and economics, the two corpora used here are mainly composed of texts taken from publications (*The Economist* and *Il Sole 24 Ore*) whose language is accessible to a fairly wide readership, not only to experts in the field. In this respect, the language we analyse can probably be considered semi-technical, rather than highly specialized.

Moving away from the idea that an orthographic word has a fixed meaning (see Sinclair 1996 for a discussion of this issue), the lemmas *credit* and *credito* and the lexical phrases *credit card* and *carta di credito* are analysed through their collocational context. We show that some terms vary in meaning across cultures, they are 'conditioned' by the linguistic co-text, and their emotive and connotative value varies according to culture (Nida 1964).

We also show that collocations can be dramatic and interesting because unexpected, and they may lead us to find out lexical or semantic features we would never have noticed by reading a text. "Language looks rather different when we look at a lot of it all at once" (Sinclair 1991: 100); the insights gained by studying concordances can be quite different from those gained when we read a full running text, for the sheer fact that there might be a large number of potentially meaningful patterns that escape the attention of the traditional linguists and mother-tongue speakers when "reading horizontally" (Tognini Bonelli 2001: 3).

The corpus which has been used for the investigation in this work, EIFECO, is an *ad hoc* corpus, what Austermühl (2001: 128) calls "a customized corpus", still quite small and at a pilot stage, but its size is adequate to prove our point. It provisionally stands at a total of 450,817 tokens, 310,567 words respectively for the English corpus and 150,250 words for the Italian.

We have tried to make our corpus as representative as possible of financial and banking English. In compiling the corpus, external criteria have been used and rogue texts have been avoided such as, for example, alluring commercial sites of specific banks or institutions publicizing their own credit card.

Of the four types of corpora described in the literature, the normative, the monitoring, the parallel and the comparable, we have chosen the last type, in that it seemed to us to be the most suitable for carrying out a contrastive analysis.

3. *Carta di credito* vs. credit card: a study of different semantic prosodies

In the Italian comparable corpus we found 402 instances of the lemma *credito* and 257 of the lexical phrase *carta di credito*. By looking at the instances of *carta di credito*, analysing both the left and right co-text, and taking into account that we "shall tell a word by the company it keeps" (Firth 1957), we get the idea that *carta di credito* is a convenient and useful way of payment:

... scelto quella determinata **carta di credito**, per esempio un'assicurazione...
... privilegiano l'uso della **carta di credito** rappresentano solo una percentuale...
... strumenti di pagamento. La **carta di credito**, comoda pure per prenotare...
... il telefono dà sprint alla **carta di credito.** MasterCard lancia in Italia il primo...
... il valore aggiunto della **carta di credito** è proprio quello del finanziamento...
... frequentemente la **carta di credito.** Vantaggi per il cliente. Il cliente ...
... propenso ad utilizzare la **carta di credito**, solo il 4% quella di debito...
... spiegato i vantaggi della **carta di credito** (intesa in senso lato) quale mezzo...
... l'utilizzo della **carta di credito**. C'è la possibilità di inviare dietro...
... carte, maggiormente della **carta di credito**, più frequente in casi...
... e finanziarie quello delle **carte di credito** è il business del futuro. Un futuro...

Since collocation is conducive to understanding meaning, we can claim that the semantic prosody of *carta di credito* is a 'good' one. We obtain this result from the citations above, which are all coloured by a general pleasantness; in fact, all the main collocates of *carta di credito* contribute to create a positive semantic aura of meaning: *comoda, valore aggiunto, propenso ad utilizzare, vantaggi, incentivare l'uso, business del futuro*[1].

Semantic prosodies represent the "functional choice which links meaning to purpose" (Sinclair 1996) i.e. the co-text merges with the context and the item *credit* achieves a purpose in a certain environment (Tognini Bonelli 2002). It may not seem obvious, but all lexical items have a semantic prosody, and rarely is language neutral; sometimes it is rather difficult to get the 'pragmatic' meaning of a lexical item, we have to process the data quite often in order to get to it, other times it is there but "we cannot put our finger on it" (Sinclair, personal communication). Every word has a semantic prosody, this is why we make a choice in the first place.

The lemma *credit* as a single word is overwhelmingly used in contexts where it carries a positive semantic prosody, both in English and Italian and in any register, meaning *trust, trustworthiness, faith, good reputation, honour*.

The instances below are taken from the Bank of English, and are reported here in order to illustrate the positive colouring of the lemma *credit* in general English:

... and you have to give credit where **credit** is due, but what we achieved last...
... but credit should be given where **credit** is due. With Millwall 2-0 down...
... that she is only 23, it is a **credit** to her that her life is so firmly...
... done a magnificent job and it's a **credit** to them. They have a surface which...
... to be thin, to be liked, to be a **credit** to their parents. Eating disorders...
... they are charming, polite and a **credit** to their parents. They appear to be...
... less boisterous and actually a **credit** to the nation in Japan and South...
... said Martin Keown. They're a **credit** to their country", Philip Neville...
... or all sport. I think he's been a **credit** to sport, not just boxing. I think...
... style that would have been a **credit** to David Beckham. Agassi, asked by...
... pub, striving for popularity. On the **credit** side, he's always been wonderful...
... through the ethical debates. On the **credit** side, the plane crash in...
... fully justified in granting academic **credit** for the project. Almost ever...
... a noncredit course, and if academic **credit** were given for those subjects...

At the time of writing, we found 45,048 instances of *credit* in the Bank of English. The citations reported above are indeed only a very small, randomly selected sample of those found in the corpus. As well as a positive semantic prosody, the lemma conveys many different meanings and shows several patterns. It also collocates with several different verbs, showing a specific colligational pattern and quite a few phraseological patterns, all of these structures implying something desirable.

[1] Convenient, added value, willing to use, advantages, encouraging the use, business of the future.

Going back to the lemma *credit* as it is conceived in financial language, in the company of the lemma *carta*, *credito* keeps a positive semantic prosody. A *carta di credito* is a card made available by a bank, which gives credit, namely both trust and money, for 28 days or so, depending on the agreement; usually the understanding is that the total monthly credit purchases are billed on a monthly statement and the customer pays in one lump sum (actually the amount is deducted from his/her bank account).

The *carta di credito* is defined in Fabrizi *et al.* (2000) as follows:

> La carta di credito è un documento tramite il quale il titolare può acquistare beni o servizi presso determinati esercenti commerciali senza che il pagamento avvenga attraverso un esborso immediato di contante. Nella maggioranza dei casi è necessario che i fruitori dei servizi resi da questo surrogato monetario siano titolari di un conto corrente presso una banca.
> La carta di credito permette al titolare di effettuare il regolamento ad una data successiva rispetto all'operazione di scambio; ciò può avvenire in un'unica soluzione alla fine del mese o in forma rateale e, quindi, su un arco temporale più prolungato[2].

The *credit card* is defined in Morgenson & Harvey (2002) as follows:

> The credit card is a card that may be used repeatedly to borrow money or buy goods and services on credit.

Under the headword *to borrow money* we read:

> To obtain or receive money on loan with the promise or understanding that it will be repaid.

Through the definitions in these two reference books we already get the idea that *credit card* and *carta di credito*, although equivalent in form, are not equivalent in meaning. In the English comparable corpus, there are 993 occurrences of the lemma *credit* and 491 instances of *credit card*. Such a big discrepancy between the occurrences of the lemma *credit* and *credito* in the two corpora is due not only to the larger size of the English corpus, but also to the uninflected form of the lemma *credit*, whose functions as noun, adjective and verb in English are identical cognates, like many words in English (0.58% *credit* vs 0.54% *credito*).

Our aim here is to infer the meaning from the environment, even for those

[2] The credit card is a document through which the cardholder can purchase goods or services at certain stores without an immediate disbursement of cash. In most cases, it is necessary for the beneficiaries of these services given by this surrogate money to be current account holders in a bank. The credit card allows the cardholder to settle the payment at a later date with respect to the exchange operation; this can be regulated in one lump at the end of the month or in instalments and, therefore, over an extended period of time.

phrases such as the ones being studied, *carta di credito* and *credit card*, which seem to be equivalent. We will see that the evidence is found mainly in the surrounding language, and that some collocations reflect the cultural setting in which they occur.

The cumulative effect of the instances reported below leads to a semantic prosody which derives from a semantic preference for a lexical set that includes items such as *addiction, desperation, trap, fiasco, risk, bubble, glaring gap, defaults, bankruptcy, junk mail*, *nightmare*, and so forth; a *credit card* is also defined as "an anesthetic which simply delays the pain" (Mackenzie 1995: 35). This is a set of undesirable events; the other words present in the right and left co-text emphasize this preference for the negative.

The following citations below are reported in order to illustrate the collocational profiles and the behaviour of the node expression in the English comparable corpus:

... the convenience of a **credit card**, we will continue the strangle hold of our...
... are just like drugs, **credit cards** offer short term pleasure and long term pain...
... it is pure hypocrisy for **credit-card** firms to complain that personal bankruptcy...
... revolving credit. Most **credit-card** consumers keep on acquiring debt even as...
... levels, and defaults on **credit-card** and mortgage loans have been high. This...
... their debts. When the **credit-card** craze finally began to abate, consumer...
... do not pay off your **credit card** each month you suffer punitive rates. That...
... **credit cards** can be a useful financial tool or a nightmare...
... people get caught up in **credit card** offers that are too "good to pass up"...
... **credit card** companies entice you to get into debt...
... is sure to point at the **credit card** industry. The constant stream of junk mail...

In the last citation, neither the right nor the left co-text is long enough to prove our point, therefore we shall proceed to expand the search to the next lines:

> if America's bubble economy bursts, a finger of blame is sure to point at the **credit-card** industry. The constant stream of junk mail offering pre-approved credit on a charge-card has helped people to get deeper and faster into debt than has ever been possible before.

The expanded text confirms and actually corroborates our previous findings.

By reading the concordance of the node, we note that the most frequent collocate of *credit card* is *debt*: in EIFECO it collocates on 19 occasions in the right co-text, with some instances also in the left co-text of the node which, in the following instances, acquires an adjectival function:

... Providian. For, how can a **credit card debt** be discharged in a bankruptcy...
... the United States carries **credit card debt** burden of $4,000. That is just...
... them avoid accumulating **credit card debt**. More than one third said they do...
... constituents swamped by **credit-card debt**. Appeals to crude politics and big...

... must follow on delinquent **credit card debts**. From July 1st issuers will also...
... on now, of which over 40% is **credit card debt**. Americans now have on average...
... of $4,000. That is just **credit card debt**; it does not include mortgages...
... to pay off debt. Still, **credit card debt** is often the most vicious sort of...
... hard to "get ahead" of **credit card debt**. It is incredibly easy to fall into...
... really get control of your **credit card debt**, you need to examine what money...

Lexical choices with a negative semantic prosody such as *debt* were unexpected in the environment of *credit card*; as a matter of fact, we do not have any in the Italian corpus; less surprising was the company that the lemma *debt* keeps with *credit*:

...innovative ways to increase **credit debt** is their primary solution to increase...
...is siphoned away paying past **credit debt**. In 1995 the total credit card debt...
...**credit/debt** management...

It is easily detectable that most of the words in the vicinity of *credit card* are not conventionally desirable or attractive. The negative semantic prosody attached to the collocates of *credit card* is very strong and regular: without a doubt it has an overwhelmingly 'bad' prosody, with very few 'good' co-occurrences.

Other frequent collocates of *credit card* in the English comparable corpus are *loan*, *borrowing* and *lending*: these lemmas do occur in the company of the word *carta* also in the Italian corpus of EIFECO, where I found ten occurrences of the lemma *prestito*, but in relation to a different way of payment: the *carta revolving*.

4. *Carta revolving* and *credit card*: similar contexts and similar meanings?

In the attempt to compare the contexts in which *credit card* and *carta di credito* occur, we found occurrences of a different type of plastic system payment, that is *carta revolving*. *Carta revolving* in the Italian data seems to be used in contexts very similar to those of *credit card* in the English data.

Below we report a few indicative examples to illustrate the point:

... nel fatto che con la carta **revolving** ti viene concesso in prestito un...
... finanziamento come la carta **revolving**, dove sta la funzione creditizia?...
... caratteristica della carta **revolving** di essere uno strumento di credito, è...
... a giurare che le carte **revolving** rappresentano il futuro. Quanto, più...
... d'anni fa erano le carte **revolving**, anche dette a rimborso rateale, a...
... poi i costi delle carte **revolving**, che consentono il rimborso a rate...
... carta di credito **revolving** con vantaggi esclusivi per gli associati...
... La carta è di tipo **revolving**, prevede quindi un pagamento rateale...
... carta può essere **revolving**, emessa da Fiditalia, gratuita il...
... i vantaggi della carta **revolving** sono molti, e molti consumatori italiani...

Other left collocates of *revolving* are *funzionalità*, *l'opzione*, *in modalità, tasso*[3].

Those who are not familiar with this method of payment will easily be able to infer the purpose of this card, in that all the information is supplied in the co-text: with the *carta revolving* the consumer is granted a loan which does not necessarily have to be paid off in one lump sum when the statement is received. Indeed, the cardholder can decide when to pay it back, and how much at a time, based upon the agreements with his/her bank. The interest to pay refers to the money actually used, therefore no interest will be charged if the customer has not used the card.

Hence, it seems to us that the concept of *credit*, in the meaning of *loan*, belongs to the *carta revolving* rather than to the *carta di credito*, often referred to as *carta a saldo*, in which case there is actually no lending/borrowing involved, if it were not for the expense-reimbursement deferment[4].

Traditional reference texts such as bilingual or monolingual dictionaries, or even specialized financial references, provide no translation equivalents or explanations. In Collins (2004) *revolving* collocates only with *door*.

Let us now look at the concordance of *revolving* in the English corpus:

... interest calculations and **revolving** credit. Most credit card consumers keep...
... because there is little **revolving** credit in Japan, card issuers want to know...
... introduce the concept of **revolving** payments. Japan's consumer-finance giant...
... Deutsche Securities. Few offer **revolving**-payment schemes, which enable...
... Indeed, where credit-card-style-**revolving** consumer lending is illegal, is...

These findings revealed a very unsuspected pattern of language, since the lemma *revolving*, which is by now an integrated calque in the Italian financial register, never co-occurs with *card* in the English comparable corpus, but only with *credit*[5] and *payment*.

The five occurrences reported above are the only instances we found in the whole English comparable corpus from EIFECO, versus the 56 instances in the Italian corpus.

The low frequency of this lemma in the English comparable corpus may be symptomatic and worth pursuing.

The association *revolving card* is therefore completely missing in English; in Italian the adjective collocates with *carta* 32 times in attributive position, and a few times in predicative position.

The recognition that semantic prosody is a constant feature of text is one of the most important contributions of corpus work so far: it is central to the creation of meaning (Sinclair 2003). Therefore the *carta revolving* takes on the mean-

[3] functionality, the option, in mode, rate.

[4] In Italian the expense-reimbursement deferment is called *franchigia*, which corresponds to the English *grace period*. No translation could be found for the term *franchigia* in traditional dictionaries with reference to the financial register.

[5] *revolving credit* is rendered in Italian as *credito rotativo*.

ing from the words with which it collocates. Although many co-occurrences of this way of payment carry a 'good' semantic prosody, a few nouns in company with *carta revolving* carry a 'bad' semantic prosody, and resemble the collocates of the English *credit card*:

> ... sta nel fatto che con la carta **revolving** ti viene concesso un prestito...
> ... del fido, per le carte **revolving**, viene concesso in base al profilo di rischio...

Other collocates worthy of note are: *una volta che l'insolvenza si concretizza*, *quindi applichiamo morosità*, *se la morosità procede*[6]. Besides, whereas the words *debito*[7] and *affidamento*, *fido*[8] are never associated with *carta di credito* in the Italian comparable corpus, we do find quite a few instances of co-occurrences with *carta revolving*.

After carefully analysing the concordances, and examining closely the verbal environment of the words under investigation, it seems to us that the English and American *credit card* resembles the Italian *carta revolving* more than *carta di credito*:

> ... il cliente a onorare i suoi **debiti** ...
> ... è richiesto il pagamento di tutto il **debito**...
> ... con una penale dell'8% sul saldo **debitore**...

We also gather from the Italian corpus in EIFECO that

> ... **revolving** ha la caratteristica di contenere un affidamento, cioè un prestito...
> ... a quest'utilità la carta **revolving** ne aggiunge un'altra: la funzione di credito…

Besides, the expression *una penalità una tantum* of the Italian comparable corpus resembles *you suffer punitive rates of interest* of the English comparable corpus.

We have also found in EIFECO that these defaulted payments hardly ever happen in the Italian banking system, *in virtù di uno screening accurato della clientela in ingresso*,[9] where *screening* stands for what in the English system is called the *credit rating*.

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[6] once insolvency becomes a concrete reality, then we apply a fine, if the arrears continue.

[7] debt.

[8] credit.

[9] by virtue of a scrupulous examination of the new customers.

5. Results

By reading concordances we note that the notion of *credit*, meaning *loan*, *borrowing* and *lending*, is implicit in the British and American *credit card*, and therefore the concept of *credit* is different from *credito*.

Our aim here is to find one or more phrases that might convey the same meaning, in that correspondence in meaning must have priority over correspondence in style if an equivalent effect is to be achieved.

The semantic prosodies of the nodes in the two languages mirror a completely different world, they reflect the world and the society in which these instruments of payment are used: the concept that something negative may not be negative in another language is supported in this investigation.

Analysing the adjectives more frequently co-occurring with *credit card* in the English corpus and looking at the environment of the node, we notice the presence of two adjectives whose equivalents never occur in the Italian corpus: *secured* and *unsecured*. Since "much can be inferred from what is absent" (Firth 1957), it seems to us that the adjectives *secured* and *unsecured* in company with *credit card* in the English comparable corpus in EIFECO are well worth pursuing.

In the English comparable corpus we find 13 instances of *secured* and four occurrences of *secured* in company with *credit card*; moreover, there are seven instances of *unsecured* but no occurrence of *unsecured credit card*. Of course, we have not one single occurrence of these adjectives in the Italian comparable corpus, this being a specific feature of the British and American credit-card system. From from the data available we gather that a *secured credit card* resembles more the Italian *carta di credito*, in that [...] *esse hanno plafond ristretti di spesa e richiedono comunque la costituzione in un conto corrente o in deposito della provvista necessaria al regolamento* [...][10]. Conversely, [...] *per le unsecured credit cards non è richiesto un deposito preventivo* [...][11].

Here are a few indicative examples selected from the overall concordance list:

... monthly balance immediately. A **secured credit card** offers a low credit limit and...
... a no-fee credit card, search for a **secured credit card**, search for a point-earning...
... option was to get what's called a **secured credit card**. The customer opens a...
... late-night TV. (Excerpt from a **secured credit card** commercial) Korry:...
... put your hard-earned money into a **secured credit card**, you're making an...

[10] they have limited credit and require, all the same, the setting up on a current account or on deposit of the provision necessary for the regulation.

[11] for unsecured credit cards a deposit is not required.

Of course, this pattern has to be validated in the light of more evidence: we would need to examine these statements after examining a larger corpus, but EIFECO is still quite small. The few instances found do not allow us to state our hunches with confidence.

As we have already mentioned in the introductory part of the paper, this study is, at the moment, a pilot study, therefore we are putting forward hypotheses for future analyses.

In the light of the present data, it would seem that to many people debt is an inevitable part of life: in President Bush's first official Tax Cut proposal, he noted that the average family in the United States carries a credit card debt burden of $4,000. This is just credit card debt; it does not include mortgages, car loans, student loans, personal lines of credit, personal loans or other big-ticket debt items. Credit card debt is the most vicious sort of debt. It seems that having a debt-free home is like being un-American, and 'buying on credit' has become synonymous with the 'American way of life'.

The American system lets people spend money they do not have, this is why it is the most indebted country in the world. It is a system with a 'business' strategy that entices people to consume and spend. It is a cultural as well as a very important macro-economic concept; European societies are traditionally used to thinking about the economy in terms of producing/manufacturing/exporting, generating revenue and spending the revenue. The US society, a post-industrial society, is based on spending, often borrowing, therefore generating revenue, which is spent again.

6. Conclusion

Our work was narrowed around one main concept, the *credit card* and the *carta di credito*. This pay-with-plastic system has been chosen because, analysed linguistically, it conveys the behaviour and the habits of two different cultures: the British and the American on one side, and the Italian on the other.

We have found enough evidence in EIFECO to gather new linguistic and technical information, usually overlooked by dictionaries: whereas the *debit card* is a 'buy now pay now tool', her 'cousin', the *credit card*, is a 'buy now pay later tool', but where you also 'pay more'. By reading concordances and trusting the text, we have come to the conclusion that, although in their *prima facie* appearance *credit card* and *carta di credito* are equivalent, there is hardly any common environment. By allowing the evidence of our corpus to influence our view of language and meaning, new observations have been made, some of which might have seemed counter-intuitive before the evidence of the corpus was encompassed (Sinclair 1996).

Although the lemma *credit* carries an overwhelmingly positive semantic prosody not only in finance but in every register in which it occurs, and although the lemma *card* has a neutral sense, in the English comparable corpus the lexical phrase *credit card* and its surrounding language suggest an extremely negative semantic prosody.

It is only because the prosody on *credit* is as consistent as it is that we started wondering why we found so many instances of 'bad' collocates (Louw 1993).

These findings were unexpected and surprising because in the Italian comparable corpus *carta di credito* is generally perceived as a very convenient plastic system. Italian consumers need to have money in their account in order to get a credit card, just like Americans need to have money in their account in order to have a debit card. This is why it seems to us that, from the financial viewpoint, Italian credit cards are semantically and pragmatically more like British and American debit cards, although we would need much larger corpora to state this confidently. Of course with a debit card the money we spend is subtracted from our account immediately or within 48 hours, whereas when spending with a credit card in Italy we get a 30-day grace period. But this is actually the only main difference between the two cards.

The money British and American people spend when using a credit card is the issuer's money, it is a loan that the bank or any other institution grants the consumers, who will have to pay back in full at the end of the month without any interest accrued. The sum owed can be repaid also in installments, and in this case with interest. This is what most consumers do, and this is why America is the most indebted country in the world.

Italy does not share this banking system with the United States and the United Kingdom because there is neither lending nor borrowing involved in the Italian *carta di credito*. With evidence at hand and by investigating the syntagmatic relations between words, we have noted that quite a similar procedure is to be found in the Italian *carta revolving*, and we have also noted that *secured credit cards* in the American financial system resemble Italian credit cards more than a credit card *tout court*. These data would still need to be explored further and validated in the light of more exhaustive evidence.

We can conclude, using Sager's words, by saying that *credit card* and *carta di credito*, despite their linguistic equivalence, shown in the maintenance of form, do not share a pragmatic equivalence, in that the significance is not the same for the target community and the source community (Partington 1998: 49).

The present corpus-based analysis has provided further evidence that language in use transmits culture, expanding the meaning from the word to the verbal environment and from the verbal context to the cultural context.

This paper is an attempt to corroborate the point made by Baker (1992: 25) that words or phrases which enter a language "take their own independent paths and we cannot predict or control the way they will change and the additional meanings they might or might not take on". If culture is perceived as dynamic, then the terminology of social structuring must be dynamic too. In the US and in the UK the concept of credit card is culture-bound, and its significance has to be conceived vis-à-vis their society as a whole; the term cannot be fully understood without some knowledge of British and American spending habits.

This is also evidence of the vitality of natural languages, of how linguistic systems are self-regulating organisms which, over time, adapt to suit changing environments, different societies and, therefore, distinct cultures.

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Travelling without a trace: a corpus study of the communicative process of 'eco-speaking'

Cinzia Giacinta Spinzi

Abstract

The purpose of this research, which adopts mainly a corpus-based approach, is to analyse the specific discourse of ecotourism for material design. The idea of studying this register, in Halliday's sense, derives from the ever-increasing demand for more authentic and natural holidays, which has given birth to a niche market of tourism. The data derive from a specialized corpus, the English corpus of Ecotourism, which is being assembled at the University of Foggia under the name of *Green Corpus* and is made up of British English and American English publications. This work is informed by the view that corpora can reveal patterns of usage not easily detectable through manual analysis and therefore enable learners to observe directly a body of evidence pertaining to the linguistic features of specialized language domains, of which ecotourism is a case in point.

In order to become a good user of LSP, two types of knowledge are required: linguistic knowledge and conceptual knowledge, and corpora are useful resources for both, in terms of lexico-grammatical and stylistic features for the former and meaning for the latter. In investigating the linguistic patterns of eco-speaking, we will consider the lexical choices, their collocations and semantic prosody in order to define its domain and the typology of the offer. The preliminary findings show the complexity of the term 'ecotourism', the importance of authenticity and primitiveness conveyed by 'green messages' and we point out how this register has properties of its own.

1. Introduction

Language description could be defined as the way in which the language system is broken down and described for the purpose of learning. Placing this work in the neo-Firthian tradition, we can only arrive at some understanding of how language works if we consider the recurrent sequences of language as operating in a given context. Therefore, if language varies according to the context of use, there are clearly language forms that tend to be used more frequently in one context than in another, and there are some features which can be identified as typical of a particular register. Corpora are a resourceful tool for investigating this 'typicality' in terms of most frequent meanings or collocates of an individual word or phrase in a specialized context like that of ecotourism. In this work, we will adopt Halliday's concept of register, which comes under the larger concept of language variation, and meant as "the set of meanings, the configuration of semantic patterns, that are typically drawn upon under the specific conditions, along with the words and structures that are used in the realization of these meanings" (Halliday 1978: 23). Moreover, Halliday notes: "registers select and foreground different options" (1985: 372), meaning that the main distinctions between general language and specific language concern some restrictions on vocabulary and syntax, which characterize the latter. This concept finds a possible equivalent in Firth's idea of "restricted language", which he defines as "serving a circumscribed field of experience or action" with "its own grammar and dictionary" (Firth 1957: respectively 124, 87, 98).

Language should be studied in attested instances of use, and a "linguistic description which is not supported by the evidence of the language has no credibility" (Sinclair 1991: 36). In this light a corpus is a body of authentic texts that might represent a source of information, for both teachers and learners. From a pedagogic point of view, corpora can be used for two main reasons: for material design and for training students how to use them. In this paper we will follow the first approach illustrated by Barlow according to whom "teachers might use corpus-based investigations to: (i) determine the most frequent patterns in a particular domain; (ii) enrich their knowledge of the language, perhaps in response to questions raised in the classroom; (iii) provide 'authentic data' examples; (iv) generate teaching materials" (cited in Partington 1998: 6) Therefore, we will start by extracting conceptual knowledge through the analysis of ecotourism as a term and, in order to collocate it in the wider context of tourism, we will study the lemma *alternative,* which emerged from the data. This choice is dictated by the idea that corpora allow us a large number of occurrences of a term in order to establish its meaning, scope and usage. Hence textual evidence will support our definition. The second part will deal with what ecotourism offers as a holiday; since ecotourism is a form of business, our purpose is to discover how it sells its 'product', dealing with the problem of combining entertainment and respect for the environment. The *un*-adjectives and the plural noun *areas* will be investigated because of their remarkable frequency in the corpus; the choice of analysing the terms *change* and subsequently *education* is substantiated by their use in the slogans promoting ecotourism and by our intuition that they convey the typology of the offer.

2. The data

Although the idea of a full-immersed nature holiday pre-dates ecotourism, what is new is the ever-increasing sensitiveness to environmental and social factors. The need for a thorough understanding of this sublanguage has led to the creation of an English special-purpose corpus, called the *Green Corpus*, which provisionally stands at 267,335 words. This *Green Corpus* is a monolingual ad hoc corpus, and the texts cover a time span from 1998 until the time of writing. The texts have been downloaded from websites dealing with this specialist domain, as well as from *The Guardian on line* and *The Environmental Magazine.* The texts gathered vary in their typology ranging from the most obvious promotional websites in order to study the typology of the offer, to academic writings and newspaper articles to acquire subject knowledge. The research is supported by a collection of brochures and catalogues, investigated manually to study slogans and pictures. The software used to carry out our analysis is provided by WordSmith Tools (Scott 1996).

Another corpus consulted is the Bank of English. The use of this corpus through its software Lookup will be confined to the downloading of the picture trees to study the collocates of some word forms in general language, since "evidence from a specific-domain corpus should be compared with evidence from a general purpose corpus" (Tognini Bonelli 2001: 9). This tool will be useful to grasp the lexical and semantic restrictions in ecotourism.

In this introductory part, it is worth clarifying that specialized corpora "do not contribute to a description of ordinary language" (Sinclair cited in Pearson 1998: 46) because we can see them as containing a certain number of unusual features hardly ever found in ordinary communication (*ibid.*).

3. Extracting conceptual knowledge: the originality of ecotourism

The concept of ecotourism dates back to the 1970s, when a group of conservationists in Latin America were alarmed at the rapid destruction of the world's remaining tropical forests and started to consider ecotourism as a potential economic alternative to other activities. At the same time in East Africa, ecotourism evolved as a means of facing the problem of wildlife management, which gave importance to the idea of the local people's involvement in wildlife conservation and tourism.

When you embark upon a corpus-based activity, the most useful way to start investigating a language variety is to find out what words are most common in it and you can do this by producing a wordlist. The lexical items at the top of the wordlist in descending order are: *ecotourism, local, conservation, people, development, natural* and *areas,* which play a fundamental role in the designation of the main concepts of this register.

Since this work is mainly descriptive, we will start by looking for some knowledge-rich contexts about *ecotourism*, because it is essential to understand the concepts that make up the specialized field: "When you use a corpus-analysis tool to produce a concordance for a specific search term, you will retrieve all the occurrences of that string that are found in your corpus. Some of these will contain conceptual information, while others will be less informative" (Bowker & Pearson 2002: 217). As Pearson suggests, the method entails the production of concordances for terms to study them in their environment, and to see whether it is possible to add information about their meanings (Pearson 1998: 190). Considering *as* (33 occurrences) and *is* (117) as types of hinges that may signal an explanatory context, and as the most frequent following the term ecotourism in the *Green Corpus*, we obtained conceptual information, taking *ecotourism* as the node:

... its loss of isolation, then came to embrace **ecotourism as** a benign path forward...
... emerged to oppose the IYE that promotes **ecotourism as** a viable tool for...
... biodiversity and oxygen – and came to view **ecotourism as** a potential...
... The tiny oil-rich sultanate of Brunei is eyeing **ecotourism as** a means of...
... story of the Siecoya community's route into **ecotourism as** a means of fighting...
... RACHEL DREWRY investigates **ecotourism as** a conservation tool...

As the concordances display, ecotourism is a multilayered concept. The pattern verb + *ecotourism* + *as a/an* (60%) includes verbs (55%) belonging to the semantic field of description in the left co-text (*describe, define, consider, view, eye, identify*), followed by the prepositional phrase saying how ecotourism is regarded. The right collocates semantically related to the 'art of planning' present ecotourism as a *tool*, a *means*, a *strategy*, an *alternative,* an *opportunity* for development (20%); as travel which benefits conservation and community (20%); and as a tool for improving the state of things in a profit-oriented perspective (17%):

... tourism is paved with pitfalls. At present, **ecotourism is** a set of interconnected...
... rate of 10-30 percent per year. However, for many **Ecotourism is** not nature...
... positive. PROFILE DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIETY **Ecotourism is** developing...
... its potential contribution to biodiversity conservation. **Ecotourism is** clearly not...
... Don't be a problem, but recognize that quality **Ecotourism is** service-oriented...
... concepts quickly occurred, such that today **ecotourism is** a tool for benefiting...
... of this report. The flyer recognised that **ecotourism is** about environmentally...

The *ecotourism is* pattern, which is the most frequent, pinpoints ecotourism in the wider context of the tourism industry as: development-targeted (32%); conservation-oriented travel (28%); a complicated concept (12%); involving local participation (5%); low-impact (5%); double-speak (5%); damaging indigenous people (5%); the rest is minor variation.

Although any number of principles of ecotourism can be identified, an analysis of definitions such as these indicates certain dimensions that represent the main essence of the concept. Considering both patterns in our sets of concordances, the most frequent aspects are: ecotourism as a strategy for future development and travel with conservation purposes; we also learn that it is low-impact and sustains the well-being of local people; there are also some unexpected and negative components. A feature worth mentioning here is the presence of the negative particle *not* after *is* (13%) which denotes an attempt to define ecotourism by what it is not:

... sustainable development and its a good business. **Ecotourism is not** a panacea...
... organic coffee for the world market. However, **ecotourism is not** only a...
... to go, but how to go as well. Conclusions Achieving **ecotourism is not** so much...
... "Sometimes it is easier to explain what **ecotourism is not**," Hector replies. "It's...
... and support the local economy at their destination. **Ecotourism is not** defined...
... luxury to outback places, using less comforts? **Ecotourism is not** for everyone...
... worldwide. There is a growing awareness that **ecotourism is not** the benign enter...

In any case, Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, who coined the term 'ecotourism' in 1983, gives the answer to the question of what it is: "Sometimes it is easier to explain what ecotourism is not. It's not casino tourism, it's not riding around at 70 mph on a jet ski in a mangrove swamp. It's not downhill skiing with lots of facilities. Too many contraptions is not Ecotourism" (Reid 2000: 2). The presence of the negative particle creates the effect of strong meanings moderately conveyed. In this context, it highlights confusion emerging from the concept, maybe due to the various aspects it absorbs. Likewise, if ecotourism is not what other types of tourism imply, the main addressee of this process, the 'tourist' must be re-branded. This means that, if this kind of traveller is not a tourist, he/she may be labelled as a non-tourist, or as an "un-tourist", as Dea Birkett proposes[1], defining tourists by what they are not. In a site promoting Mozambique, we read "[…] is one of the few African countries where you can explore vast, untouched regions *rarely visited by tourists*" (my emphasis)[2]. This version of holidaymaker differs from that of the mass-tourist, and the traveller's ethos and needs are seen as being in tune with the environment. Thus, if tourists are not interested in local culture or in ecological issues, non-tourists are. So termed, an eco-tourist is meant to be a good, respectful, and responsible tourist.

Since ecotourism is more than sightseeing, an experience that stands out from other forms of tourism, we investigated the lemma *alternative* (75 occurrences) which emerged from the definitions of ecotourism:

... industries. In East Africa, it evolved as an **alternative to** a failed protectionist...
... protected areas, and a greener, cleaner **alternative to** the ills of conventional mass...
... Ecotourism is proving an increasingly popular **alternative to** the traditional...
... established in the last half century as an **alternative to** low intensity agriculture...
... communities. Ecotravel offers an **alternative to** many of the negative effects...

[1] *The Guardian on line*, 24 August 2002.

[2] *The Guardian on line*, 19 July 2003.

... attempt to construct an eco-tourist **alternative to** mass tourism does at least...
... Eco-tourism has been widely promoted as a viable **alternative to** ecologically...

Since "there is a close correlation between the different senses of a word and the structures in which it occurs" (Sinclair 1991: 53), the two forms of this lemma, adjective and noun, convey different meanings. The use of this noun (28%) in the frame *as an alternative to* displays a dichotomy as part of the semantic structure. In the left co-text ecotourism is the most frequent subject of verbs such as *evolved, trumpeted, proving, offer, promoted,* which introduce this type of holiday as opposed either to mass tourism or to other economic activities. The visible presence of both negative nouns (*ills*) and adjectives (*failed, degrading, negative*) gives a negative semantic prosody to mass tourism considered as traditional, thus highlighting, by contrast, the very positive meaning of ecotourism, embraced as a 'solution' to mass tourism. This disillusionment with mass tourism may have triggered the emergence of ecotourism. In its attributive use, which is the most common (72%), when the adjective collocates with *tourism* (32%) almost all instances are in inverted commas. This implies that 'alternative tourism' is a label that encompasses a whole range of unconventional tourism strategies, ecotourism included. What is more evident is that there is a thread through most of the remaining 68% of the attributive uses of *alternative*:

... patrol vessel and providing them with an **alternative** income if fishing stocks...
... both on-the-ground surveillance and **alternative** revenue to remote villages...
... contributions into tree planting and **alternative** energy to off-set global...
... generating economic benefits" and "providing **alternative** employment and ...

Most of the head words concern the economic field such as *income, productive opportunities, money-making,* and *employment.* The left co-text contains a notion of 'supply' realized both at the verbal level *(providing, catering to, find, bring about,)* and at the lexical level *(generation, contributions).* The core pattern (41%) is: (providing) + adjective + head word. For the sake of completeness, we will report the list of the other groups and the percentage of their occurrence: abstract nouns (*lifestyle, interests, solution, definition*) (24%); *energy* (9%); *routes* (9%); minor variation (17%). The adjectival use of *alternative*, here glossed as 'other' or 'alternate', with words belonging to the business range, helps us understand that ecotourism is only a powerful tool when it provides an attractive economic alternative to more resource-consuming activities.

4. Lexical choices

Nature is seen as being good for the soul, and in order to stimulate the traveller to recover primordial harmony the language abounds in the use of alluring adjectives which highlight the persuasive power typical of the tourist language.

The alphabetical wordlist in our corpus shows a remarkable presence of epithets starting with the morpheme *un-*, the most frequent being *unspoilt, undisturbed* (see Appendix 1). This feature would probably go unnoticed without access to the corpus. Some of these adjectives are hapaxes in our corpus, but they are evenly distributed among the different texts. Before going on, let us consider briefly that in English there are two types of prefixes with *un-*. One has the basic meaning of 'not', thus *unfamiliar* means '*not familiar*'. This type of *un-* is chiefly attached to adjectives, as in *unrealistic.* It can also be attached to adjectives constituted by participles, as in *unspoilt.* Less frequently, this same prefix can be attached to nouns like *unconcern.* The other *un-* can be attached to verbs and expresses removal, reversal, or deprivation, e.g. *undress*, *unravel.* Since semantically adjectives, more than other categories, are able to take on different meanings depending on their context, we have investigated them to see how they are restricted by the context and how the meanings are associated. All the 27 *un*-adjectives (78 occurrences) which, in the *Green Corpus*, depict the destinations of this kind of holiday, belong to the *un*-participle type and share three different meanings:

... as ecotourism implies, exploration of pristine and **uncharted** areas of the Earth...
... In the middle of these new discoveries we find an **unexplored** new world, where...
... Join us as we explore one of the last remaining **undiscovered** treasures of the...
... awareness of environmental threats to the last **unexploited** continent, are also...
... substantially. Rather than visiting remote and **unknown** places to enjoy nature...

This first group (15 instances), including *unconquered, uncommercialised,* creates a kind of military metaphor that is sometimes reinforced by verbs/nouns in the left co-text related to the semantic field of learning through exploration. The meaning conveyed is that of 'novelty' and 'unfamiliarity':

... to relatively undisturbed or **uncontaminated** areas with the specific object...
... we're looking at one of the last **unspoiled** continents on the planet, but the view...
... 9-14. Paddle one of the nation's largest **unspoiled** delta-estuarine systems, and...
... depths: Ecotourists want to see **unadulterated** nature and don't want to...
... nature, ecotourism targets the earth's last **untouched,** pristine (undeveloped)...
... travelers who seek natural settings and **untouched** landscapes. This ecotourism...

This second group (38 instances) incorporates adjectives related to the idea of purity and virginity *(undamaged, unbroken, undeveloped, untracked)*, and again the verbs or nouns in the left co-text belong to the semantic field of 'visit', with an explicit reference to the theme of 'searching'. These destinations appear as *safe havens* never seen before. The theme is the discovery of a new nature which, covered by a halo of virginity, allows the ecotourists to step back in time, searching for authenticity and tracing their origins:

... aspiring to attract one million tourists to its **uncrowded** beaches and pristine...
... responsible travel and visitation to relatively **undisturbed** natural areas, to...

... responsible travel and visitation to relatively **undisturbed** natural areas in order...
... November 5-16. Explore the last **untraveled** wilderness of South America...

In line with the eco-speak procedures through 'what it is not', this third group (25 instances including *unfarmed, uninterrupted, untouristed, uncontacted, uninhabited*) delineates a Robinson Crusoe-like isolation in a place where everything is powered by nature, where you live *unplugged*, creating an implicit reference to man's destructive power and placing itself as the antidote to mass tourism. All these selective adjectives are noun modifiers, except for two occurrences of *untouched*. They derive from a transitive verb, have a passive meaning, and substitute a negative relative clause. Thus, *undisturbed natural areas* = natural areas which are not disturbed. The result is a meaningful conciseness, which reduces the complexity of the sentence.

With this evidence we can postulate the existence of a common core, which consists of an *un*-adjective and a head word indicating a place, most commonly *areas.* As well as this colligation within the core, there is another colligation with an adverb of degree of which *relatively* is the typical realization. The verbs and verbal nouns *explore/exploration, visit/visitation/travel/travelling* to the left of the colligation imply an idea of 'search', 'discovery', 'investigation'. The repetition of the adjective *last* in all the three groups invites travellers to see wildlife before it is too late. Schematizing, we find: Verb/verbal noun + (adjective/adverb) + *un*-adjective + head word. The connotation of 'immaculacy' is further formulated by the use of the selective adjective *pristine*, creating pleonasm and strings of adjectives as shown by the following citation:

By its very nature, ecotourism targets the earth's last untouched, pristine (undeveloped) areas, and "authentic", "pure" cultures.

Pristine is a very formal and uncommon adjective; in the Bank of English we found 1379 instances and the picture tree shows *condition* (112), *white* (73), *state* (39) and *beaches* (28), as its top collocates. In the *Green Corpus*, the range of collocates is restricted to *beaches*, *environment* and *wilderness*.

A look at the right co-text of the three adjectival groups reveals a wide variation of geographical places such as: *beaches, forests, coastline, parks, bay*, *wilderness*, which can be seen as co-hyponyms of the superordinate *areas,* one of the keywords from our wordlist.

flat space/ piece of land	*natural*	*protected*	*remote isolated untouched*	*wilderness/ rural*	*geographical names*	*fragile/ sensitive*
33%	21%	20%	9%	7%	6%	4%

Table 1. Semantic preference of 'areas'

As we can see from Table 1, the semantic preference associated with *areas* (415 occurrences) is for natural parts of the environment in its diversity, but mainly *natural* and *protected.* These two collocates do not appear in the top collocate list of *areas* from the Bank of English, where out of 66,242 instances we find the following picture:

Bank of English	Green Corpus
other 3072 (5%)	*natural* 81 (20%)
in 3005 (4.5%)	*protected* 74 (18%)
the 2854 (4%)	*these* 11 (2.7%)
some 2258 (3.4%)	*rural* 10 (2%)
rural 2212 (3%)	*conservation* 5 (1%)

Table 2. Top collocate lists from The Bank of English and the *Green Corpus*

This analysis has confirmed our expectations about *natural areas* as one of the components of this type of holiday and as a collocation pertaining to 'eco-speaking':

... nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in **natural areas** 2. It...
... responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed **natural areas**, to...
... for example, staying on trails, recycling, visiting the **natural areas** etc. and the...
... than 50 per cent of travellers to Tasmania visit **natural areas**, and that wildlife...
... are often grossly undervalued. The protection of **natural areas** assists in the...
... be educated to appreciate the value and beauty of **natural areas** in their...

This collocation tends to form prepositional phrases according to the following pattern in both subject and object position: abstract noun (*protection, preservation, beauty, value*) + *of* + *natural areas* (38%). The other common usage is that described for the use of *un*-adjectives: verbal noun + *to* + (*relatively*) + (adjective) *natural areas* (17%).

These data suggest that the key concepts underlying ecotourist travel motivations are linked to ethical values, such as conservation of important areas and the exploration of nature.

The 'protected areas' have different labels: wilderness areas, marine areas, national parks, and their visit requires of the traveller a certain knowledge about their history and cultural content. Each of these protected area systems has environmental-integrity goals. Therefore, the inherent thrust of ecotourist travel motives and the management philosophy of the park agencies are similar. The catchy labels created for destinations, such as *Close to Eden* or *The Tuscan Miracle*, anticipate the dense adjectival descriptions of the places.

5. Dealing with the pragmatic meaning

10 journeys that just might change the world…or at least your view of it is the title of an on-line list of package tours offered by some environmental organizations. The metaphorical use of the lemma *change* tempts the traveller to embrace this holiday with the promise that it will prove to be beneficial. Starting from the hunch that this word conveys an instrumental meaning, we investigated its pragmatic behaviour. Often a word "in a particular cotext carries extra meaning of an emotive or attitudinal nature" (Sinclair 2003: 117) creating what is known as semantic prosody. This phenomenon "refers to the spreading of connotational colouring beyond single word boundaries" (Partington 1998: 68). Some words are commonly known to carry a negative semantic prosody due to unpleasant collocates, as Stubbs has shown with the lemma 'cause'. (Stubbs 1996: 174), while other items may have a particular colouring in some contexts but not in all.

Change is usually thought to be of neutral meaning, it implies 'variation in some way' and only the company it keeps can explain its pragmatic meaning:

... industry to change and for us, as consumers, to demand **change**. It's an...
... share. Thoughtfully driven, this proposal to effect **change** might succeed...
... away from the serious need to create fundamental **changes** in the structure and...
... activities on biological diversity and seeking **changes** where appropriate...

17% of the instances of the noun in the *Green Corpus* carry a neutral meaning. When the nominal form (80 occurrences out of 137 instances of the lemma) is found in collocation with verbs such as *demand, effect, create, seek* (50%), the change/s which in this case are required imply 'a transformation for the better' usually to avoid the impact of tourism, or demand a different attitude from the traveller. Since ecotourism is marking a change in the tourism industry, the tourist's behaviour must consequently change to become more sensitive to environmental issues:

... ecotourism entire communities have endured a radical **change**. The majority...
... suspicious of outsiders who seek to impose **change**. Visitors may be welcomed...
... identify, changes in the quality of a site, such as **change** in bird behaviour...
... Are we likely to cause, however gradually, any **changes** to their habitat? What if...

Negative semantic prosody frequently accompanies 'change' (32%), when *cause, impose* occur within a certain span of this node, or when unpleasant collocates such as *unacceptable, undesirable, drastic, radical* are found in the right co-text. Furthermore, if the element affected by change is a component of the environment (collocates: *behaviour*, *culture, natural habitat, animals, community, climate*) the change is portrayed as leading to certain destruction, because it alters the natural status quo, which must be preserved.

This negative semantic prosody is more associated with the detrimental impact of tourism with regard to changes in local attitude and behaviour. This reveals a feeling of distrust in tourism changes, and consequently in ecotourism which is part of this industry.

In sum, the environment needs to be protected from degradation caused by visitors' activities. Hence ecotourism can be a useful tool to change the scenario, and this is the hope of many. In order to achieve its goals, this kind of trip challenges travellers to modify their attitude towards nature. If the visitor takes up the challenge, he/she will be *changed by the experience,* and after exploring the rarely-visited areas, will return home stimulated and fulfilled.

What emerges clearly is an educational emphasis, which led to the investigation of the lemma *education*. According to research by Stubbs, in general English "education collocates primarily with terms denoting institutions" (Stubbs 1996: 172), while in our register the main usage of *education* (84 occurrences) is given by *environmental* as the most frequent collocate (41%):

... childhood, with car camping, and with **environmental education** programs...
... example, works toward improving **environmental education** and restoration...
... underemployed fishermen, promoting **environmental education** and assisting...
... that work toward the goals of conservation and **environmental education**...
... training so that the guides actually share their **environmental education** and...

In 37% of the instances we find words like *tourism, formal, interpretation* in the left co-text and the remaining 18% refer to 'teaching local tribes something'. Two main purposes of education might be postulated. The first (represented by 37% of the occurrences) derives from the traveller's need to receive information about the wildlife in ecotourist destinations: learning about the natural habitat unique to an area. The second aspect is clearly illustrated by the above citations and better summed up in the following complete concordance:

> Environmental education, on the other hand, tends to be knowledge-based, curricular and sequential, with the express goal of developing an environmentally conscious and active citizenry.

The traveller is educated about how to minimize negative impact while visiting a site, and presented with a code of ethics. S/he is called to change in a pro-environmental way, because s/he is provided with education on ecological sustainability. The idea of visiting natural and protected areas for the purpose of experiencing elements of the natural environment is not new. The novelty is the growing acceptance of the principle of environmental conservation and sustainability. In short, ecotourism is more than a trip: it is an experience that combines education and pleasure.

6. Shortcomings

The study of language through a corpus approach sometimes uncovers unexpected meanings. A certain clash has emerged in the concordances of *ecotourism is*, when followed by *not*. Another surprising finding has revealed the occurrence of the marked collocation *clear the people away*, which discloses a sharply negative meaning. Things usually cleared away are plates and messes and jungle, but not people. A collocational profile from the Bank of English for any form of the verb *clear* followed immediately by *away*, shows no significant collocate (by t-score) referring to people (Sinclair, personal communication). So, putting the people in the same class as jungle suggests strongly that evicting people from their native habitat is an act of dehumanization.

"While it is your holiday, it is somebody else's home", says a slogan by which ecotourism promotion tries to avoid this imperfection, by making the customer aware of the need to respect the local community.

In this section of our work, we can underline the importance for non-native speakers to access to information on prosody from the corpus, "since they are both more liable to miss such irony and to be more vulnerable to the hidden intentions of the producer than native speakers, who probably have some sensitivity to it at a subconscious level" (Partington 1998: 72).

7. Conclusion

Such a corpus-based study of how language is used has shown how the subject matter of a discipline can be related to its use of linguistic features. The lexical items like adjectives and nouns, together with their collocational behaviour and the discourse patterns they activate, as well as semantic prosody, play a fundamental role in the process of textual encoding and contextualization of the message, by construing different ideologies, beliefs and value systems.

From a conceptual point of view, ecotourism is a multi-faceted concept in its attempt to combine pleasure and education, a strategy for development and travel for the conservation of biodiversity. The presence of some aspects like 'double-speak' and the negative adverb 'not' in the citations has shown some contradictions in terms. In its aim of being an alternative to mass tourism, and of offering a guilt-free holiday, it is viewed with mistrust, as the investigation of *change* has revealed. The word *change* has been central to understanding also how ecotourism sells the uncontaminated areas: it promotes travel to pure, isolated and pristine places and challenges the holidaymaker to learn from nature, without harming the environment.

As a register, ecotourism has its own restricted vocabulary and lexical choices (*protected and natural areas*, *pristine*); it is characterized by an expressive conciseness of which the use of *un*-adjectives is the typical realization. This dense adjectival description creates redundancy, which aims at increasing the persuasive force.

Appendix 1

N	Word
17378	UNADULTERATED
17391	UNBROKEN
17394	UNCATALOGUED
17402	UNCHARTED
17407	UNCOMMERCIALISED
17411	UNCONQUERED
17412	UNCONTACTED
17413	UNCONTAMINATED
17421	UNCROWDED
17423	UNDAMAGED
17474	UNDEVELOPED
17475	UNDISCOVERED
17476	UNDISTURBED
17502	UNEXPLOITED
17503	UNEXPLORED
17507	UNFARMED
17536	UNINHABITED
17538	UNINTERRUPTED
17562	UNKNOWN
17589	UNPROTECTED
17613	UNSPOILED
17614	UNSPOILT
17623	UNSURPASSED
17630	UNTOUCHED
17631	UNTOURISTED
17632	UNTRACKED
17636	UNTRAVELED

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The influence of the use of English in Dutch job advertisements

An experimental study into the effects on text evaluation, on attitudes towards the organization and the job, and on comprehension

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Abstract

Several authors have claimed that the use of English in advertising for products and services in non-English-speaking countries is associated with prestige and an enhanced image. Similar claims have been made in relation to job advertisements. English terms are, for instance, said to make a job sound more appealing. The present study aims to test the effects of the use of English in Dutch job ads.

In a between-subjects experimental design, three manipulated versions of the same job ad were presented to potential applicants, students who either had just graduated or were close to graduation in a relevant field, 30 for each version. One version was completely in English, the second version contained 11 different English words, and the third version was completely in Dutch. The respondents answered questions on text evaluation, on their attitudes towards the organization and the job offered. In addition, they indicated the degree to which they understood the meaning of the 11 English words and phrases and their Dutch counterparts in their version of the ad, and paraphrased the meaning of these words and phrases.

Results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the scores of the three versions on the attractiveness and intelligibility of the ad as a whole, nor on respondents' attitudes towards the organization and the job offered. The Dutch version scored significantly better than the partly English version, but not significantly better than the completely English version, on the respondents' own estimation of their understanding of the manipulated words and phrases and on the number of correct paraphrases.

One important conclusion is that, contrary to claims in the literature, the use of English instead of Dutch does not affect potential applicants' attitudes towards

various aspects of the ad, the job and the organization, at least not in the case of young and highly educated respondents.

1. Introduction

Berns (1995) discusses the use of English in the European Union in terms of the model developed by Kachru (1985, 1992) to classify the spread of English throughout the world, with "inner circle" countries, where English is spoken as a first or primary language, "outer circle" countries, where English is not the first language but one of the official languages or state languages, and the "expanding circle" of countries where English functions as a foreign or international language. She puts the Netherlands – along with Germany and Luxemburg – in a special category of countries ("expanding/outer circle") where the English used is more than a foreign language or international language but serves functions "in various social, cultural, commercial and educational settings" (1995: 8-9). Other authors have also observed that English is used increasingly in a number of domains of Dutch society, including the media (de Bot 1994; Claus & Taeldeman 1989; Gerritsen & Nickerson 2004; Ridder 1995; van der Sijs 1996). English is used widely in the Dutch media by companies to communicate with their potential customers through advertising for products and services (see Gerritsen 1995; Gerritsen, Korzilius, van Meurs & Gijsbers 2000), in line with international developments. Piller (2003: 175) says that "English is the most frequently used language in advertising messages in non-English-speaking countries (besides the local language, of course)".

Several authors have commented on the use of English in another form of communication through the media between companies and their target groups in non-English-speaking countries: job advertisements in newspapers. Larson (1990) notes that the use of English is very obvious in Swedish job advertisements, particularly in work areas and job titles. Hilgendorf (1996: 10-11) gives a number of examples of the use of job titles "reflecting varying degrees of Englishization" from job ads for positions advertised in German in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. That English is used increasingly in job advertisements in Dutch newspapers has been pointed out by Schreiner (1990) and Renkema, Vallen & Hoeken (2001). Gerritsen (2001) shows that there was a statistically significant increase – from 60% to 81% – in the use of English gender neutral terms in job titles in the headings of job ads published in the Dutch national daily newspaper *de Telegraaf* and in the national weekly *Intermediair* between 1989 and 1999. Korzilius, van Meurs, and Hermans (submitted) found that 39% of job advertisements in the Dutch national paper *de Volkskrant* (published in August 2001) contained one or more English words, and that 2.4% of the job ads were completely in English.

One of the reasons that is frequently mentioned for the use of English in advertising for products and services in non-English-speaking countries is that it has prestige value (Friedrich 2002: 22; Griffin 1997: 38; Haarmann 1989: 234). Its use is supposed to be good for the image of the product or service (Takahashi 1990: 329; Gerritsen *et al*. 2000: 20). This same point is made in one of the few articles that discusses reasons for the use of English in job advertisements in countries where English is not the first language or an official language. In connection with Swedish job ads, Larson (1990: 367) says that a common reason for organizations to use English is the image they are trying to convey. He even claims that "[o]ften a less attractive and maybe more mundane job can be made to sound more appealing and challenging using an English-sounding job title" (1990: 368). In relation to Dutch and French job advertisements published in Belgium, Heynderickx and Dieltjens (2002: 101) make a more tentative claim when they observe that the use of English is one of the aspects of language use that may affect potential applicants' motivation to apply.

As far as we know, these claims about the effects of the use of English in job advertisements in non-English-speaking countries have seldom been studied empirically (the only exception being Renkema *et al*. 2001, to be discussed below). The present study aims to investigate these effects. Since job advertisements in newspapers are the most widely used medium for recruiting new personnel in the Netherlands (van Dalen 1999: 42), it is important for companies to know what impact the use of English in recruitment advertising actually has on potential applicants.

The current study links up with earlier research into the effects of the use of English in business communication through the Dutch media. Gerritsen (1996) studied respondents' comprehension and appreciation of completely English advertisements for products in Dutch newspapers and magazines. She found that respondents on average were not very positive about the English used, and that only 51 per cent of respondents were actually capable of translating the texts correctly. In a study into the effects of the use of English in Dutch television commercials, Gerritsen *et al*. (2000) found that respondents displayed a rather negative attitude towards the English used, and that only 36 per cent were able to paraphrase the meaning of the English words and phrases correctly. Renkema *et al*. (2001) found that the use of English instead of Dutch terms in job advertisements had no effect on respondents' evaluation of the image of the company and of the exclusivity of the job, nor on their appreciation of the text, although the use of English terms was considered less natural. Unlike Gerritsen (1996) and Gerritsen *et al.* (2000), Renkema *et al*. did not research respondents' understanding of the English terms used, and they did not use completely English texts.

The present study combines the approaches and research questions of the three above-mentioned studies. We have formulated the following research questions. What is the effect of the use of English as opposed to Dutch in job advertisements on respondents'

1) evaluation of the text (intelligibility, attractiveness, and naturalness)?
2) attitudes towards the organization and the job offered (image of the organiza-

tion, attitudes towards working for the organization and towards the position offered, and interest in working for the company)?
3) comprehension of the English and Dutch terms used?

We study the effect of three degrees of the use of English: completely and partly English job ads and a completely Dutch job ad.

2. Method

2.1. *Design and respondents*

In a between-subjects experimental design, three manipulated versions of a job ad were presented to potential applicants, 30 for each version. The number of respondents was based on a statistical power of .93, a large effect size and an alpha of .05 (cf. Cohen 1992). One version was completely in English, the second version (henceforth the "partly English version") contained 11 different English words, and the third version ("the Dutch version") was completely in Dutch.

The 90 respondents were students at the Faculty of Social Sciences (Communication Studies, Management Studies) and Faculty of Arts (Communication and Information Studies; Dutch; Theatre, Film and Television Studies) of the Universities of Nijmegen and Utrecht, the Netherlands. These students were either in their final (third, fourth or higher) years of study or had just graduated. This particular criterion was used because it was thought that these respondents would be interested in job offers. The mean age of the respondents was 22.8 (min. = 20, max. = 34; SD = 2.58). There were 23 male and 67 female respondents. The native language of all respondents was Dutch. The respondents had had seven to eight years of formal training in English (M = 7.73; SD = 2.75).

2.2. *Materials*

The position advertised in the three versions of the job advertisement was that of a management trainee in the communication department of a fictitious bank. It was chosen because it was thought to be a job that would be suitable for and would appeal to the respondents.

The English words used in the partly English version of the job advertisement and the length of the ad were based on an analysis of 119 job ads in the Dutch national newspaper *de Volkskrant*, published in August 2001 (Korzilius *et al.* submitted). The completely English version, the partly English version, and the completely Dutch version of the ad contained 341, 340 and 345 words, respectively, compared to an average of 328 words for the ads in *de Volkskrant*. Seven of the eleven different English words were among the most frequent English words in the corpus studied: *management*, *professional*, *business*, *assessment*, *service*, *team* and *player* – in the combination *team player*. The four less frequent English words from the corpus were *finance*, *core* (used in the combination *core business*), *hands-on* (used in the combination *hands-on professional*) and *trainee* (used in the combination *management trainee*). These words were a mixture of lexical items of English origin included in the authoritative dictionary of the Dutch language, Van Dale *et al.* (1999) – *assessment*, *business*, *corebusiness*, *management*, *service*, *team*, *trainee* – and English words that were not included, or not included in the right sense in that dictionary – *finance*, *core* (as a separate word in core business), *hands-on*, *professional*, *player*. This mixture was used because the job ads in the corpus from *de Volkskrant* also contained lexical items of English origin that were included in Van Dale as well as English words that were not included in this dictionary (see Korzilius *et al.* submitted). The Dutch translations were found in the English-Dutch Van Dale dictionary (1997), in the corpus of job ads from *de Volkskrant* and on Dutch websites. For a list of the English terms and the Dutch equivalents used in the experiment, see Table 1.

The completely English version was a direct translation of the partly English and completely Dutch versions, and included the 11 English words from the partly English version. The only major change was the use of the phrase "We are an equal opportunities employer" at the end of the completely English advertisement instead of the Dutch abbreviation "m/v" (literally "male/ female") after the job title in the other two versions to stress that no discrimination on gender would take place, in line with the conventions of English job advertisements. The naturalness and idiomaticity of the translation was checked by two native speakers of English. In accordance with the method recommended by Brislin (1980) to safeguard the equivalence of translated documents, the equivalence of the English translation and the original ad was checked by having an experienced translator translate the English translation back into Dutch. It turned out that there was a very high degree of agreement between the back translation and the original partly English and completely Dutch versions, but a discussion of the differences led to some minor changes in the final version of the completely English job advertisement.

Table 1. English terms and Dutch equivalents used in the experiment

English term	**Dutch equivalent**
Assessment	*Psychologisch onderzoek*
Core business	*Kernactiviteit*
Finance	*Financiën*
Hands-on professional	*Praktijkgerichte deskundige*
Management	*Directie*
Management trainee	*Leidinggevende in opleiding*
Service	*Dienstverlening*
Team player	*U functioneert goed binnen een groep*

The three versions of the job ad were pre-tested by experts, personnel officers, who were asked whether the texts seemed authentic and whether they contained anything that was unclear or unusual.

The partly English and the completely Dutch job advertisements were evaluated by two Dutch personnel officers, who were also asked explicitly for their views on the English words used in the partly English version. The only comment they had in connection with the authenticity of the ads was that the ads contained too much text. They considered the English words in the partly English version to be good equivalents of the Dutch words in the Dutch version, but they did comment that the phrase *hands-on professional* might be difficult to understand. On the basis of these comments, no changes in the design of the ads were deemed necessary, since the length of the ads was roughly the average length of the ads in our corpus, and since the aim of our study was precisely to determine whether potential applicants understand the English used in job ads.

The completely English job ad was pre-tested by an English native speaker human resources manager working for a multinational company in the Netherlands. He pointed out an awkward formulation, which was subsequently changed on the basis of his comments. He also commented on the content of the job ad, observing that it implied that the activities of the management trainee would be limited to the communication department, whereas the activities of management trainees would usually be more wide-ranging. However, we decided not to change this, because we wanted the completely English job ad to be equivalent to the partly English and completely Dutch versions in what it offered the successful applicant.

2.3. *Instrumentation*

Seven-point semantic differential scales were used to test the effect of the use of English or Dutch on text evaluation (the intelligibility, attractiveness and naturalness of the job ad), attitudes towards the organization and the job offered (the image of the organization, respondents' attitudes towards working for the organization and towards the position offered), and estimated comprehension of the Dutch and English items. The scales were balanced to avoid response bias, that is, we made sure that the negative and positive qualifications did not always appear on the same side of the scales, in order to counteract the possible tendency of those who filled in the questionnaire to respond in a particular way to the questions or statements, regardless of their content. For each scale we calculated internal consistency in terms of Cronbach's α and determined its qualification using the criteria in Van Wijk (2000: 217). We tested actual comprehension by asking respondents to paraphrase the English and Dutch items. We assessed interrater agreement on the correctness of the paraphrases by calculating Cohen's kappa ($\mathbf{K}$), defined in terms of the qualifications in Rietveld and Van Hout (1993: 221).

2.4. *Text evaluation*

The scales relating to the intelligibility and attractiveness of the text were based on Maes, Ummelen & Hoeken (1996: 208-209). Respondents were asked to indicate how easy/difficult, simple/complex, clear/unclear, well organized/poorly organized, logically structured/not logically structured, concise/wordy they considered the text to be (intelligibility; $\alpha = .68$, qualification: moderate) and how interesting/uninteresting, distant/appealing, uninviting/inviting, engaging/boring, personal/impersonal, monotonous/varied (attractiveness; $\alpha = .79$, qualification: adequate). In order to measure the naturalness of the job ad, respondents were asked to indicate how natural/unnatural it was, and to what extent they agreed or disagreed that it was a good example of a job advertisement (naturalness; cf. Hoeken *et al.* 2003; $\alpha = .69$, qualification moderate).

2.5. *Attitudes towards the organization and the job offered*

The scale used to measure respondents' attitudes towards the image of the organization contained the following bipolar adjectives (based on Maes *et al.* 1996: 209): reliable/unreliable, professional/unprofessional, efficient/inefficient, honest/dishonest, innovative/old-fashioned, careful/careless ($\alpha = .75$, qualification: adequate). Respondents' attitudes towards working for the organization were measured by asking them to what extent they thought working for the organization would be nice/not nice, positive/not positive, wise/unwise, uninteresting/interesting, exciting/boring, gratifying/ungratifying (partly based on Hoeken 1998: 73; $\alpha = .90$, qualification: good). Respondents were also asked whether they thought the position on offer carried a great deal of responsibility/very little responsibility, was monotonous/varied, low-level/high-level, interesting/uninteresting, important/unimportant, nice/not nice ($\alpha = .80$, qualification: adequate). Their interest in working for the organization was measured by asking them to what extent they agreed/disagreed that they would like to know more about the possibilities to work for the bank, that they were going to send an application to the bank after they had graduated, and that they would like to work for the bank (based on Hoeken 1998: 73; $\alpha = .89$, qualification: good).

In order to determine respondents' views on the exclusivity of the position, a multiple-choice question was included asking them about the gross monthly salary they would expect to get when they started the job (based on Renkema *et al.* 2001: 258). They could choose between five different amounts of euros: 1000 to 1500, 1500 to 2000, 2000 to 2500, 2500 to 3000, and 3000 or more.

2.6. *Comprehension*

The respondents' understanding of the 11 English words and their Dutch equivalents was measured in two rounds (based on the procedure in Gerritsen *et al.*

2000). First, the respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they understood the meaning of the manipulated Dutch and English items as they occurred in their version of the ad (estimated comprehension). The English words and their Dutch equivalents were presented as eight different items, made up of either single words or phrases, printed in bold as part of the sentence in which they were used in the job ad. Next, in a separate task, the respondents were given the same eight items, presented in the same way, and were asked to paraphrase the meaning of these terms, to measure their actual comprehension. The correctness of the paraphrases of the English items was evaluated on the basis of the degree to which they corresponded with the Dutch equivalents selected for the Dutch version. The correctness of the paraphrases of the Dutch items was evaluated on the basis of the degree to which they corresponded to the definitions in the Dutch dictionary Van Dale *et al.* (1999), where these were available, or to our own paraphrases. A paraphrase could be 'completely correct', 'completely wrong', but also 'partly correct/wrong'. If an item consisted of more than one word, we evaluated the correctness of the paraphrase of the item as a whole. If a respondent's paraphrase consisted of a number of alternative paraphrases which included a correct one, the paraphrase was judged to be completely correct. One of the cases in which a paraphrase was considered to be 'partly correct/wrong' was when it used the same term that was used in the item that was to be paraphrased, and added little or no additional information. We determined respondents' actual ability to paraphrase the meaning of the items correctly by counting the number of completely correct paraphrases.

Interrater reliability for the evaluation of the correctness of the paraphrases was determined by having two independent judges (the first and third author of the present article) evaluate the correctness of the paraphrases of each of the eight Dutch items in the completely Dutch job advertisement and of each of the eight English items in the partly English job ad. We found percentages of agreement ranging from 55% to 93%, with a mean of 78%. We found kappas ranging from .37 (qualification: fair) to .68 (substantial), with a mean kappa of .56 (moderate).

3. Results

One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether the three versions of the job advertisement differed with respect to the dependent variables. The results are displayed in Table 2. As for *text evaluation*, no statistically significant differences were found between the scores of the three versions on attractiveness and intelligibility. However, the respondents in the three groups assessed the naturalness of the ad differently. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests revealed that the completely English version was considered more natural than the other two versions. There were no statistically significant differences between the three versions with regard to the respondents' *attitudes towards the organization and the job offered*.

Table 2. Results of ANOVAs testing the effect of the use of English on text evaluation, on attitudes towards the organization and the job, and on comprehension in three versions of the job ad

Variable	**Version**	**M**	**SD**	**F** df = 2, 87	**η**	**Post-hoc differences**
Text evaluation:						
Intelligibility	1	4.46	0.71	0.40[ns]	.10	
	2	4.61	0.90			
	3	4.64	0.94			
Attractiveness	1	3.89	0.95	0.88[ns]	.14	
	2	4.12	0.93			
	3	3.83	0.86			
Naturalness of the ad	1	4.37	1.19	8.61***	.41	1 vs. 2
	2	3.08	1.15			1 vs. 3
	3	3.53	1.30			
Attitudes towards the organization and the job:						
Image	1	4.72	0.54	0.22[ns]	.07	
	2	4.78	0.70			
	3	4.85	0.90			
Attitude towards working for the organization[a]	1	4.29	1.22	0.24[ns]	.08	
	2	4.44	1.01			
	3	4.25	1.14			
Attitude towards the position	1	4.76	0.95	1.43[ns]	.18	
	2	4.89	0.74			
	3	5.13	0.88			
Interest in working for the organization	1	3.28	1.64	0.37[ns]	.09	
	2	3.54	1.61			
	3	3.21	1.49			
Comprehension:						
Estimated comprehension	1	5.84	0.80	4.51*	.31	2 vs. 3
	2	5.56	0.84			
	3	6.19	0.79			
Actual comprehension	1	5.03	1.30	5.29**	.33	2 vs. 3
	2	4.67	1.24			
	3	5.67	1.06			

Note. Version: 1 Completely English; 2 Partly English; 3 Completely Dutch.
df = 2, 86. ns = not significant, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

For all variables, high scores indicate a positive attitude or better comprehension.

As far as *comprehension* is concerned, we found a statistically significant effect of version for both estimated and actual comprehension of Dutch or English items. Bonferroni tests indicated that on average the completely Dutch version scored better than the partly English version on the respondents' own evaluation of their comprehension of the eight manipulated Dutch or English items as well as on the number of correct paraphrases of these items (see Table 2). When we look at individual items, there were two cases where the Dutch version scored significantly higher than the other two versions on estimated comprehension: *hands-on professional* versus *praktijkgerichte deskundige* (tested with Bonferroni) and *assessment* versus *psychologisch onderzoek* (tested with Games-Howell). In the case of *team player* versus *u functioneert goed binnen een groep*, the estimated comprehension of the item in the completely English version was higher than in the completely Dutch version (tested with Games-Howell). When we look at actual comprehension, there were two Dutch items that had a significantly larger number of correct paraphrases than their counterparts in the other two versions: *hands-on professional* versus *praktijkgerichte deskundige* (χ^2 (2, n = 90) = 13.20, p <.01); *assessment* versus *psychologisch onderzoek* (χ^2 (2, n = 90) = 17.72, p <.001). The two English items were more often left unparaphrased than their Dutch counterparts, and examples of paraphrasing errors included *independent* (*zelfstandig*) for *hands-on* and *treatment* (*behandeling*) for *assessment*.

A Kruskall-Wallis test indicated that there was no significant difference between the estimated gross salary for the three versions (χ^2 (2) = 1.37, ns).

4. Conclusion and discussion

We can conclude that there was no overall effect of the use of English on respondents' attitudes towards various aspects of the job advertisement (except for naturalness), the job and the organization, even when the job ad was completely in English. This is in line with Renkema *et al.* (2001), who found no differences in the effect of the use of English as opposed to Dutch terms in partly English and completely Dutch job advertisements on the evaluation of the job ad, the image of the organization and the exclusivity of the position. These findings disprove claims about the prestige and image-enhancing effect of English in advertising in non-English-speaking countries (see Friedrich 2002; Gerritsen *et al.* 2000; Griffin 1997; Haarmann 1989; Takahashi 1990). Contrary to what is claimed (Larson 1990), the use of English did not make the job advertised sound more appealing and challenging, nor did it affect potential candidates' motivation to apply, either positively or negatively, as Heynderickx and Dieltjens (2002) speculate it might do.

Where Renkema *et al.* (2001) found that the use of English was considered to make a partly English job ad less natural than a completely Dutch one, we found that the completely English ad scored best on naturalness. We can only speculate why this should be the case. It may be that the cognitive effort that goes into processing a completely English test makes respondents less critical than they are about a text which is completely or largely written in their own language. Alternatively, respondents may have taken a different view of the naturalness of the completely English job ad because they did not expect it to adhere to the conventions that apply to Dutch texts and to Dutch job advertisements in particular. Further research along the lines set out in the present article may profitably be combined with psycholinguistic research into the ways speakers of a language process texts that are partly or completely written in another language.

A second conclusion that can be drawn from our study is that respondents' comprehension of English words and phrases in the partly English job ad was worse than their comprehension of their Dutch equivalents, both in terms of their own estimation of how well they understood the items and in terms of their ability to paraphrase the meaning of the items. This is in line with Gerritsen *et al.* (2000), who showed that only 36% of respondents were able to paraphrase correctly the meaning of English words and phrases in Dutch TV commercials, and with Gerritsen (1996), who found that only 51% of respondents were capable of correctly translating completely English job ads for products in Dutch magazines and newspapers.

In contrast to these earlier findings, and contrary to what may be expected, however, there were no statistically significant overall differences in estimated and actual comprehension of the manipulated items between the completely English and the completely Dutch job ad, although the Dutch ad scored better on two individual items. We have no explanation for the fact that the overall differences in comprehension we found were only significant for the partly English and completely Dutch version, and not for the completely English and completely Dutch version. As for estimated comprehension, we can only speculate that the specific English items questioned did not stand out in the fully English context of the completely English job advertisement, whereas they did stand out in the Dutch context of the partly English advertisement, and that it was this difference that made the English items in the completely English ad seem easier.

The findings of the present study apply to highly educated young respondents and may not be generalized to older and less highly educated populations. Renkema *et al.* (2001) found no differences between younger (18- to 22-year-old) and older (45 or older) respondents, but Gerritsen (1996) found that respondents over 45 were more negative about completely English advertisements than were respondents under 25, and that the older respondents made more mistakes in translating English into Dutch. Gerritsen *et al.* (2000) found that younger (15- to 18-year-old) respondents and respondents with a higher level of education had a more positive attitude towards English in Dutch TV commercials and were better at paraphrasing English than older (50- to 57-year-old) respondents and respondents with a lower level of education. We deliberately chose to use only young and highly educated respondents, since they, and not older and less highly educated respondents, were the likely target group for the job advertisement in our experiment.

Our study has a number of limitations. One limitation relates to the way we tested actual comprehension (based on Gerritsen *et al.* 2000). The question is whether a paraphrase task is a very precise way of testing whether respondents have understood a particular word or phrase. It may well be that they know what it means, but cannot put this into different words. When respondents' paraphrases cover only one aspect or some aspects of the original item, they may still fully understand its meaning. In our case, the difficulty of the task may have been compounded by the fact that some items did not consist of one word, but of combinations of words. In future research, additional methods may be used to measure comprehension, such as Cloze tests and recording reading time (Hans Hoeken and Wilbert Spooren, personal communication).

Another limitation of the present study is that, unlike Renkema *et al.* (2001), we only tested the effects of the use of English in versions of one advertisement. In this one advertisement, the attitudes of the respondents towards the position offered and the organization may have outweighed the effects of the use of English instead of Dutch.

Further research should test the effect of the use of English in job ads aimed at potential applicants belonging to various age groups and with different educational backgrounds, with more than one job ad per target group. It would also be interesting to test the effects of the use of English on potential applicants from other countries where English is not spoken as a first language. If we limit ourselves to the European Union, research on the status of English in general offers a basis for hypothesizing that respondents in the Netherlands have a more positive attitude towards English and that they understand English better than is the case in other countries where English is not the primary language. Eurobarometer data from 2001 indicate that 75% of the Dutch population claims to be able to speak English well enough to take part in a conversation, compared to an average of 32% of the population in EU countries where English is not the mother tongue (European Commission 2001: 83-84). Cross-cultural research of the kind proposed here has obvious relevance for the decisions of organizations in different non-English-speaking countries regarding their use of English when trying to recruit new personnel.

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Appendix

The three versions of the job advertisement used in the experiment

Version 1: The completely English version

Van Breederode isn't a bank like other banks. We believe that banking isn't only about finance, but also about style and personal contact. Van Breederode is a trusted name and has an excellent reputation when it comes to client-oriented banking. Offering high-quality service focusing on advice and personal attention is our core business.

In order to guarantee this high level of quality, we pay particular attention to the wishes of our customers. Our Communication department has a special role in this. For this department we are seeking a

Management trainee with an eye for service

Content

The communication department consists of five communication staff members and looks after both external and internal communication.

At Van Breederode we want to know at all times what matters to our clients. Not only in the area of finance, but also in the area of general service.

Advising Management about these areas is one of the main tasks of the communication department. In addition, the department is responsible for developing external communication means, promoting our organisation, and organising events such as information evenings for our clients. Furthermore, the department ensures that the internal communication flows are streamlined.

As a management trainee you will become familiar with all aspects of our communication.

Requirements

- You are expected to have a relevant academic degree, for instance in Communication or Management Sciences.
- Some experience in the field is an advantage.
- After a period of two to three years as a management trainee, you will be expected to be able to run the communication department independently as a hands-on professional and to be able to motivate your staff.
- You are a team player and you have excellent communicative skills.

Procedure

If you are interested in this position, please telephone Ms. J. Hermans, tel. 024-452978, for an information package.

Application letters should be sent within two weeks after publication of this advertisement to Van Breederode Bankiers, P.O. Box 335, 6500 HC Nijmegen, att. Mr. P. Jacobs. Ref. 5578.

An assessment may be part of the application procedure.

We are an equal opportunities employer.

Version 2: The partly English version

Van Breederode is geen bank als andere banken. Bankieren heeft in onze optiek niet alleen te maken met finance maar ook met stijl en persoonlijk contact. Van Breederode is een vertrouwde naam en onze bank heeft een uitstekende reputatie als het gaat om cliëntgericht bankieren. Kwalitatief hoogwaardige serviceverlening waarin advisering en persoonlijke aandacht centraal staan, is de core business van onze organisatie.

Om dit kwalitatief hoge niveau te kunnen waarborgen, hebben wij bijzondere aandacht voor de wensen van onze klanten. Hierbij is een speciale taak weggelegd voor onze Communicatieafdeling. Voor deze afdeling zijn wij op zoek naar een:

Management trainee m/v met oog voor serviceverlening

Functie-inhoud

De communicatie-afdeling bestaat uit vijf communicatiemedewerkers en draagt zorg voor zowel de externe als de interne communicatie.

We willen bij Van Breederode te allen tijde weten wat er bij onze cliënten speelt. Niet alleen op financieel gebied, maar ook op het gebied van de algemene serviceverlening.

Het adviseren van het Management over deze gebieden is één van de hoofdtaken van de communicatie-afdeling. Daarnaast is de afdeling verantwoordelijk voor de ontwikkeling van externe communicatiemiddelen, de promotie van onze organisatie en het organiseren van evenementen zoals informatieavonden voor onze cliënten. Verder zorgt de afdeling voor het stroomlijnen van de interne communicatiestromen Als management trainee raakt u vertrouwd met alle aspecten van onze communicatie.

Functie-eisen

• U wordt geacht een relevante academische opleiding te hebben genoten, bijvoorbeeld Communicatie- of Managementwetenschappen.

• Enige ervaring binnen het vakgebied is een pre.

• Na een periode van twee à drie jaar als management trainee wordt u geacht zelfstandig als een hands-on professional de communicatie-afdeling te kunnen aansturen en uw medewerkers te kunnen motiveren.

• U bent een team player en u beschikt over uitstekende communicatieve vaardigheden.

Procedure

Indien u geïnteresseerd bent in deze functie, kunt u telefonisch een informatiepakket opvragen bij Mevrouw J. Hermans, tel. 024-4529788.

Sollicitatiebrieven dienen binnen twee weken na het verschijnen van deze advertentie gestuurd worden naar Van Breederode Bankiers, Postbus 335, 6500 HC Nijmegen, t.n.v. de Heer P. Jacobs. Ref. 5578.

Een assessment kan onderdeel uitmaken van de sollicitatieprocedure.

Version 3: The completely Dutch version

Van Breederode is geen bank als andere banken. Bankieren heeft in onze optiek niet alleen te maken met financiën maar ook met stijl en persoonlijk contact. Van Breederode is een vertrouwde naam en onze bank heeft een uitstekende reputatie als het gaat om cliëntgericht bankieren. Kwalitatief hoogwaardige dienstverlening waarin advisering en persoonlijke aandacht centraal staan, is de kernactiviteit van onze organisatie.

Om dit kwalitatief hoge niveau te kunnen waarborgen, hebben wij bijzondere aandacht voor de wensen van onze klanten. Hierbij is een speciale taak weggelegd voor onze Communicatieafdeling. Voor deze afdeling zijn wij op zoek naar een:

Leidinggevende in opleiding m/v met oog voor dienstverlening

Functie-inhoud

De Communicatieafdeling bestaat uit vijf communicatiemedewerkers en draagt zorg voor zowel de externe als de interne communicatie.

We willen bij Van Breederode te allen tijde weten wat er bij onze cliënten speelt. Niet alleen op financieel gebied, maar ook op het gebied van de algemene dienstverlening.

Het adviseren van de directie over deze gebieden is één van de hoofdtaken van de

Communicatieafdeling. Daarnaast is de afdeling verantwoordelijk voor de ontwikkeling van externe communicatiemiddelen, de promotie van onze organisatie en het organiseren van evenementen zoals informatieavonden voor onze cliënten. Verder zorgt de afdeling voor het stroomlijnen van de interne communicatiestromen.

Als leidinggevende in opleiding raakt u vertrouwd met alle aspecten van onze communicatie.

Functie-eisen

• U wordt geacht een relevante academische opleiding te hebben genoten, bijvoorbeeld Communicatie- of Managementwetenschappen.

• Enige ervaring binnen het vakgebied is een pre.

• Na een periode van twee à drie jaar als leidinggevende in opleiding wordt u geacht zelfstandig als een praktijkgerichte deskundige de communicatieafdeling te kunnen aansturen en uw medewerkers te kunnen motiveren.

• U functioneert goed binnen een groep en u beschikt over uitstekende communicatieve vaardigheden.

Procedure

Indien u geïnteresseerd bent in deze functie, kunt u telefonisch een informatiepakket opvragen bij Mevrouw J. Hermans, tel. 024-4529788.

Sollicitatiebrieven dienen binnen twee weken na het verschijnen van deze advertentie gestuurd worden naar Van Breederode Bankiers, Postbus 335, 6500 HC Nijmegen, t.n.v. de Heer P. Jacobs. Ref. 5578.

Een psychologisch onderzoek kan onderdeel uitmaken van de sollicitatieprocedure.

Legal English and Plain Language: an introduction

Christopher Williams

Abstract

In this paper I first describe some of the main characteristics of written legal English such as sentence length and the complexity of its sentence structures, repetitiveness, the high concentration of Latinisms and archaic or rarely used lexical items etc. (Bhatia 1993). Such features have been widely held for centuries as having an exclusionary function, entrenching the privileges of the legal profession. With the growth of the Plain Language movement in recent decades in all major English-speaking countries, however, calls for radical changes in legal English have become increasingly widespread, and cases of enacted legislative texts following the principles of Plain Language can already be found in several countries, e.g. South Africa, Australia and Canada. I analyse some of the proposals of the Plain Language movement and the feasibility of making legal texts more comprehensible to the layperson without running the risk of 'dumbing down' such texts and creating new problems of ambiguity in interpretation that could end up by being detrimental to the public at large.

1. Introduction

Legal language is made up of several genres, each with its own specific, if often related, characteristics. It ranges from the spoken exchanges in a court between, say, lawyers and witnesses in a cross-examination, to the relatively standardized instructions given to jury members who are required to express a verdict in a court case, to the jargon employed by members of the legal profession in interpersonal communication[1], to the written language in case law, law reports and prescriptive legal texts.

[1] Mellinkoff (1963: 17) defines this specialized lexis as 'argot'.

The latter may include anything from international treaties to municipal regulations, insurance policies, contracts of sale or wills. Some of the genres constituting legal language are more formal than others. For example, even if there are various formal restrictions in how spoken exchanges in the courtroom may be allowed to develop, some of the actual language used, for example by witnesses, may not differ radically from other genres of spoken discourse. On the other hand, certain types of written legal language may contain features that mark it as being so highly idiosyncratic as to be at times incomprehensible to anyone except legal experts. In this article we shall focus our attention on written legal discourse, particularly prescriptive legal documents[2], a genre Crystal & Davy describe as not only one of the least communicative of all uses of language but also about as far removed as possible from informal spontaneous conversation (1969: 193-194). The texts taken into consideration are all authentic and come from a wide range of English-speaking countries.

2. The main features of written legal texts

The principal characteristics of such texts in legal English are generally well-known, the most commonly mentioned being:
a) *the inclusion of archaic or rarely used words or expressions*. These may be adverbial expressions such as *hereinafter*; verbs such as *to darraign* (to clear a legal account or settle an accusation or controversy); nouns such as *surrejoinder* (the answer by the plaintiff to a rejoinder by the defendant); adjectives such as *aforesaid*, and so on. Texts may also include multiword expressions in which at least one of the terms is archaic such as *malice aforethought* or *residuary devisee*.
b) *the inclusion of foreign words and expressions, especially from Latin*. English legal language is heavily imbued with lexical items deriving in particular from French and Latin, largely the result of centuries of Norman domination of England in the sphere of law and government. Besides the vast number of terms of Norman origin still used daily in legal English (e.g. *court*, *judge*, *appeal*), many are now practically unknown outside legal circles, e.g. *attainder* (the loss of civil rights through conviction for high treason), but such terms have nonetheless become 'naturalized' as English words. Other expressions have preserved all of their Frenchness, such as *profits à prendre*, also known as the right of common, where one has the right to take the fruits of the property of another. A French expression used in contemporary legal English is *acquis communautaire*, which refers to the entire body of EU law. A large number of foreign lexical items or expressions in legal texts come from Latin, such as *ex parte* (on behalf of) or *ratio legis* (the reason for, or principle behind, a law). It should be borne in mind that the Latin used by the legal profession was adapted to the needs of English law and that it eventually

[2] Parts of this paper can be found in a modified form in my forthcoming volume entitled *Tradition and Change in Legal English: Verbal Constructions in Prescriptive Texts* (Bern: Peter Lang).

developed into something called Law Latin (Tiersma 1999: 25).
c) *the frequent repetition of particular words, expressions and syntactic structures* instead of using, for example, pronoun references or other types of anaphora. This may take the form of an almost obsessive repetition of lexical items, as in the example below where the noun *chair* occurs nine times and *vice-chair* four times out of a total of 120 words:

(1) Powers of *vice-chair* 11. Where - (a) a member of a Board is appointed to be *vice-chair* either by the Assembly or under regulation 10, and (b) the *chair* of the Board has died or has ceased to hold office, or is unable to perform the duties of *chair* owing to illness, absence from England and Wales or any other cause, the *vice-chair* shall act as *chair* until a new *chair* is appointed or the existing *chair* resumes the duties of *chair*, as the case may be; and references to the *chair* in Schedule 3 shall, so long as there is no *chair* able to perform the duties of *chair*, be taken to include references to the *vice-chair*[3].

The reason for such repetition is to ensure there can be no ambiguity whatsoever as to what is being referred to. Outside legal discourse such repetition would be deemed as odd, even comic. Besides this repetition of certain lexical items, the 'flavour of the law' is enhanced by the frequent use of multiword prepositional structures such as *in respect of*, *in accordance with*, *pursuant to* etc.
d) *long, complex sentences, with intricate patterns of coordination and subordination*. Even today prescriptive legal documents in English tend to use punctuation sparingly. Some earlier statutes were formulated as one sentence without any punctuation except for a final full stop, though Crystal & Davy (1969: 200-201) observe that "It is not true that legal English was always entirely punctuationless, and in fact the occasional specimens which were intended for oral presentation – proclamations, for instance – were quite fully punctuated. The idea of totally unpunctuated legal English is a later development […]." Although reforms in punctuation have been slowly introduced through the centuries, even today sentences may run to hundreds of words, especially in preambles, with complex patterns of coordination and subordination.

Bhatia remarks that "most legislative provisions are extremely rich in qualificational insertions within their syntactic boundaries […]" (1993: 111). These qualifications often create so-called *syntactic discontinuities* whereby "legal draftsmen try to insert qualifications right next to the word they are meant to qualify, even at the cost of making their legislative sentence inelegant, awkward or tortuous but never ambiguous, if they can help it" (*ibid*.: 112). The following sentence contains four cases of syntactic discontinuity, coming respectively after *If*, *are*, *may* and *including*:

[3] Part II of the *Local Health Boards (Constitution, Membership and Procedures) (Wales) Regulations* 2003.

(2) *If, after informing the supervisory authority concerned under subsection (3), any measures taken* by the supervisory authority against the insurance undertaking concerned *are, in the opinion of the regulatory authority, not* adequate and the undertaking continues to contravene this Act, the regulatory authority *may, after informing the supervisory authority of its intention, apply* to the High Court for such order as the Court may seem fit, in order to prevent further infringements of this Act, *including, insofar as is necessary and in accordance with the Insurance Acts 1909 to 2000, regulations* made under those Acts and regulations relating to insurance made under the European Communities Act 1972, the prevention of that insurance undertaking from continuing to conclude new insurance contracts within the State[4].

Long, convoluted sentences also result from adopting the principle of all-inclusiveness, which is often essential in a legal document if every possible circumstance and eventuality is to be envisaged (Maley 1987: 35; Bhatia 1994: 138).
e) *the frequent use of passive constructions*. Another aspect characterizing written legal English is the frequent use of passive constructions (Jackson 1995: 119-120). This, of course, is not just a feature of legal discourse but applies to other written registers such as scientific discourse and the language of journalism. Approximately one quarter of all finite verbal constructions in prescriptive legal English take the passive form (Williams 2004: 228). In the following passage we find four consecutive verbal constructions in the passive:

(3) The acronym EURES *shall be used* exclusively for activities within EURES. It *shall be illustrated* by a standard logo, defined by a graphic design scheme. The logo *shall be registered* as a Community trade mark at the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM). It *may be used* by the EURES members and partners[5].

f) *a highly impersonal style of writing* (Maley 1985: 25). Using passive forms is one of the most common methods of emphasizing the impersonal in a language (Šarčevič 2000: 177). The generalized use of the third person (singular and plural) in legislative texts helps to reinforce the idea of impartiality and authoritativeness. Where, for example, a provision applies to everybody, the sentence either begins with *every person*, *everyone* etc. when expressing an obligation or authorization, or *no person*, *no one* etc. when expressing a prohibition, as in these sections, respectively 13 and 32, from the South African *Constitution* of 1997:

(4a) Slavery, servitude and forced labour
No one may be subjected to slavery, servitude or forced labour.

(4b) Access to information

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[4] Section 21(4) of Ireland's *Unclaimed Life Assurance Policies Act* 2003.

[5] Article 5 of the EU *Commission Decision of 23 December 2002 implementing Council Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 as regards the clearance of vacancies and applications for employment*.

(1) *Everyone* has the right of access to – (a) any information held by the state; and (b) any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.

Naturally, in certain types of binding documents in private law such as wills the first person singular is used abundantly. One of the few exceptions to the general rule of 'impersonalization' in legislative texts can be found at the beginning of constitutional documents, such as the Preamble to the South African *Constitution* where the first-person plural pronoun and possessive adjective are used:

(5) *We*, the people of South Africa, Recognise the injustices of *our* past; Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in *our* land; Respect those who have worked to build and develop *our* country; and Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in *our* diversity.
We therefore, through *our* freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic […].

g) *the tendency towards nominalization*. Drafters frequently resort to *nominalization* (Tiersma 1999: 77-79; Jackson 1995: 120-121), i.e. where verbs are transformed into nouns, such as when the verb *to amend* is nominalized into *to make an amendment*. For example, the following sentence from article 38 of Canada's 1982 *Constitutional Charter*

(6) *An amendment to the Constitution of Canada may be made* by proclamation issued by the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada where so authorized […]

could be reformulated more concisely (using seven words instead of ten) as

(7) *The Constitution of Canada may be amended* by proclamation issued by the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada where so authorized […].

Written legal texts do not necessarily contain all the features outlined, though many of them do, and the compound effect often makes them extremely difficult to decipher without specific training. Small wonder, then, that there have been widespread calls to bring them closer to the average citizen.

3. The Plain Language movement

Legal English has often been criticized for its abstruseness: Jonathan Swift, Thomas Jefferson, Jeremy Bentham and Charles Dickens are just some of history's more illustrious names that have lampooned the legal profession on this score. For example, in *Bleak House* Dickens describes members of the High Court of Chancery "mistily engaged in one of the ten thousand stages of an endless cause, tripping one another up on slippery precedents, groping knee-deep in technicalities, running their goat-hair and horsehair warded heads against walls of words and making a pretence of equity with serious faces, as players might" (1964: 18). Moreover, isolated attempts had been made during the first half of the 20th century, for example in the United States, to introduce measures to make legal English less convoluted. But it was not until the 1970s that a concerted effort was made to take the matter in hand.

An important catalyst in sparking off the need to overhaul legal English was the publication in 1963 of Mellinkoff's *The Language and the Law* where he highlighted the defects of legal language. The 1960s also saw the proliferation in the West of consumer movements which were concerned with empowering ordinary citizens so they could defend their rights against companies and government bodies. Hence the rise of grassroots organizations devoted to the abolition of bureaucratese, officialese and legalese to enable people of average intelligence to understand what they were doing when they had to, say, fill in a tax form, or apply for housing benefit, or sign an insurance policy. In the legal sphere, the first concrete application of this drive towards 'plain language' came in 1973 from Citibank (as it is known today), a private company based in New York, which drafted a 'promissory note' in terms shorn of the usual legalistic terminology that traditionally abounds in contracts[6]. The initiative was so successful with both the public and the media that several states began urging the drafting of federal legislation along the same lines of clarity. Across the Atlantic, in Liverpool, the Plain English Campaign was born in 1979 and, via various publicity-seeking stunts, such as shredding reams of government documents outside Westminster, its influence in stigmatizing 'gobbledygook' soon spread. By the mid-1980s it was already possible to speak of a 'Plain Language movement', with a capital P and a capital L[7], operating in all major English-speaking countries, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, by the early 1990s, South Africa. Furthermore, the movement has not been wholly confined to English, and analogous initiatives have gathered momentum in various countries including Sweden with the Plain Swedish Group (*Klarspråksgruppen*) and (more recently) Italy with its *Progetto Chiaro!*, as well as in organizations such as the European Union with its 'Fight the Fog' campaign undertaken by members of the Translators' Service.

Clearly the objectives of these groups are not confined to modifying legal language alone. The aims are generally much broader, and may include a desire to democratize government, extend legal rights, and encourage efficiency, also by providing courses which train people in the skills of text revision and in drafting handbooks and guidelines so as to bring the language of officialdom in its various guises (which may even include taking into account design and layout as well as language) closer to the ordinary citizen. Moreover, the success of Plain Language

[6] Examples of Citibank's promissory note before and after its redrafting in plain English can be found in Tiersma (1999: 257-262).

[7] Some scholars of legal English, such as Jackson (1995), prefer to speak of the 'Plain English' Movement.

campaigners in the legal field has been mixed so far, and it is claimed that "the legal profession and finance industries cause the most concern" even today in terms of their capacity for producing 'gobbledygook' (Plain English Campaign 2004). Although the movement first took root in the US, and several states in the US require insurance contracts to be written in plain English, there has in fact been relatively little innovation in the drafting of legislation in the US. The same is also true of the UK which introduced the *Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations* 1999 stating that contracts must be in "plain and intelligible language", but where laws are still drafted along traditional lines. In Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, on the other hand, Plain Language principles have penetrated legal culture more deeply, and many new laws are drafted in plain English these days. Nevertheless, there still remain areas within the genre of written legal documents where Plain Language has made little headway so far, such as the drafting of wills.

We shall now examine some of the major proposals of the Plain Language movement with regard to legal language.

4. Proposals for reforming legal English

In Section 2 we outlined some of the main characteristics of legal documents, several of which have been stigmatized by the Plain Language movement as tending to make such texts obscure and beyond the comprehension of the average layperson. So we shall begin by returning to some of the points mentioned above, seeing what innovations have been suggested, and what some of the objections to them may be.

4.1. *Technical vocabulary: replacing archaic, rarely used and foreign terms with words closer to everyday use*

Clearly, one aspect preventing a full understanding of a legal text is the inclusion of technical terms and expressions that may often be either archaic and/or rarely used or foreign, or which may be commonly used in everyday discourse but which have an unusual meaning in the legal context. Examples of each type are provided below, respectively in *chattels*, *surplusage*, *mandamus* and *factor*:

(8a) The legal relationships generated by a mortgage of *chattels* do not differ in any respects material to this Report from the more commonly known mortgage of land[8].

[8] Section I of Chapter III The Present Law – *Chattel Mortgages* – of the Law Reform Commission of British Columbia (Report on Debitor-Creditor Relationships) 1972, at http://www.bcli.org/pages/publications/lrcreports/.

(8b) The material sought to be stricken as *surplusage* is relevant and material to the charges alleged in the indictment[9].

(8c) The district courts have no jurisdiction of a suit seeking *mandamus* against the United States[10].

(8d) There was no suggestion that the person who sold the respondent the vehicle was some kind of *factor* or mercantile agent[11].

In such cases the average citizen would probably be unaware that, for example, a *chattel mortgage* is a mortgage on personal property rather than on real property; *surplusage* is a useless statement that is wholly irrelevant to the cause; *mandamus* is a writ issued by a court ordering a public body or agency to perform a specific act; and a *factor* is someone who is authorized to buy and sell goods for others.

It has long been held that it is precisely by adopting such lexical items that the legal profession has managed to preserve its exclusionary hold over legal language. Indeed, there are critics past and present, including Jeremy Bentham, who tend towards the 'conspiracy theory', i.e. who believe that legal experts deliberately choose abstruse terms because if documents were written in plain language people would cease to resort to lawyers to have such texts 'translated' for them. It is indisputable that a knowledge of specialized lexis enhances one's power status in a specific field. This is as true of medicine or engineering or information technology as it is of law. It is equally indisputable that many in the legal profession feel comfortable with centuries-old habits that have stood the test of time, and they fear that any change would only lead to greater confusion and uncertainty. Moreover, an important aspect of legal drafting is precisely that of making fine distinctions and categorizations over matters ranging from mortgages to murder which must withstand the scrutiny of lawyers intent on exposing flaws and inconsistencies in the law. Indeed, it has frequently been observed (e.g. Jackson 1995: 131-132) that the drafting of legal language flouts the Gricean 'cooperative principle' by assuming the text will be analysed by an 'uncooperative' reader wishing to capitalize on any possible ambiguities or loopholes. A drafter's loyalties are thus divided between making the text comprehensible to the layperson while attempting to ensure that it will not invite litigation (Bhatia 1994: 137). And when push comes to shove, most drafters will feel obliged to put consistency before ease of comprehension.

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[9] US Civil Resource Manual 127: *Response to Motion to Strike Surplusage*, November 1998, at http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/eousa/foia_reading_room/usam/title4/civ00127.htm

[10] US Civil Resource Manual 215: *Mandamus*, November 1998, at http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/eousa/foia_reading_room/usam/title4/civ00127.htm.

[11] Fiji Islands – Credit Corporation (Fiji) Ltd v. Kennedy Hotel Ltd. – Pacific Law Materials, Civil Appeal no. ABU0009 of 1997, at http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/paclawmat/Fiji_cases/Volume_A-C/Credit_Corp_v_Kennedy_Hotel.html.

There would appear to be no ready solution as to how to deal with technical terms. Clearly in cases where an equivalent word or expression from everyday discourse can replace more abstruse terms without any loss or shift of meaning there can be no justification for clinging to tradition. However, the doctrine of precedent still looms large, and in citing authoritative opinions and decisions made generations or even centuries ago, "lawyers and judges often repeat – and thus keep on life support – ancient verbiage that should long since have died out" (Tiersma 1999: 40). But any change in lexis must be counterbalanced by the certainty that ambiguity will not ensue, for one advantage of rarely used words is precisely the fact that they generally cannot be confused in meaning, whereas commonly used words may often have several different meanings attached to them. In the end a pragmatic, functionalist approach would seem to be the most rational, based on an analysis of the specific function of a particular lexical item or expression within a given context. For example, in the following assertion:

(9) To kill with malice aforethought means to kill either deliberately and intentionally or recklessly with extreme disregard for human life[12]

the expression 'malice aforethought' might not be fully understood by the average layperson, and outside the realm of legal language it is highly unlikely that the archaic adverbial 'aforethought' would be actively used even once during a person's lifetime. On the other hand, how much would be gained by adopting some more frequently used expression such as 'planned in advance'?

One well-established drafting policy in prescriptive texts is to include so-called 'definition provisions' or 'interpretation provisions' where many of the terms of reference used in a given text are defined, as in, for example:

(10) "squat trading" means a trade or business consisting of the selling, offering for sale, display or exposing for sale of any article by any person on any premises if that person occupies the premises without the consent of the owner or lawful occupier of the premises[13].

This has been done to date largely for the benefit of legal experts. But such a policy could be extended through an explicit commitment by the legislating body in question to provide definitions that would not only clarify the terms of reference to legal experts but also to the general public. This would entail a widening of focus in drafting such provisions, but it would probably be beneficial in terms of instilling in legal drafters the need for clarity and comprehensibility when drafting a text, and of eschewing technical terms except where necessary.

[12] 18 U.S.C.§ 1111. 8.90 Murder –Second Degree at http://www.ce9.uscourts.gov/web/sdocuments.nsf/.

[13] Section 2 of *Nottingham City Council Act* 2003.

Such a commitment already exists, at least on paper, in several English-speaking countries (Tiersma 1999: 213-214). In the UK the Renton Committee was appointed to investigate on the process of formulating statutes, and a report was published in 1975. Besides highlighting examples of convoluted drafting in British statutes, it recommended improving the explanatory materials which accompany statutes (Asprey 2003: 34-35). Similar recommendations have been made in the US: for example, Article 16, Section 13 (entitled 'Plain Language') of the Hawaii Constitution states that

(10) Insofar as practicable, all governmental writing meant for the public, in whatever language, should be plainly worded, avoiding the use of technical terms[14].

The expression 'governmental writing' is clearly not restricted to legislative texts alone, but it undoubtedly includes such texts. And in Australia the Victoria Law Reform Commission issued its second report on legal drafting in 1990 which included proposals such as introducing a 'boxed' explanation of the effect and intent of each provision, and clearly marking each defined word with a cross each time it appears so the reader can look up the definition (Asprey 2003: 37). Such proposals would undoubtedly help in making legal documents more 'user-friendly' than they currently tend to be.

Nevertheless, it is worth reiterating the *caveat* that drafters must be careful in choosing which 'plain' lexical items should be introduced. For example, the Legislative Commissioners' Office of the Connecticut General Assembly (2000: 8) views the issue from a historical perspective:

> Although the goal is plain language, the drafter is hobbled by certain facts: one is that some statutes, although being amended today, have been around for fifty or one hundred years. If the drafter suddenly uses modern, plain language in the middle of an older statute, the reader (and often a court) is left to guess whether the change was merely an attempt to 'clean up' the language or whether the legislature intended some substantive change. Another fact is that some bills may become new statutes that will be around fifty or a hundred years in the future and what is plain language today may not be plain language in the future. Because of these two facts, drafters should not abandon style and usage conventions too readily.

4.2. *Removing unnecessary words and expressions*

Besides avoiding abstruse technical terms where possible, another Plain Language proposal is to eliminate all unnecessary words and expressions within the text. Even today many texts suffer from excess wordiness which makes the style turgid and difficult to follow. This is partly a legacy from the ancient custom when clerks were paid by the page and hence, besides adopting large hand-writing and wide

[14] http://www.hawaii.gov/lrb/con/.

margins, they deliberately made legal documents as verbose as possible (Tiersma 1999: 41). The following is an excellent example of the excesses of modern legal English where verbs, modal auxiliaries, nouns, determiners, adverbials, and even prepositions, come in the form of 'binomials' or 'multinomials', i.e. sequences of two or more words which are syntactically co-ordinated (generally by *and* or *or*) and semantically related and which tend to be regarded as style-markers of legal English (Jackson 1995: 121):

(11) I, for myself, my heirs, legal representatives and assigns, hereby release, discharge and agree to hold harmless the ASPCA, its past, present and future representatives, officers, directors, agents, employees, successors and assigns, from and against any and all liability related to the loan of the trap(s), including, but not limited to, all actions, causes of action, suits, covenants, claims, and demands whatsoever for any thing and for any reason, in law or equity, which against the ASPCA, its past, present and future officers, directors, agents, employees, successors and assigns, I, my heirs, executors, successors and assigns ever had, now have, or hereinafter can, shall or may have, for, upon, or by reason of any matter, cause or thing whatsoever in connection with and/or arising from my use or the loan of the trap(s)[15].

Here there would seem to be several cases of redundancy, e.g. in the accumulation of verbs ('release, discharge and agree'), modal auxiliaries ('can, shall or may') and prepositions ('for, upon, or by reason of'), all of which 'thicken' the language and weigh it down (Jackson 1995: 122). However, one should not conclude that all binomials and multinomials ought to be avoided for, as Bhatia has remarked, they may also be "an extremely effective linguistic device to make the legal document precise as well as all-inclusive" (1993: 110). Moreover, their formulaic quality sometimes contributes to what Danet (1984) has defined as the 'poetization' of legal language, as in "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth".

4.3. *Reducing sentence length*

While there would appear to be general agreement by both Plain Language exponents and by legal practitioners that prescriptive texts could be profitably shorn of excess verbiage, the question of sentence length is more controversial. From the perspective of the Plain Language movement and most writers of manuals on legal writing (e.g. Garner 2001), many of the sentences in statutes are excessively long and should be reduced to a more 'manageable' size. However, the preoccupation with sentence length, especially on the part of Plain Language exponents, is partly an extension, as it were, of their interest in tackling bureaucratese or officialese by producing documents that can be more readily understood by the population at large. But while long and complex sentences in, say, a government leaflet on entitlement to

[15] *Loan Agreement* of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), at http://www.aspca.org/site/DocServer/Trap_Bank_Agreement.pdf.

unemployment benefit may find little reason for justification, legal drafting obeys a rather different type of logic. As has already been observed, the overriding priority of a prescriptive legal text is that of establishing the rules regulating a given matter in such a way as to ensure that there is no room for misinterpretation. And this may frequently entail adopting linguistic features such as subordination and coordination and embedded clauses which may result in extremely long sentences. For example, many resolutions, such as those of the UN, are made up of a single sentence, often stretching to hundreds – occasionally thousands – of words. Yet the structure of resolutions follows well-established drafting rules, beginning with the name of the authorizing body (e.g. 'The Security Council') usually followed by a preamble which generally contains a number of non-finite clauses (e.g. 'Reaffirming its previous resolutions …' or 'Deeply concerned by the increase in acts of terrorism …') where each recital ends with a comma, followed by the main body of the text which often contains performative verbs (e.g. 'Calls upon all States …' or 'Expresses its determination …') where each section or subsection ends with a semi-colon. Despite the inordinate sentence length of many resolutions, their underlying structure is in fact relatively straightforward to follow, even for the layperson, and it is difficult to see how anything would be usefully gained by breaking down the text into a series of shorter sentences. As was observed in the Renton Report on the Preparation of Legislation: "Shorter sentences are easier in themselves, and it would probably help overall to have them shorter, but of course you are faced with having to find the relationship between that sentence and another sentence two sentences away which, if you have it all in one sentence, is really done for you by the draftsman" (Renton 1975: 64).

That said, it is equally clear that well-ingrained habits of drafting legal texts can often lead to the production of unnecessarily long and complex sentences, and one of the chief concerns of legal drafting manuals is that of taking actual examples from texts and exploring ways of how they can be restructured by being broken down into shorter sentences with fewer cases of subordination, coordination and embedded clauses.

4.4. *Reducing the use of the passive*

Another complaint frequently reiterated by Plain Language exponents (e.g. Asprey 2003: 102-103) is the excessive use of passive constructions. In this regard, many critics cite George Orwell's well-known maxim of never using the passive when you can use the active form. But once again we must bear in mind the specific context in which legal texts are drafted, for very often passive constructions are adopted to avoid specifying the actor, as in:

(12) Wool International *is hereby authorised* to make the application[16].

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[16] Section 8(2) of the *Australian Wool International Privatisation Act* 1999.

Moreover, according to empirical research, passives, when viewed as a class, would not seem to constitute a major source of confusion when processed by readers (Charrow & Charrow 1979: 1325).

4.5. *Reducing the use of nominalization*

It is also claimed by certain Plain Language exponents that legal texts suffer from an excessive use of nominalization which has the effect of making them overly abstract and impersonal, besides adding to the sheer volume of words. In the following example, nominalization occurs with *makes a contribution* (instead of *contributes*), and *the provision of services or of contributions* (instead of *providing services or contributions*):

> (13) A sponsorship agreement is an agreement under which, in the course of a business, a party to it *makes a contribution* towards something, whether the contribution is in money or takes any other form (for example, *the provision of services or of contributions* in kind)[17].

On the other hand, it has been pointed out that

> An advantage of this reification of processes and actions is that it makes them much easier to organise into an argument. It also means that they can be qualified and modified more easily – adjectives are more productive and plentiful than adverbs, verb particles such as 'intended' and 'referred to' can be used, and nouns can modify other nouns (e.g. 'service payments') much more freely in English than one lexical verb can modify another lexical verb (Gibbons 1994: 6f, cited in Jackson 1995: 120).

5. Conclusions

Through this brief survey of written legal English and the Plain Language movement, I have attempted to highlight not only some of the features that it is claimed are in need of reform, but above all the complexity of many of the issues involved. While much of the criticism by Plain Language exponents of legal language is clearly justified in that much of it is objectively extremely hard for the average layperson to grasp, the reservations of many legal experts cannot simply be put down to a self-interested desire to prevent non-experts from understanding legal texts. If it is possible to identify an overriding criterion for drafters to follow, it would appear to be that of the underlying *function* of the text. Where it is feasibly possible, then, drafters should attempt to use expressions and a phraseology that can bring legal texts closer to ordinary citizens, but not at the expense of creating uncertainty or ambiguity, as this would ultimately be even more detrimental to those citizens in whose defence the text may have been written to start with.

[17] Section 10(2) of the UK's *Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act* 2002.

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