


<i>Discourse and Contemporary Social Change</i>		
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This work is a collection of 22 selected papers delivered at an international conference held at the University of Palermo in May 2005. Its major goal is to draw together varying perspectives on the analysis of verbal and non-verbal aspects of discourse and social change by integrating various approaches and methodologies. The collection is rich in topical issues such as recontextualization, evaluation and ideology, globalisation, multilingualism, and media discourse, tackled by different authors and from varying research angles. It mainly addresses a specialised audience but some of the papers are fairly accessible to the layman interested in the discourse within and on society. The editors have arranged the contributions into four sections.

In the first section (Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics) the papers are concerned with evaluation and evaluative devices representing different, often conflicting voices in the discourse about socio-political events. Fairclough's article applies a version of Critical Discourse Analysis to exploring changes in the Romanian Higher Education System, as reflected in relevant written documents. Only after a detailed presentation of the categories for the analysis (e.g., recontextualisation of global practices in a local domain) does Fairclough focus on scrutinizing linguistic data. In the subsequent contributions (namely, Bayley's, Duguid's, Ponton's and Clark's) more space is devoted to empirical investigation, with an emphasis on systematic (i.e., multiple linguistic level) data analyses carried out through corpus-assisted research methods and functions (frequency-based

wordlists, key-words, concordancing, collocations). In these studies, a hybrid quantitative-qualitative procedure is usually followed by the writers and extensive reference is also made to the descriptive apparatus of systemic functional linguistics. The corpora referred to consist of more or less extended samples of specialised legal or political discourse on war issues and events such as the war against Iraq in 2003.

The second section (Language Variation and Social Change) starts with Gotti's extensive overview of the impact of globalisation on business, academic and legal discourse. His article shows how these domains, the legal one in particular, require adaptation and adjustment of supranational discourse to the typical discourse features of the varying European nations, with special reference—for illustrative purposes—to northern Italy's regulations on international commercial arbitration and how they diverge from the U.N.'s rules. The other studies outline distinct attitudes, and correlated discursive practices, towards language policy and minority languages within the western world, notably Solly's on U.S. vs. U.K. and European behaviour. Ardizzone's and Solly's papers concentrate on educational discourse, while Dossena discusses the role of Scots as recently used on the Scottish Parliament's website. Dossena views this use of Scots as making a contribution to a multicultural approach to local specificity, whereby the latter is recognised as a cultural asset in a modern world "in which increasing attention is (or should be) given to global solidarity... and—as the E.U. motto aptly suggests—unity in diversity" (p. 228). Gardaphé provides a diachronic excursus on Italian-American fiction, Ardizzone focuses on the prominence of English vs. minority languages in the U.S.A., and Guzzo on Italian as a minority language in the U.K..

The third section (Language, Social Cognition and Ideology) is more heterogeneous than the previous ones. Van Dijk's survey of different conceptions of *context* paves the way to developing a theory of this continuously changing construction, comprising both a social and a cognitive dimension (cf. relevant mental models of the participants in conversations, and of the ongoing situations in which such conversations take place). He complements this theoretical account with a partial analysis of fragments of a parliamentary debate from the British House of Commons. Viscusi's essay discusses two episodes in the history of Italian national branding (the introduction of the label *Made in Italy* and Berlusconi's coinage of the name of his political party, *Forza Italia*) to show their socio-cultural consequences especially for Italian-American notions of Italy—and of Italian America, too. Douthwaite's contribution focuses on the ideological roles played by the characters in a detective story (*Three is a Lucky Number*, by Margery Allingham, 1969). His analysis underlines the feminist orientation of the story, which he views as a precursor of the wave of women's crime novels that fully emerged in the 1980s. Cortese's study tackles the issue of perspectivity in the international debate over the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and as enacted through ratification procedures. She envisages ratification procedures as discourse practices leading to social change and investigates the linguistic resources used to express reservations, and objections to reservations, formulated by varying States upon ratifying the *Convention*. These resources appear to reflect dissonant stances on the agreement and correlatively affect the drive for social change in human rights law in

different ways. The section closes with Ferrari's paper exploring the interplay of metaphor and appeals to emotions as strategic elements in argumentation, in the case of President George W. Bush strategies built on ideology and subservient to the persuasive aims of his public speeches (the Bush Corpus, 2001-2004).

The fourth section (Media/Multimedia Analysis of Social Change) opens with Bondi's intriguing study of the role of key-words in revealing an evaluative stance, especially in terms of emotions, by comparing data from two corpora from two different genres: courtroom transcripts and press reports of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, an inquiry recently set up to reassess responsibility in the 1972 Bloody Sunday shootings in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. This paper is reminiscent of the corpus-assisted studies of section one. Other papers in this final section join the debates started in the preceding sections. Kutter's account, for instance, contributes to the debate on the range of attitudes that emerge when global and local social realities interact or overlap, as reflected in Polish printed news discourse on the E.U. Constitutional Treaty. Also, the subsequent analyses share a multimodal scope (encompassing verbal language, sounds, images), with Lipson's paper especially focusing on the visual code, specifically on visual texts in BBC news reports of the Iraqi conflict. Unger and Sunderland's account of the film *Shrek* highlights how the intertextual structure of the film, as well as other features, encode both the subversion and the confirmation of gender stereotypes, thus establishing a link with Douthwaite's contribution in section three. Balirano's fascinating exploration concentrates on humorous mechanisms behind the construction of hybrid stereotyped identities, which he claims result from the destabilization of traditional ways of imagining ethnic groups. He exemplifies this claim through a parody of *The Godfather* on an Anglo-Indian sketch-show (*Goodness Gracious Me*, BBC2, 1998). Together with Torresi's view on stereotyped representations of Italian-Americans in a corpus of films (produced in the U.S.A. in the 1990s), Balirano's paper complements the broader description, begun in section two, of the linguistic role of Italian and the cultural identity of Italians in the Anglo-Saxon countries and beyond.

What is striking about the collection as a whole is the great variety among the contributions. The editors' organization is noteworthy as well, especially in light of the vast array of topics and fields of enquiry encompassed, scopes and purposes addressed, methodologies explored, and extent of specialised terminology used and frame of reference presupposed. An example, among many, of this breadth on all levels is represented by Van Dijk's contribution vis-à-vis Viscusi's. Aside from their differing discourse fields, Van Dijk's contribution addresses a specialised audience, while Viscusi's study can be accessed by a wide readership. Bidirectional change, the continual back and forth between language use and society, is at the heart of this collection. Whereas contributions such as Fairclough's illustrate how social practice is reflected in and revealed by linguistic practice, others highlight how language use may affect the chain of events in the social environment. The ratifying practices in legal discourse highlighted in Cortese's study are emblematic of action-in-discourse and through discourse. The rhetoric of persuasion, too, is a case in point: quintessentially, Bayley's hypothesis that the wide use of the lexeme *terror* in U.S. President

George W. Bush's discourse, after the dramatic events of September 2001, enabled a subtle conflation of concepts which permitted him to extend his military action to different fronts.

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