ESP

Across Cultures
20, 2023

Edipuglia srl, via Dalmazia 22/b - I-70127 Bari-S.Spirito
tel. (+39) 080 5333056 - http://www.edipuglia.it - e-mail: info@edipuglia.it

Tipografia: Services4media

ISSN 1972-8247
ISBN 979-12-5995-044-4
DOI http://dx.doi.org/10.4475/0444

ESP Across Cultures VOL. 20, 2023

CONTENTS

Foreword 5

Roxanne Barbara Doerr
Academic style proofreading as a practice of intercultural translation and metalinguistic awareness 7

Jean Jimenez and Ida Ruffolo
Time to rethink tourism: a comparative linguistic analysis of strategies used by UK, USA and Italian tourism boards 23

Fabiola Notari
Liaison interpreting in international business contract negotiations: the legal interpreter at the crossroads 43

Gianmarco Vignozzi
"I found this law firm on Google Reviews, and I wasn't disappointed". A linguistic study of positive law firm client reviews and business owner responses in the US and the UK 73

Annalisa Zanola
"I advise a clerk to write in all his business words clerk like": a diachronic insight into English for intercultural business communication 91

Notes on contributors 107

Instructions for contributors 109

ESP Across Cultures

Website: https://edipuglia.it/esp/

ESP Across Cultures is a double blind peer reviewed 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 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 indexed in Scopus and is covered in *Linguistics & Language Behaviour Abstracts*, *MLA International Bibliography*, *Translation Studies Abstracts* and *Bibliography of Translation Studies*.

Foreword

Welcome to volume 20 of *ESP Across Cultures*, the tenth to be published in online format. There are five papers in the current issue, all focusing on particular aspects of English for Specific Purposes from a cross-cultural perspective.

In the opening paper, Roxanne Barbara Doerr starts from the premise that non-native academics frequently receive requests to revise and correct papers that have been translated and revised by a native speaker before submission, and that "good academic English" is changing in the international academic context. By using a corpus of papers on management, corporate governance and sustainable development written by Italian scholars and stylistically proofread before publication in peer-reviewed business journals, her study shows how and why common errors occur in academic style as a result of cultural interferences and transfers. She also highlights the advantages of implementing academic style proofreading to improve academic writing and raise awareness of existing intercultural differences.

Jean Jimenez and Ida Ruffolo examine linguistic aspects of the tourism industry after the devastating impact of Covid, investigating the promotional discourse used on three national tourism board websites, respectively in the UK, the US and Italy. Their comparative analysis identifies a set of best practices that would allow the know-how transfer required to create more effective tourist promotion. The authors show how tourism is slowly recovering by diversifying products and markets, and promoting mainly domestic and regional tourism, as well as focusing on sustainability in an attempt to reallocate tourists to new destinations. From a linguistic point of view, there is a wide use of strategies used in tourism discourse including ego-targeting, nostalgia, and nature.

Fabiola Notari looks at the question of liaison interpreting in contract negotiations, observing that no previous study has explored this domain, whose originality for interpreters lies in combining two aspects: the legal language of contracts with cooperative negotiation strategies in the business field. The author examines an authentic, interpreter-mediated meeting between German buyers and an Italian ceramic tile manufacturer where English serves as the lingua franca. Her findings reveal that legal interpreters need to constantly redefine and reconsider their role in this hybrid setting, thus blurring the boundaries between the *impartial interpreter* when crucial legal matters are at stake and the *involved cross-cultural mediator* engaged in renegotiating identities and meanings when mutually beneficial business outcomes are expected to be achieved.

In his paper Gianmarco Vignozzi proposes a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of positive online reviews of US and UK law firms and the corresponding business owners' responses. The aim is to understand and describe their linguistic nature and their structure, and assess whether and how cross-cultural variation occurs. The cross-cultural analysis reveals that US reviews and responses are more oriented towards experience-sharing, recommendation, and publicity. By contrast, the UK's samples are characterized by a more attentive expression of politeness and conversational rituals. Moreover, the adjectives used to express positive evaluations reveal the tendency of foregrounding communication and social skills in US reviews and technical and professional skills in UK reviews.

In the final paper in this volume Annalisa Zanola focuses on business communication in intercultural and cross-cultural contexts, starting with an analysis of Daniel Defoe's *The Complete English Tradesman* (1725), whose advice reveals an implicit understanding that there is an internationally recognized and shared language of business. The author then examines the first manuals of business English and business communication, showing how the latter in English evolved from the essentially British perspective of early studies in business English to the international phenomenon it has now become. The study underlines the relevance of certain principles of past studies which should be adapted in a modern perspective to improve students' and teachers' performances, to ensure better intercultural and cross-cultural business communication.

The last time we publicly thanked external referees was in issue 18 (2021). Since then the following scholars have all reviewed paper for the journal:

Francesca Bianchi
Marina Bondi
Judit Borszéki
Gloria Cappelli
Paola Catenaccio
Jan Engberg
Astrid Fellner
Denise Filmer
Elisa Fina
Luisanna Fodde
Giuliana Garzone
Michela Giordano
Kim Grego
Magdolna Lehmann
Hélder Fanha Martins
Stefania Maci
Elena Manca
John McRae
Laura Mori
Sabrina Noccetti
Luke Prodromou
Colin Robertson
Martin Solly
Christina Muriel Samson
Dominic Stewart
Johanna Sumiala
Anne Vestergaard
Alessandra Vicentini
Jacqueline Visconti
Stefanos Vlachopoulos

We hope you enjoy the current issue of this journal, and we encourage you to browse through any of the past issues, all available online.

Christopher Williams
Denise Milizia

ACADEMIC STYLE PROOFREADING AS A PRACTICE OF INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATION AND METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS

Roxanne Barbara Doerr
(University of Brescia, Italy)

Abstract

It is increasingly frequent for non-native academics to receive requests to revise and correct papers that have been translated and revised by a native speaker before submission. This proves that "good academic English" is changing in the international academic context, and research in ERPP (English for Research Publication Purposes) has explored the challenges and occasional injustices that non-native academics face when publishing in English, and the international academic community's perception of their linguistic competence. To realign disciplinary EAP to such a perception, it is necessary to address a gap in ESP and EAP learning and teaching that lies in "style", a subtle level of communication positioned between language and discourse and detected by reviewers and editors (Nørgaard *et al*. 2010). "Academic style" differs from "style" in literature and everyday discourse and may be investigated through corpus stylistics (McIntyre and Walker 2019), a methodology that is as flexible and elusive as its object of inquiry, starting from error analysis (Allen and Corder 1974; Corder 1981). It is also connected with an academic's "mind style" (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010), which is influenced by his or her cultural background and encompasses explicit and implicit deviations from the international community's expectations. In such a context, "academic style proofreading", which ensures a manuscript's suitability for submission and publication, represents a form of linguistic and stylistic translation and mediation (Doerr 2023). This study provides empirical evidence of and explanations for common errors in academic style and their related cultural interferences and transfers. It is based on a corpus of papers on management, corporate governance and sustainable development written by Italian scholars and stylistically proofread before publication in peer-reviewed business journals. The study concludes with reflections on the practical and research implications and advantages of implementing academic style proofreading to improve academic writing and raise awareness of intercultural differences in mind style and academic style.

1. Introduction: developments in ESP and intercultural interference in academic writing

Almost one century after the coining of the well-known expression "publish or perish" by Coolidge (1932), the international academic community and its discourse are affected by underlying changes in standards of English academic writing. Such changes go beyond what has hitherto been considered “correct” writing, and are especially demanding for academics whose L1 is not English, reaching a 24% increase in difficulty (Englander and Cocoran 2019). Not only must they write highly specialized content in a foreign language, but they also need more time to do so and feel they are at a disadvantage because they must write with a limited vocabulary and simple style. Nevertheless, growing internationalization in the field of academic publishing has led to the realization that “there is increasing pressure on scholars to publish in English […] and that English-medium publications are often accorded higher status than publications in other languages” (Lillis and Curry 2006: 4). Such challenges in academic writing are compounded with an intercultural and translanguage filter of which many remain unconscious because it emerges in subtle errors at linguistic levels that are perceived but cannot be clearly detected or explained. Such errors lie at the level of “academic style”, which often escapes the understanding of both native-speaking language professionals and of non-native academics. This is because academic language is “no one’s mother tongue” (Bourdieu *et al.* 1994), and is often acquired through expertise and practice rather than language learning (Swales 2004), to the point that “‘EAL writers may be as equally proficient in English as their Anglophone counterparts, or even better’ (Flowerdew and Habibie 2022: 18).

Publishers now also require papers to be written in a satisfactory “style”, and not just a correct form (Bennett 2009, 2014; Curry and Lillis 2013) for them to be better received by reviewers and the readership. This is demonstrated by the fact that the main reasons for the rejection of submitted papers include style and language, lack of focus, poor contextualization, non-compliance with journal submission guidelines, research design, and inappropriate content (Kapp *et al.* 2011). Among these, “style and language” are at the fore, but while the latter is understandable and trained on many levels, the former is often undefined both in academic writing classes and in journal guidelines under the assumption that proper academic style comes naturally with language competence. A further complicating factor lies in the fact that different disciplines, as well as different journals and their stylesheets, permit a different degree of tolerance of deviations in style and that, as McKinley and Rose (2018: 1) observe:

> Some guidelines state a requirement of meeting an unclear standard of good English, sometimes described as American or British English. Many guidelines specifically position L2 writers as deficient of native standards, which raises ethical considerations of access to publication in top journals.

In linguistics, “style” is at the intersection between language and discourse and usually not addressed in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) except in a very superficial and vague manner (e.g. structure of arguments, impersonal voice, use of specialized terminology and signpost language, avoidance of contractions and colloquial language). Proper style is also often mentioned in journals’ author guidelines and publishers’ “house style”, yet it is not explained in the former and simply consists in a set of conventions in the latter. However, academic style is a level of academic writing where even native academics err at the beginning of their careers unless they are properly corrected. As a result, the EAP materials that are currently available and employed are not in line with today’s requirements and consist of manuals instructing English native speakers on academic writing in general or of sections of advanced EAP manuals with a brief section dedicated to style (Sword 2012; Hayot 2014; Hopkins and Reid 2018; Tusting *et al*. 2019). Academic style thus represents a gap in academic English that may impede publication in itself (in “review language” feedback) or be combined with other criticisms to enforce a “major review” or “reject” decision.

The growing presence and importance of non-native academics has led to a gradual evolution and integration of intercultural and transcultural elements and approaches in many consolidated terms related to EAP. One of these, which has already been implemented in countries where cultural and linguistic diversity is integrated into institutional educational and academic discourse, consists in the shift from “(non) native speaker” to “(plurilingual) EAL (English as an Additional Language) writer/learner” (Holliday 2005; Luo and Hyland 2019), which will be used from this point on. This choice acknowledges the academic’s competence in at least one language, alongside their mother tongue; it avoids ordering the languages an academic is capable of using in a rigid hierarchy; it substitutes the more limited reference to “speaker” with “writer/learner”, which considers academic writing or all four language skills.

The second ongoing change is from ESP (English for Specific Purposes) to ESPP (English for Scientific and Professional Purposes), which is based on the learner’s real needs and on the collection and analysis of empirical material similar to that encountered in professional and academic contexts (Zanola 2023). This will presumably lead to experiential courses with a closer connection between the theory of language learning and the practice of a profession or academic research. Accordingly, the well-known field of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) is currently branching out into EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) and ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) to address the linguistic needs of the academic community in general and those of the academics operating in a specific discipline or line of research (Blue 1988). Finally, EAP is taking on an international and intercultural dimension by being increasingly accompanied by research in ERPP (English for Research Publication Purposes) (Englander and Cocoran 2019; Flowerdew and Habibie 2022), a term coined in 2008 by Cargill and Burgess and focused on the geopolitical and international knowledge exchange consequences of academic language review and evaluation.

These evolutionary trends all tend towards the inclusion of more professional specialization and intercultural diversity within an international discourse that has hitherto upheld standardized global language to promote common grounds of understanding. While it is still necessary for academics worldwide to master this “no one’s language”, accepting and enforcing one standard academic style and mind style founded on a generally accepted UK/USA-based variation of academic English without providing EAL learners with the means to understand and integrate it into their writing ultimately lead to loss of knowledge and its multifaceted discourse.

The third word in the “academic style proofreading” term adopted in this study refers both to the professional role, which is often confused with other “literacy brokers” (Lillis and Curry 2006: 4), and to a linguistic activity that must always be carried out in academic publishing. In fact, proofreading is well known and necessary but often taken for granted as a mere “routine procedure, a process of giving a final dusting down […] before an article or chapter is published” (Scott and Turner 2008: 1). Traditional dictionaries, in defining the verb “proofread” and the activity of “proofreading”, focus on spelling, grammar and punctuation and define proofreading as aspiring to the correctness of a text by pointing out and correcting obvious errors while maintaining the overall structure of the discourse and sentence. There is a very diverse use of the term proofreading, and it is often identified with or opposed to copyediting, which is an increasingly present practice and profession that often deals with editing style, and language editing, which is a general term that includes copyediting (language) and mechanical editing (adherence to publisher's "house style"). However, copyediting is not always separately provided in the revision process and language editing generally does not include stylistic editing. For this reason, the term "proofreading", which is well known and always executed at least once before publishing, has been adopted here. The official ENG-ITA translations of the term "proofreading" in the IATE (Interactive Terminology for Europe) terminological database confirm this by yielding results such as "correzione di bozze" and even, in one instance, of "controllo tecnico dei documenti", further restricting the activity to the search for a perfect correspondence among the terms of a specialized microlanguage. Accordingly, "proofreader" is translated as "correttore di bozze". In recent years however, high level and high-stakes linguistic contexts like academic writing increasingly require an enhanced form of proofreading that also considers subtle stylistic and specialized syntactic structures (Chovanec 2012; Hartse and Kubota 2014).

The first intent of the present contribution is therefore to shed light on the practical implications of this emerging issue by highlighting key concepts that can raise awareness on the matter itself and its possible consequences in terms of evaluation by editorial and reviewing recipients of the text. The concepts of "mind style" and "academic style" will be explored in relation to English and Italian to represent possible divergences between the writing of EAL academics and the expectations of the international academic discourse community. Therefore, the first research question dealt with in Section 2 is:

> *RQ1: What are "academic style" and "mind style", and what impact can intercultural interference have on an EAL academic's writing?*

These reflections will then be connected to the relevance of enhancing the (self) proofreading of one's own academic style and to the potential contribution of (corpus) stylistics and error analysis in academic writing and publishing. In particular, it will explore the language of economics, whose context and academic writing requirements make interlanguage errors common but avoidable if properly taught, thus addressing the second and third research questions in Section 3:

> *RQ2: How can academic style proofreading be observed and studied?*
> *RQ3: Why can academic style proofreading be important in the field of economics?*

Some examples of common errors, with their treatment and related comments, drawn from a corpus composed of proofread papers written by Italian academics for a nation-based open access peer-reviewed journal in economics, will be provided in Section 4, starting from the final research question:

RQ4: What are some common areas of error in Italian EAL academics' writing and how may they be treated?

The study then concludes by connecting the findings with the practical and research implications of promoting academic style proofreading within an international context.

2. Academic style and mind style: the next level of metalinguistic awareness

From a linguistic standpoint, the international discourse community responsible for filtering and promoting the dissemination of knowledge around the world accepts academic texts whose style and register is in line with the "globally dominant Anglo-American system" (Chovanec 2012: 6). Academic style consists in (Doerr 2023: 93):

> a way of communicating in an academic setting where it is necessary to thoroughly communicate complex ideas in a manner that will make them clearly understandable and less likely to be challenged on the fundamental principles and purposes at their core (although these may be commented on or expanded).

However, like "style" in general, academic style is elusive and subjective, and therefore hard to pinpoint and dependent on the learners' culture(s) and language(s) of origin. Therefore it is often absent or quickly glossed over in EAP manuals in favour of more homogenous and assessable – and therefore "marketable" – aspects. This leaves EAL academics unaware of how their text may be interpreted by an experienced peer, and therefore unprepared for reviews requesting further linguistic revision, especially if multiple professionals (e.g. other author(s), revisor, reviser, copyeditor, and proofreader) had already intervened on the text. By the same token, reviewers – especially those who are not acquainted with linguistics or language teaching – are unable to explain why certain texts are intuitively "not well written" although they present no evident or indisputable mistakes.

Academic style therefore reflects the international academic community's "mind style" (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010), i.e. its common values, aspirations, and associations of thought, not only in text and paragraph organization but also in underlying discursive patterns and flow. This collective mind style is communicated and upheld by conventions and standards aiming at cohesion, uniformity and appropriateness to ensure that specialized information is properly conveyed and understood. An acceptable academic style therefore expresses an academic's ideas and knowledge (Solly 2016), based on experience and know-how, through idiosyncratic language that complies with the academic discourse community's mind style and resulting global collective and socially determined dimension of communication (Stockwell 2006). In contrast, writing that reflects non-English sentence structures or discourse flow runs the risk of not being considered suitable for publication (Hartse and Kubota 2014; Luo and Hyland 2019) because it deviates from the collective mind style and is still anchored to the writer's unconscious epistemological and communicative framework. A significant difference in mind styles interrupts the expressive flow at the heart of an interpretative process of knowledge exchange between writer and reader. Despite using the same language, if such a divergence in flow were to be maintained throughout the academic text, it could result in unclear communication and potential misunderstanding resembling deviation from Grice's (1975) "Cooperative Principle". In fact, as Mauranen (1993: 263) asserts:

> Breaking grammatical rules has different consequences from breaking textual or rhetorical rules originating in a national culture: by breaking grammatical and lexical rules, a writer conveys the impression of not knowing the language, which may in mild cases be forgiven and in serious cases cause breakdown of comprehension; by breaking rules of a text-linguistic type, a writer may appear incoherent or illogical; finally, by breaking cultural-specific rhetorical rules a writer may seem exotic in command and low in credibility.

The importance of mind style has emerged in studies on academic writing and cultural patterns and can explain possible misinterpretations of the author's intent. For instance, Kaplan (1980) associated English academic writing with direct and linear communication that does not go off topic, refers constantly to the main subject or topic of interest, and arranges the main statement and supporting statements in a hierarchical structure. On the contrary, "[m]uch greater freedom to digress or to introduce extraneous material is available in French, or in Spanish, than in English", but such a digression, which is also common in Italian, "really does not seem to contribute significant structural material to the basic thought of the paragraph" (*ibid.*), and is therefore deemed redundant in English. Similar reflections on contrastive rhetoric are present in Galtung's (1981) classification of four academic community style approaches, as well as in Clyne's (1993, 2002) intercultural specialized language research and contrastive discourse studies. The latter study underlines the significant presence of politeness in languages like Italian through greater hedging and a more extensive use of reflexive verbs, subjunctives and/or modal particles, which convey indirectness and elegance.

Another common divergence between English and Italian, which "translates" into academic discourse, lies in their styles of reasoning and is also at the base of learning methods, legal institutions and knowledge-sharing practices. In fact, Italy, like other Latin European cultures, falls under the "principles-first (or deductive) reasoning style", which "derives conclusions or facts from general principles or concepts" (Meyer 2014: 93). This translates into the need for solid theoretical bases and sound arguments to be explored in detail in order to present persuasive conclusions, at the expense of more practical sections such as discussions, conclusions and implications. It also allows for more material and digressions than is considered necessary or acceptable for readers or reviewers who are versed in the dominant mind style. As a result, syntactic structures in academic Italian are more articulate than their English counterpart, leaving Italian academics with the impression that the translation or transference of the content of their work into English is banal or simplistic.

In contrast, English follows an "applications-first (or inductive) reasoning" where "general conclusions are reached based on a pattern of factual observations from the real world" (Meyer 2014: 93). This attention to hands-on experience is reflected in an experiential and practical approach to knowledge and information, as well as focus on discussions and their possible developments. As a result, sentences and reasoning are more linear and concrete in academic English compared to its Italian counterpart, but they must be based on convincing applications and results rather than the theoretical background, thus promoting academic and critical thinking. For this reason, an Italian EAL academic following a principles-first mind style and reasoning/writing pattern may receive feedback from a peer adhering to the dominant Anglophone mind style and academic style asking for clearer and more linear language and style, or for more dedication to the analysis of case studies and applications, as well as the discussion of results, limits and implications. Therefore, by being versed in the accepted mind style and discursive style, it is possible to better (self)proofread one's own papers in terms of overall academic style and prevent common errors due to the interlanguage translation and transference of thought and linguistic patterns.

3. Methodology and corpus construction

After outlining the context, it is necessary to present the methodology of the study, consisting in the combination of corpus stylistics and error analysis by starting from "stylistics". Stylistics as an interdisciplinary (Simpson 2004, 2014; Sorlin 2014, 2018) and unruly discipline analyses style starting from "defamiliarization" (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010: 1), i.e. diverging (linguistic, rhetorical and discursive) elements. Here such defamiliarized elements are represented by the EAL author's stylistic divergences, which are perceived as strange or deficient. Stylistics' need for "rigour, objectivity, replicability, empiricism, falsifiability" (*ibid.*: 22-23) – qualities that are typical of academic research and knowledge sharing – led to corpus stylistics (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010; Nørgaard *et al.* 2010; McIntyre and Walker 2019), the linguistic study of literary "style" appropriated by corpus linguistics (Nørgaard *et al.* 2010: 10):

> Corpus stylistics focuses on interpretation and on answering the question of how a text means, which is appropriated from stylistics. This will then advance corpus linguistic procedures by not only describing achieved results, but also by interpreting them and answering the question of 'So what?'.

Interestingly, the question "so what" is typical of an Anglophone mind and academic style: to answer this, error analysis (Allen and Corder 1974; Corder 1981; Canagarajah 2015) will be applied "to document the errors that appear in learner language, determine whether those errors are systematic, and (if possible) explain what caused them. […] Such errors tell us something about the learner's interlanguage, or underlying knowledge of the rules of the language being learned" (Corder 1981: 10). From this perspective, the divergences in style dealt with in the present paper are not "mistakes", but rather "errors", which consist in (Richards and Schmidt 2010: 201):

> the use of a linguistic item (e.g. a word, a grammatical item, a speech act, etc.) in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning. […] In the study of second and foreign language learning, errors have been studied to discover the processes learners make use of in learning and using a language.

For this reason, the term "error" will be used throughout the study and such occurrences will be "treated", not "corrected", to align the text with the stylistic expectations of the academic community. Moreover, as opposed to mistakes, these errors all fall under the "local error" category that "does not cause problems of comprehension" (*ibid.*: 247).

Academic writing and style in economics, which will be the focus of this study, is a developing discourse and part of the "social sciences", located between the hard and soft sciences, and turns "an initial abstract construal of experience into something more technical" (Hyland 2009: 8), a line of reasoning that reflects the previously mentioned applications-first reasoning. Such a position entails a certain degree of (non)tolerance of non-English lexico-grammatical and stylistic variations and "errors" because the language of economics lacks both the urgency of the sciences and the freedom of the humanities. Moreover, papers in economics follow the IMRaD (Introduction - Method - Results - Discussion) structure that is typical of scientific writing and are constrained by a word limit that must often be divided among multiple authors and the data. This results in a perceived need to reduce one's number of words and follow the most stringent formulas of academic writing.

The ECO corpus of academic texts used here is composed of 60 articles (and their abstracts) written in English (the vast majority are written in American English) by Italian scholars for an Italian nation-based journal in management, corporate governance and trends in sustainable development aiming at an international audience. The articles were written, submitted, and proofread by the author between January 2013 and December 2021. The articles had already been revised by peers but required proofreading of grammar accuracy and stylistic readability prior to publication. The corpus was divided into two subcorpora (hitherto referred to as "ECO with corrections" and "ECO without corrections", the first of which is considered here). To guarantee the contents' anonymity and better focus on the text, the authors' names and contact information were deleted, along with the articles' bibliography. As a result, the "ECO with corrections" subcorpus consisted of 15,640 word types and 381,645 word tokens. This resulted in a type/ token ratio of 4.10%, indicating a lack of lexical richness that is presumably due to the word limit and specialized terminology. The length of the articles ranged between 3,488 words and 10,115 words, and the average number of words amounted to 6,500.

The four common types of errors that have been singled out for the qualitative analysis and dealt with here include:

- Addition of extra text
- Deletion of redundant text
- Shifting and repositioning
- Appropriateness and register

Such an analysis has the intent of raising awareness about academic style proofreading and reducing Italian scholars' natural transference of common Italianized linguistic forms and patterns. Doing so will increase the fluidity and readability of the text and favour the publication and dissemination of their studies.

4. Analysis and discussion

The four main common stylistic errors mentioned above will be dealt with in separate sections. Each type will be illustrated in relation to the Italian academic language and through empirical examples taken from the "ECO with corrections" subcorpus. All sensitive information in the examples has been substituted with "X", "Y" or "Z" and a note on what it referred to in [ ] brackets when necessary. The underlined sections were added by the author, while those with single strikethroughs were deleted. The (#number) indication at the end of each example corresponds to the number of the article in the subcorpus (ordered in chronological order).

4.1. *Addition of extra text*

Although the Italian language is "content-based", and therefore tends to express ideas in great detail and completion to provide a better overview, there are situations in which information may be elided, as it is considered unnecessary or implicit. Such is the case, for instance, of specifying pronouns when the subject may be gleaned from the form of the verbal tense. In English however, which is a "form-based" language that relies on direct and explicit style where all necessary elements must be specified, eliding certain pieces of information may render the text unclear or ambiguous. Moreover, when this occurs too frequently, the reading of the paper becomes frustrating or seemingly "incomplete", leading to the reviewer's invitation to have the paper revised by a native speaker.

The most common case of this consists in the lack of relative clauses (either with "that" or "which/who/where/when"), here represented by examples 1 and 2. There is actually both an error and a mistake in example 1, since the verb "hit" is not used in association with earthquakes in English, as opposed to lightning or thunder strikes, while the Italian turn of phrase is, in fact, "essere colpit* da un terremoto". The *who*-relative clause rounds the sentence and better connects the subject ("small retailers") with the circumstantial information that follows. A similar situation occurs in example 2, where a relative clause is necessary in order to connect "small details" to its verb "to co-create" in English, otherwise it would be perceived as if something were missing.

(1) small retailers <u>who were affected</u> ~~hit~~ by the "X"[geographical location] earthquake (ECO #48)

(2) The small details <u>that are used/employed</u> to co-create value by driving "X", can be realized along three main dimensions (ECO #42)

Another common stylistic change is found in example 3, where "represented by" (also found in Italian but more often in English) provides further support to what follows. This is frequent and advisable when presenting definitions and relevant case studies to emphasize them more than would be possible simply with the verb "to be".

(3) An example of this enhancement of products to incorporate services is <u>represented by</u> the way "X"[company] went from "A" copiers to "B" copiers. (ECO #37)

Examples 4-6, on the other hand, are calques (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958) of words that are often used by themselves in Italian ("i non-profit", "calamità", "conoscenza"), because the second part (i.e. "organizations", "backgrounds" and "matter") is already implied. These omissions leave native and advanced speakers with the feeling that something is missing or incomplete.

(4) Accordingly, "X"[company] has created a website that allows people to post solutions to challenges that are defined by "X" members, a mix of non-profit~~s~~ organizations and companies. (ECO #39)
(5) the retailers who are able to reopen in the immediate post-calamity period/phase recorded a significant increase in sales due to the presence of fewer competitors. (ECO #48)
(6) This paper contributes in advancing scientific knowledge on the matter,.. (ECO #44)

The last example of addition regards quantity or degree in trends: the author was presumably thinking of "l'aumento" or "un aumento", which are generally interchangeable in Italian but have a slightly different meaning in English. "An" is more neutral and leads to the understanding that the increase will have to be a discernible, or at least detectable, one. "Any", on the other hand, implies that even a minimum increase would be sufficient and therefore lowers the threshold for the expressed condition to be fulfilled.

(7) An/Any ~~I~~increase in these immaterial assets encourages the circulation of knowledge within the company and stimulates the creation of long-term value. (ECO #19)

These treatments are therefore based on aligning different requirements in terms of explicitness and semantic richness, which often remain unfulfilled by EAL academics because they have not been made aware of such differences and the effect they have on readers in practice.

4.2. *Deletion of redundant text*

Another opposite case in which Italian EAL academics often unconsciously allow their original linguistic and stylistic *forma mentis* to filter into their English academic writing, is the use of wordy expressions that are perceived as eloquent and formal in Italian, but translate into excessively complicated and redundant sentences from the English perspective. The extra words actually become "distracting noise" that frustrates readers who are not familiar with the Italian language and may impede the stylistic flow of the text.

This issue requires not only the proofreader's knowledge of the English language in general, but also a certain detachment from the Italian language and acquaintance with the academic English of the discipline at hand to avoid maintaining excessive textual equivalence. In example 8, the deletion is based on the difference between the Italian "essere capace di", which is used frequently in Italian and could also mean being in the position of or having the potential to (thus meaning both "to be able to" and "to be capable of"), and the English "to be able to", which is only used to refer to a specific skill or ability.

(8) a need to make the most effective of these cases more organic, which involves identifying the elements that have allowed a certain qualitative level to be reached in order to ~~be able to~~ create a "package" of good practices (ECO #27)

The deletions in examples 9 and 10 are of a lexical nature and motivated by the amount of semantic information that "Facebook (page)" and "sample" possess by themselves. In fact, "Facebook" already implies that the page and related community are online, and the presence of a "sample" proves that there had already been a selection among the firms.

> (9) a single case study method […], represented by the "X" [brand] ~~online~~ Facebook community page. (ECO #42)
> (10) In addition, ~~in the selection of firms~~ we tried to build up a heterogeneous sample that could represent firms from different industries, of different sizes and in different locations in "X" [geographical location] (ECO #43)

Examples 11 and 12 are particularly important, in that they intend to provide indirect definitions. As opposed to example 3, where the verb "to be" was direct but lacked the impact in supporting an important part of the text, in example 11 the noun phrase "the policies" already refers to a specific category of policies. Therefore, the word "those", which has the purpose of emphasizing with the Italian expression "quei xxx che", interrupts the linear connection between the verb and its object without adding any useful information. In example 12, the eliminated expression more or less corresponds to the Italian "era inteso rispetto a/in relazione a", found in academic and formal written Italian but brings no relevant information in English. Furthermore, "the occurrence of" is presumably a transfer of the Italian "nel/in caso di" that does not make sense in English in the presence of "response", which already implies that there has been a case of "specific threats and/or specific impacts".

> (11) … sometimes not acknowledging ~~those that are~~ the policies that have been decided upon in Brussels. (ECO #26)
> (12) However, the concept has been gradually linked to the ability of societies to be reactive or proactive and their capacity to enhance their response ~~was intended in respect~~ to ~~the occurrence of~~ specific threats and/or specific impacts. (ECO #28)

In the final example, the expression "come ad esempio" is common in both written and spoken Italian, but in English one must choose between "such as/like" and "for example/instance". This obligation is also due to stylistic preferences based on the author's intent: "such as/like" are the best option when the author wishes to integrate the example into the rest of the sentence and not interrupt the flow, while "for example/instance" has the function of isolating and better highlighting the example because it is easily visible within a sentence or paragraph.

> (13) phenomenon, like~~, for example,~~ invasive procedures, medical check-ups, dental tourism, wellness tourism, and "diasporic tourism", as well as maternity or even death tourism. (ECO #21)

Such deletions therefore lighten the sentences and word count and enable the reader to focus on the main points and lexical content. At the same time, they allow the text to follow the linear stylistic flow of academic English writing that is expected and accepted in the international academic community.

4.3. *Shifting and repositioning*

Repositioning embedded clauses and phrases that interrupt or complicate the structure of the sentence ensures that the text is comprehensible and readable. The contrary is widely accepted in the Italian language, where certain elements and declinations allow the reader to infer what each clause refers to, and is actually seen as a way of refining the language and thought process. On the contrary, in English, it reduces the text's conciseness and compels the readers to re-read the text.

As far as style is concerned, the priority here is to maintain the coherence and logical flow of the sentence by keeping phrases and clauses that relate to each other close, like in examples 14 and 15, where a large section of the sentence was shifted to do so. This could even mean separating a verb phrase from its subject to connect it with the defining clause, like in example 16, something that is quite uncomfortable for Italian native speakers who were taught to remain faithful to the SVO word order.

> (14) In particular, they present the case of "X", a project developed by businesses, citizen sector, for-profit venture capital and social funds that which aims at enabling online medical service providers, ~~developed by businesses, citizen sector, for-profit venture capital and social funds, which~~ and developed an integrated business model. (ECO #39)
> (15) The participants' anonymity was guaranteed and ethical issues were handled by explaining ~~in advance to the respondents~~ the study's aims and scopes to the respondents in advance. (ECO #45)
> (16) To achieve the research objectives, two studies ~~were planned~~ combining quantitative and qualitative research methods were planned. (ECO #49)

Maintaining the "core" of the message may also implicate moving circumstantial information (such as time and place deixes) that is often embedded in academic Italian to the margins, as may be seen in examples 17 and 18.

> (17) it is important to understand how firms~~, within their online communities,~~ can exploit business-to-consumer interactions within their online communities. (ECO #42)
> (18) In particular, ~~through the estimation of the measurement model~~ it was possible to assess the validity of the scales in the specific research setting through the estimation of the measurement model. (ECO #28)

This rule presents two advantages: it makes it easier for Italian EAL academics to clearly structure long sentences when it is not possible or advisable to shorten or divide them, and for the reader to concentrate on the main content and integrate it with the additional information that is provided at the beginning and/or end.

4.4. *Appropriateness and register*

The issue differs from the previous types of errors because it is caused by a developmental lack of awareness of the effect that certain acquired variations of academic expressions have. EAL academics may not be aware of the difference because there is "a tendency for non-native speakers not to think of English immediately in terms of varieties" but rather to focus "on the function of communication rather than identity" (Henshall 2018: 31). This is the aspect in which divergences in style are most strongly detected, as is demonstrated by the fact that it is the one that is most frequently defined as "style" in EAP manuals and textbooks, and the one where even non-trained natives err.

These treatments may concern different levels of linguistic and discursive choices: lexis (like in examples 19 "a lot of" and 20 "grown up in"), phrasal verbs that are used in written and spoken English but should be substituted with an equivalent formal synonym in academic writing (examples 21 "go through" and 22 "strive at"), and even discourse markers and signpost language, which are usually memorized as fixed expressions (as in examples 23 "stick to" and 24, with an appropriate variation of "this is the reason why").

(19) ~~A lot of~~ Many factors drive the actual growth of "X". (ECO #21)
(20) Raised with ~~Grown up in~~ e-commerce with and great tech advances... (ECO #49)
(21) The "X" industry is particularly suitable for this research, because of the recent growth in the number of "Y" [establishments] which has stimulated older firms to ~~go through~~ undergo a process of customer engagement. (ECO #42)
(22) Drawing on the conceptual framework depicted above, this study ~~strives for~~ aims at shedding light on the relationship linking... (ECO #45)
(23) ~~Sticking to~~ In accordance with these arguments, this paper investigates the role of "X" in realizing the full potential of patient empowerment. (ECO #45)
(24) For this ~~This is the~~ reason ~~why~~ surrogate motherhood is illegal in "X" but allowed in "Y" and "Z" [geographical locations]. (ECO #21)

Here both form and context come into play and separate academic English into linguistic and discursive subfields that EAL academics should be made aware of from an intercultural perspective.

5. Concluding remarks and future research

The present study has focused on academic style proofreading and how introducing it can endow EAL academics with greater metalinguistic awareness and attention towards stylistic, as well as linguistic, appropriateness. This aligns with ongoing threads of development within ESP and their increasing focus on specialized and intercultural academic and professional diversity. This form of "proofreading" represents a special skill that has been hitherto attained through trial and error experience in light of feedback from reviewers and the analysis of acceptable writing. Academic style is both subjective and closely connected to the academic's language and culture of origin: however, if properly researched and integrated into academic writing teaching and training, it could enable language professionals and EAL academics themselves to reduce the amount of errors in their academic writing and speed up the review and publishing processes.

The first research question (*RQ1: What are "academic style" and "mind style" and what impact can intercultural interference have on an EAL academic's writing?*) may be answered by considering academic style as an idiosyncratic expression of knowledge that must be reconciled with the discursive form that is accepted within the international academic community. The study then underlined accepted academic style as being the conveyance of information filtered through the dominant UK/USA-based cultural mind style according to expectations and perceptions that are not explicit in terms of style and syntax and often not explained or clear to other cultures.

The second research question (*RQ2: How can academic style proofreading be observed and studied?*) introduced the methodological framework of the study, i.e. a combination of corpus stylistics and error analysis, to collect, treat and analyse examples of common stylistic errors by Italian EAL academics. To do so, the study addressed the third question (*RQ3: Why can academic style proofreading be important in the field of economics?*) and outlined the peculiarities of academic writing in economics to anticipate possible limitations that are typical of the discipline and could constrain and lead EAL academics back to their native academic style.

The study answered the final research question (*RQ4: What are some common areas of error in Italian EAL academics' writing and how may they be treated?*) by focusing on four common types of errors, i.e. addition of extra text; deletion of redundant text; shifting and repositioning; appropriateness and register. A sample of errors explained their use by Italian EAL academics and their perception by reviewers and readers who evaluate them based on the stylistic criteria of the international academic discourse community. Such qualitative research could provide insight into and overt description of stylistic peculiarities that EAL academics should keep in mind because they could lead to the extensive (and time-consuming) revision, or even rejection, of papers. These and future findings could be embedded into culture-specific checklists and manuals used both by EAL academics and proofreaders of academic writing to improve revision and proofreading phases. Another direction for future research consists in comparing academic writing across different disciplines to detect and classify common and characterizing errors and treatment.

Finally, future research must also determine how much one could, or should, change a text when carrying out this sort of proofreading to maintain the original communicative intent and idiosyncratic traits while ensuring readability within the community. More intersectional research in corpus stylistics, error analysis and EGAP/ESAP is necessary to create a solid theoretical framework that could enrich EAP research, materials and courses, especially considering ongoing developments in academic writing and translation thanks to artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML).

References

Allen J.P.B. and S.P. Corder (eds) 1974. *Techniques in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bennett K. 2009. English academic style manuals: a survey. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 8: 43-54.

Bennett K. (ed.) 2014. *The Semiperiphery of Academic Writing: Discourses, Communities, and Practices*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Blue G. 1988. Individualising academic writing tuition. In P.C. Robinson (ed.), *Academic Writing: Process and Product* (ELT Documents 129). London: Modern English Publications: 95-99.

Bourdieu P., J.C. Passeron and M. De Saint Martin 1994. *Academic Discourse: Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professional Power*. London: Polity.

Canagarajah S. 2015. Clarifying the relationship between translingual practice and L2 writing: addressing learner identities. *Applied Linguistics Review* 6/4: 415-440.

Cargill M. and S. Burgess 2008. Introduction to the Special Issue: English for Research Purposes. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 7/2: 75-76.

Chovanec J. 2012. Written discourse in English: from local traditions to global outreach. *Brno Studies in English* 38/2: 5-16.

Clyne M.G. 1993. Pragmatik, Textstruktur und Kulturelle Werte: Eine Interkulturelle Perspektive: Forum für Fachsprachenforschung'. In H. Schröder (ed.), *Fachtextpragmatik*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag: 3-18.

Clyne M.G. 2002. Contrastive discourse studies. *Cahiers de praxématique* 38: 59-84.

Coolidge A.C. 1932. *Archibald Cary Coolidge: Life and Letters*. Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Corder S.P. 1981. *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Curry M.J. and T. Lillis 2013. *A Scholar's Guide to Getting Published in English: Critical Choices and Practical Strategies*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Doerr R.B. 2023. *Academic Style Proofreading: an Introduction (Contemporary Studies in descriptive linguistics, vol. 54)*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Englander K. and J.N. Cocoran 2019. *English for Research Publication Purposes: Critical Plurilingual Pedagogies*. New York: Routledge.

Flowerdew J. and P. Habibie 2022. *Introducing English for Research Publication Purposes*. London: Routledge.

Galtung J. 1981. Structure, culture, and intellectual style: an essay comparing Saxonic, Teutonic, Gallic and Nipponic approaches. *Social Science Information* 20/6: 817-856.

Grice P. 1975. Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J.J. Morgan (eds), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press: 41-58.

Hartse J.H. and R. Kubota 2014. Pluralizing English? Variation in high-stakes academic texts and challenges of copyediting. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 24: 71-82.

Hayot E. 2014. *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Henshall A.C. 2018. English language policies in scientific journals: signs of change in the field of economics. *Journal of English for Scientific Purposes* 36: 26-36.

Holliday A. 2005. *The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hopkins D. and T. Reid 2018. *The Academic Skills Handbook: Your Guide to Success in Writing, Thinking, and Communicating at University*. Sage Publications Ltd: London.

Hyland K. 2009. *Academic Discourse*. London: Continuum.

Jeffries L. and D. McIntyre 2010. *Stylistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaplan R.B. 1980. Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. In K. Croft (ed.), *Readings on English as a Second Language*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company: 399-418.

Kapp C.A., R.M. Albertyn and B.L. Frick 2011. Writing for publication: an intervention to overcome barriers to scholarly writing. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 25/4: 741-759.

Lillis T. and M.J. Curry 2006. Professional academic literacy brokers in the production of English-medium Texts. *Written Communication* 23/1: 3-35.

Luo N. and K. Hyland 2019. 'I won't publish in Chinese now': publishing, translation and the non-English-speaking academic. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 39: 37-47.

Mauranen A. 1993. *Cultural Differences in Academic Rhetoric: A Text Linguistic Study*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

McIntyre D. and B. Walker 2019. *Corpus Stylistics: Theory and Practice*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

McKinley J. and H. Rose 2018. Conceptualizations of language errors, standards, norms and nativeness in English for Research Publication Purposes: an analysis of journal submission guidelines. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 42: 1-11.

Meyer E. 2014. *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done across Cultures*. New York: Public Affairs.

Nørgaard N., M. Rocío and B. Busse 2010. *Key Terms in Stylistics*. London and New York: Continuum.

Richards J.C. and R. Schmidt 2010. *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*, 4th edition. Harlow: Pearson Longman.

Scott M. and J. Turner 2008. Problematising proofreading. *Zeitscrift Schreiben*. At https://zeitschrift-schreiben.eu/globalassets/zeitschrift-schreiben.eu/2008/scott_proofreading.pdf: 1-5.

Simpson P. 2004. *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.

Simpson P. 2014. *Stylistics*. London: Routledge.

Solly M. 2016. *The Stylistics of Professional Discourse*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Sorlin S. 2014. The 'interdisciplinarity' of stylistics. *Topics in Linguistics* 14. At https://sciendo.com/pdf/10.2478/topling-2014-0008.

Sorlin S. 2018. La stylistique anglaise comme Carrefour de l'anglistique. *Études de stylistique anglaise* 12: 7-35.

Stockwell P. 2006. Language and literature: stylistics. In B. Aarts and A. McMahon (eds), *The Handbook of English Linguistics*. Carlton: Blackwell Publishing Ltd: 742-758.

Swales J. 2004. *Research Genres: Exploration and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sword H. 2012. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Tusting K., S. McCulloch, I. Bhatt, M. Hamilton and D. Barton 2019. *Academics Writing: The Dynamics of Knowledge Creation*. London: Routledge.

Vinay J-P. and J. Darbelnet 1958. *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais*. Paris: Les Éditions Didier.

Zanola A. 2023. *La Lingua Inglese per la Comunicazione Scientifica e Professionale*. Rome: Carocci Editore.

TIME TO RETHINK TOURISM: A COMPARATIVE LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES USED BY UK, USA AND ITALIAN TOURISM BOARDS

Jean Jimenez and Ida Ruffolo
(University of Calabria, Italy)

Abstract

Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the tourism industry. As the sector is struggling to get back to business, research on new tourism trends as well as the promotional discourse employed is imperative. The aim of this paper is to investigate the promotional discourse used on three national tourism board websites: *VisitBritain*, *VisitTheUSA* and *Italia.it*. Specifically, a corpus-based quantitative and qualitative approach was used to examine the content and language of these tourism boards and conduct a comparative analysis in order to identify a set of best practices which will allow the know-how transfer for building more powerful tourist promotion, also on a local level. The findings suggest that the tourism sector is slowly bouncing back by diversifying products and markets, and promoting mainly domestic and regional tourism, as well as focusing on sustainability and related activities in an attempt to reallocate tourists to new destinations to tackle issues of over-tourism. From a linguistic point of view, there is an extensive use of strategies of the tourism discourse illustrated by Dann (1996), namely ego-targeting, nostalgia, and nature. The new patterns concern the desire to discover a new side of tourism.

1. Introduction

Restrictions consequent to the Covid-19 pandemic have had a devastating impact on all realms of life, including the global tourism industry, which has suffered greater economic losses than first predicted (UNWTO 2021). Consumption patterns deriving from this new social reality have changed radically and, as a consequence, the tourism sector has had to innovate its marketing strategies in order to survive (Ketter and Avraham 2021). The challenges being faced by tourism destinations emphasize the need to rethink tourism so as to "boost competitiveness and build resilience" (UNWTO 2020) by diversifying products and markets, and promoting domestic and regional tourism,

* Although the authors have collaborated in the research work and in writing the paper, they have individually devoted specific attention to the following sections: Jimenez - § 1, 3.1, 4.2, 5, and 6; Ruffolo - § 2, 3.2, 4.1, 5, and 6.

while taking into account sustainability and the need to reallocate tourists to new destinations to tackle issues of over-tourism.

In addition to using promotion to wake up from the lethargy imposed by the pandemic (Vargas 2020), strategies to restore consumer confidence in this delicate post-lockdown period are fundamental. Indeed, tourism operators must focus on consumers' changing concerns as well as accommodate their legitimate requests, i.e. health and safety measures (UNWTO 2020).

In this scenario, promotional language and the use of new technologies, especially when their development is presented in accordance with the World Health Organization and the World Tourism Organization guidelines (Streimikiene and Korneeva 2020), cannot be underestimated. Undeniably, it is thanks to digital marketing that many companies have managed to gain competitiveness after the changes following Covid-19 (Hoyos-Estrada and Sastoque-Gómez 2020).

In light of this, examining the communication strategies that official tourism boards are using to promote their facilities and services online in the post-lockdown period can provide insights into possibly new discursive and linguistic strategies used to communicate how they are complying with tourists' changing habits while continuing to guarantee quality services. In particular, the aim of this paper is to examine the promotional discourse used on three national tourism board websites (*VisitBritain*, *VisitTheUSA* and *Italia.it*). Specifically, a corpus-based quantitative and qualitative approach was used to examine the content and language of these tourism boards. In particular, the purpose of the comparative analysis conducted is to identify recurring topics/themes as well as discursive strategies used to promote tourism in the post-Covid era in order to shed light on a set of best practices which may contribute to the know-how transfer for building more powerful tourist promotion also on a local level.

2. Background to the study

Covid-19 has been described by Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as "a crisis like no other" (World Economic Forum 2020) which has had a tremendously negative impact on both the global and sectoral economies. As a consequence of the stringent restrictions on business and social life, together with the consequent economic downturn, tourism demand experienced an unprecedented slump in 2020. Indeed, most tourist destinations were forced to stop operations that year due to lockdown measures and travel bans, cancelled bookings, and local logistics. In conjunction, such an evolution has placed tourism among the most severely impacted sectors in terms of revenue, jobs, and few available alternatives for maintaining operations during lockdown. Given the extent to which the tourism sector comprises and affects a wide range of related industries, which in turn contribute to economic growth and employment opportunities worldwide, the importance of mitigating the negative effects brought on by the pandemic and paving the road to recovery cannot be underestimated (Assaf and Scuderi 2020).

The unprecedented nature of the impact of Covid-19 on the global economy has led to a need to continuously track and monitor the pandemic's impact on various sectors of the economy to provide insights necessary for policy and practice (Dube *et al.* 2021). According to the IMF (2021), some countries dependent on tourism may be forced to diversify their economies by investing in non-tourism sectors. This transition could be eased by creating stronger links between the tourism industry and local farmers, artisans, entrepreneurs and enterprises in an effort to increase locally produced goods and services, which could also lead to a boost in exports.

Although tourist activity is slowly recovering back to pre-2020 levels, it would be preferable as well as beneficial for post-Covid tourism to prioritize tourist products and services which focus their attention on selective forms of tourism, for example cultural tourism, ecotourism and nautical tourism, as well as on the physical and mental well-being of tourists, health, safety, and security issues, and sustainability (Skryl and Gregoric 2022). Indeed, tourism researchers are exploring new tourism models which will prioritize staycations and proximate travel, drive to and travel by train destinations, in addition to continuing to invest in nature and adventure tourism with the aim of meeting the demands of sustainability conscious consumers (Orîndaru *et al*. 2021). Opportunely, the pandemic has accelerated the transition to more sustainable models of tourism, with stimulus recovery programs for tourism focusing on rebuilding tourism locations to be more sustainable, which, in addition to creating jobs for workers involved in the rebuilding, can enhance their attraction. For instance, in the first five months of 2022, 100,000 pilgrims had already participated in the Camino de Santiago, which provides a perfect example of sustainable, low-impact tourism combining cultural heritage and bringing people together from across Europe. Alfonso Rueda Valenzuela, President of the Government of Galicia, the region that hosts the Camino, stated (cor.europe.eu 2022) that “People want to travel again, discover new places and cultural heritage, but the pandemic has changed models of tourism towards destinations that are nearer and less massified”.

The European Parliament has urged the European Commission to present a new strategy on sustainable tourism in Europe and to establish an EU Agency for Tourism (Report - A9-0033/2021), with recovery strategies requiring a focus on the green and digital transition in the tourism sector. Most European cities are already moving in this direction: for example, the Veneto Region in Italy has recently inaugurated several new walking and cycling routes across the territory and tourists arriving in the region are being asked to pay an extra price for more ecology-friendly accommodation.

Technology can also play an important role in the recovery strategies. With consumers becoming more aware of health and hygiene and social distancing conventions as a result of the pandemic, investments in digital technology which include touchless service delivery have become even more important as a way to inform planning and decision-making. Moreover, technology will continue to have a fundamental role in long-stay tourism as digital nomads are looking for tourism destinations which can guarantee remote and telecommuting options.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have reached its last leg and life seems to be slowly returning to normalcy, the psychology of travellers has been greatly affected moving from initial health anxiety to getting used to the new normal (Abbas *et al*. 2022). Covid-19 started out as a health crisis, and improving health safety and building traveller confidence is the immediate challenge which countries need to tackle.

When the pandemic started spreading worldwide, governments began putting health protocols in place and press releases providing information on Covid-19 became commonplace in many countries. The World Bank Group also supported the development of standard operating protocols for the tourism industry as well as public-private cooperation regarding recovery strategies. Today, governments still consider strong health and sanitation protocols necessary to protect tourists and residents.

3. Data and methodology

3.1. *Corpus-based discourse analysis*

The present study combines corpus linguistics (CL) and discourse analysis (DA) in an attempt to analyse data systematically from both linguistic and sociocultural perspectives (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2001). The three corpora under investigation were compiled from the websites of the institutional tourism boards in Great Britain, the USA and Italy (*VisitBritain*, *VisitTheUSA*, *Italia.it*) to investigate how tourism is promoted in the new post-lockdown era. Specifically, this study includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis in which texts were analysed at two different levels: 1) topics/themes, and 2) discursive and linguistic strategies. The analysis starts with the identification of the topics employed on the three websites under investigation, followed by an inquiry into the discourse strategies used as well as their linguistic realizations. A quantitative and qualitative mixed-method approach was adopted for the study, analysing keywords and collocational profiles in addition to carrying out content analysis on concordance samples to shed light on how institutional tourism boards, namely *VisitBritain*, *VisitTheUSA*, *Italia.it*, promote tourism trends in order to respond to the challenges posed by Covid-19.

The three corpora were later equipped by Sketch Engine to process the data accordingly. Sketch Engine (www.sketchengine.co.uk) is a leading corpus tool used for lexicography and language research which has a number of main functions such as Keywords, Thesaurus, and Concordance (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2004). The three corpora were automatically annotated with lemma and part-of-speech information.

Three separate corpora were first compiled thanks to Sketch Engine, which has a unique corpus-building tool that uses the WebBootCaT technology, and were then analysed with the Sketch Engine corpus analysis tool. In an initial step, a list of keywords was retrieved in each corpus to identify recurring themes in the dataset, using the EnTenTen20 corpus as a reference corpus. The Keywords and Terms tool was used to identify the multiword expressions, which consist of several tokens, that appear proportionally more frequently in each corpus compared to the reference corpus. This tool facilitates the identification of the main topics of each corpus, which was the second step of the analysis. In this step, a subsequent qualitative content analysis of the first most frequent 100 keywords allowed the identification of recurring themes in the three corpora. Analysing the context of each occurrence of all keywords would have been too time-consuming due to the number of occurrences. For this reason, a concordance sample was created by choosing keywords and then classifying them within each topic identified. Lastly, the collocational profile and concordance output of the words were examined with the aim of clarifying how the three tourism boards promote tourism in the post-Covid era.

3.2. *Corpora data*

The analysis was first conducted separately on the three corpora under investigation, followed by a tentative comparative analysis. Only the English versions of the websites were taken into consideration for the investigation. As for the Italian tourism board, the analysis focuses on the translated version in English to investigate its contents, without looking into mistranslations or any mistakes, which is beyond the scope of this research. Indeed, the aim of this study is to understand to what extent the 'new' consumers' demands in terms of travelling and fears regarding pandemics are taken into consideration by national official institutions. The reason why these three countries were chosen is that, according to the UNTWO, they ranked in the top 10 destinations in terms of worldwide arrivals in 2019, that is, before the outbreak of Covid-19.

The *VisitBritain (VisBrit) Corpus* was compiled by retrieving the texts from the website https://www.visitbritain.com/en. As the website states, VisitBritain is the official tourism website of Great Britain, which provides potential tourists with inspirational activities and experiences, guidance and information about travelling to Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and helps the travel industry showcase the best of Britain. In 2022, VisitBritain launched a multi-million-pound global campaign to boost inbound tourism. In particular, "VisitBritain's international campaign is putting the spotlight on Britain's cities, hit hard by the absence of international visitors, as well as on messages of welcome and reassurance" (VisitBritain.org 2022). Moreover, "the campaign's city-focused content has been tailored using VisitBritain's research into its target audiences' interests and motivations for travel right now – including 'city foodies', 'city icons with a modern twist', and 'outdoors in the city' – alongside 'travelling responsibly', 'travelling to reconnect' and 'freedom to explore'" (*ibid*.).

Specifically, the *VisBrit Corpus* was compiled in late October 2022 and consists of 165,990 tokens. All sections of the websites have been included. A decision was made to focus only on the text of the websites, hence photographs or images were not included.

The *VisitTheUSA (VisUSA) Corpus* was built employing texts from https://www.visittheusa.com/, the official travel site of the USA. The website belongs to the corporate 'Brand USA', which aims at increasing national and international tourism in the USA and boosting the US market share in the tourism sector. The brand highlights the economic and social advantages of travelling to the United States with the aim of fostering a better understanding between people and cultures as well as increasing job opportunities in a sector essential to the US economy. In particular, *VisitTheUsa* aims at promoting what they define as exceptional and unexpected travel experiences in the United States. The federal states are putting an effort into promoting the United States as a premier destination and fostering a sector that drives economic growth, creates good jobs, and bolsters conservation and sustainability.

Specifically, the *VisUSA Corpus* was compiled in late October 2022 and consists of 445,154 tokens. As with the *VisBrit Corpus*, all the sections of the website have been included, with the exception of images and photographs.

The third corpus built for the purpose of this research is the *Italia.it* (IT) *Corpus*, compiled retrieving texts from the website https://www.italia.it/en. Italia.it is affiliated to ENIT - the Italian National Tourist Board, which, under the supervision of the

Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, performs all of the functions and tasks attributed to it by law in the pursuit of its mission of promoting tourism. ENIT aims at promoting the peninsula's seaside beauties and active tourism, collaborating with local authorities, to encourage lesser-known cities to create special experiences that spotlight the unique traits of Italy, such as medieval towns. Moreover, many small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups have invested in innovative and sustainable tourism projects.

The *IT Corpus* is the largest of the three corpora, with 905,569 tokens, and, similarly to the other two corpora, was built including all the sections of the website with the exception of images.

4. Results

4.1. *Keywords analysis*

This research is an attempt to address the linguistic features used in tourism discourse taking into consideration the socio-cultural component of language content. The main focus of the study is the persuasive linguistic strategies used in tourism promotion by official tourism destination websites and, more specifically, by the destination websites of Great Britain, the USA and Italy.

As mentioned above, the two main tools used to analyse the data are 'Keyness' and 'Collocations'. Keyness refers to salience in Corpus Linguistics: as explained by Baker (2006), researchers compare word lists from different corpora, determining which words are statistically more frequent keywords in a corpus. The keyness score used in Sketch Engine to identify keywords, terms, key n-grams and keyword sketch collocations is simple maths, which "compares the frequencies in the focus corpus with the frequencies

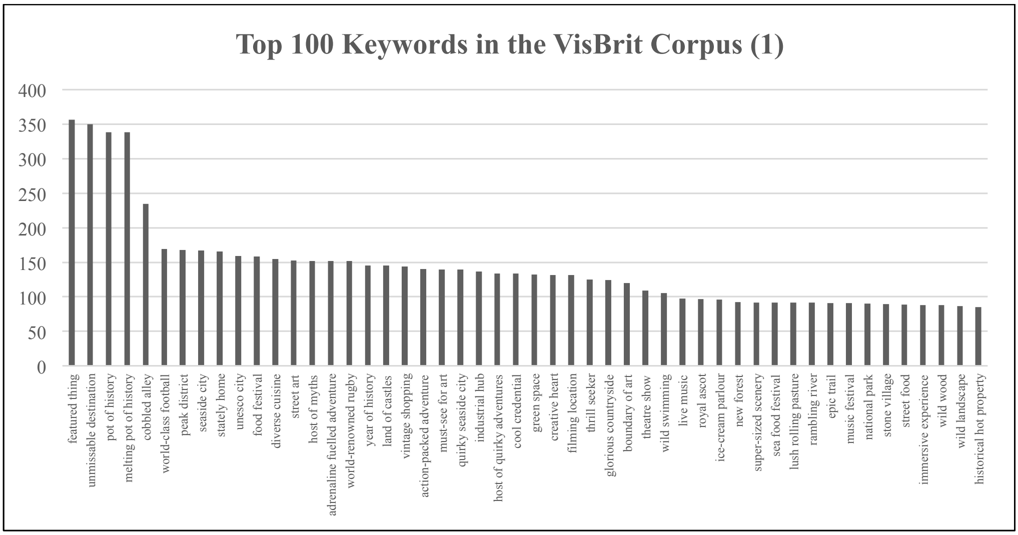


Figure 1. Keyness Score of top 100 keywords in the *VisBrit Corpus*

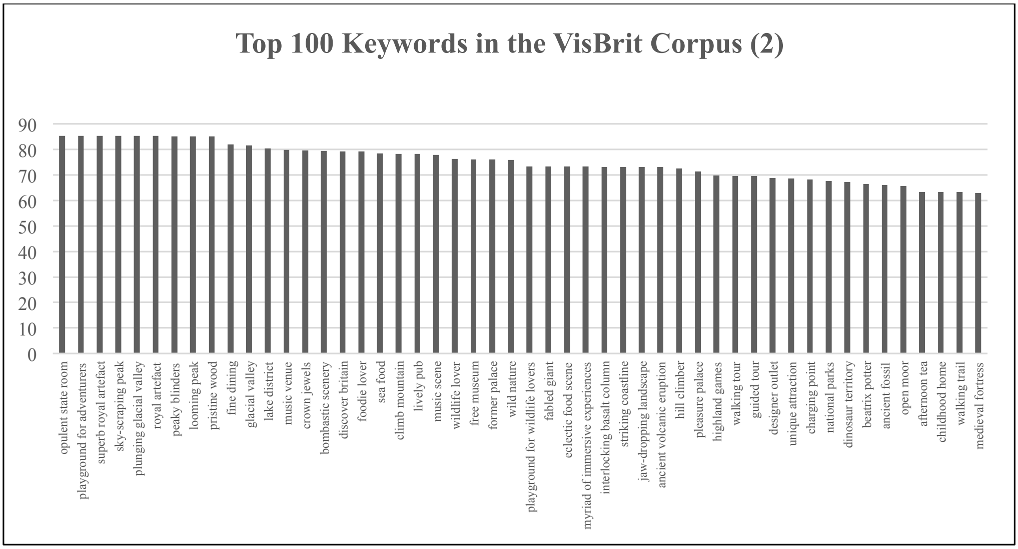


Figure 2. Keyness Score of top 100 keywords in the *VisBrit Corpus* (continued)

in the reference corpus" (https://www.sketchengine.eu/documentation/simple-maths/). Specifically, this "method includes a variable which allows the user to focus on higher or lower frequency words" (Kilgarriff 2009: 1)[1].

Figures 1 and 2 show the top 100 keywords for the *VisBrit Corpus* based on their keyness score.

For the top 100 keywords, the keyness score starts relatively high (at 356,443) for the word "featured thing", followed by "unmissable destination" (at 349,616): both terms seem to be employed as promotional linguistic devices to draw tourists' attention and encourage them to read further in order to understand why the locations promoted are featured or unmissable. Occurrences of collocations such as "featured thing" were manually checked to verify whether such terms refer to tourism discourse or to website language in general. Looking further down the list, the focus is addressed to more specific lexical items that regard particular topics that will be explained in detail in the next sections, such as attractions linked to food ("food festival", "diverse cuisine", "foodie lover"), nature ("green spaces", "lush rolling pasture", "wild landscape"), entertainment ("live music", "theatre show"), just to mention a few.

Figures 3 and 4 show the Sketch Engine overall keyness of the top 100 keywords for the *VisUSA Corpus*.

The terms that are ranked in the top positions in the *VisUSA Corpus* seem to immediately provide a clear picture of the persuasive strategies adopted on the website. Terms such as "scenic byway", "scenic drive", and "natural beauty" emphasize the post-Covid tourists' interest in enjoying the natural landscape as well as outdoor activities ("outdoor adventure", "hiking trail", "horseback riding"), while terms such as "historic

[1] Practical examples of how the score is calculated can be found here: https://www.sketchengine.eu/documentation/simple-maths/.

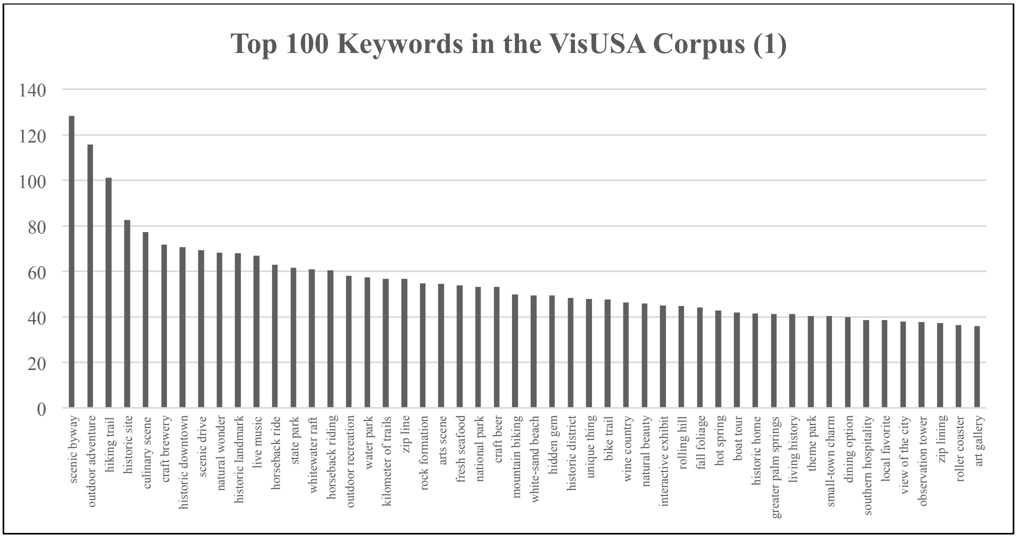


Figure 3. Keyness Score of top 100 keywords in the *VisUSA Corpus*

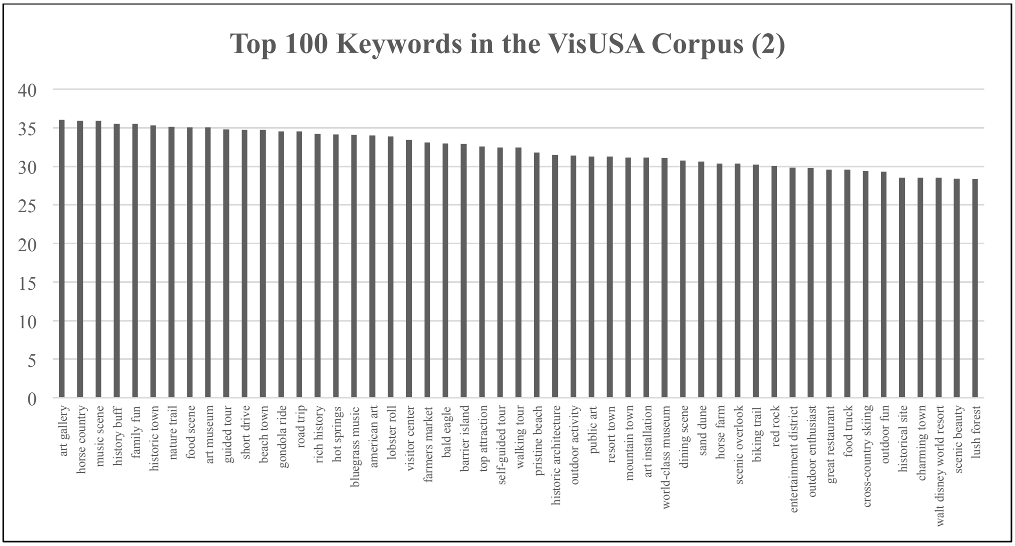


Figure 4. Keyness Score of top 100 keywords in the *VisUSA Corpus* (continued)

site" and "historic landmark" underline the need to protect the cultural heritage in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of tourism. A quick glance at the list also seems to support the idea that the *VisitTheUSA* website is aiming at providing food and beverage experiences, which "are an important travel motivator in tourists' decision-making process" (Knollenberg *et al.* 2021: 379).

The overall keyness of the top 100 keywords in the *IT Corpus* is illustrated in Figures 5 and 6.

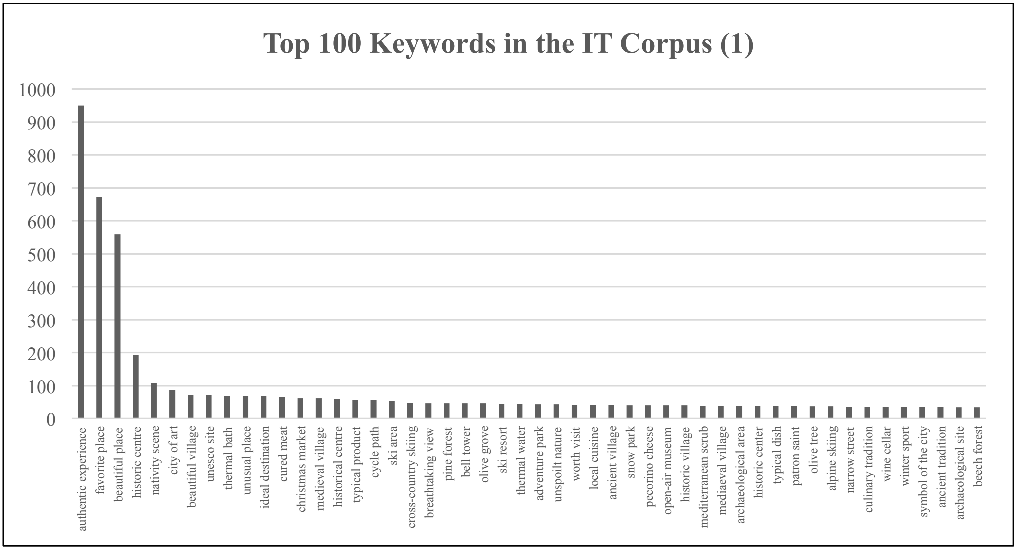


Figure 5. Keyness Score of top 100 keywords in the *IT Corpus*

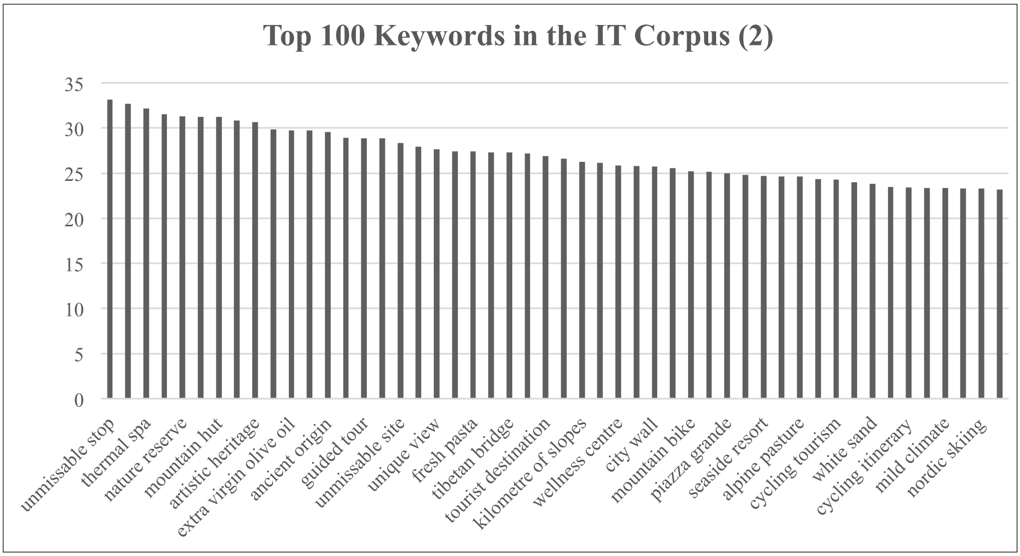


Figure 6. Keyness Score of top 100 keywords in the *IT Corpus* (continued)

Interestingly enough, the *IT Corpus* employs various descriptive multiword expressions that aim at describing the location and making it attractive in tourists' eyes (e.g. "beautiful place", "ideal place", "perfect place"); these versatile multipurpose adjectives are frequent in tourism discourse and can be used in almost any situation to arouse a positive feeling in the tourist.

Food and wine are notably one of the driving forces behind Italian tourism, with an estimated one out of four tourists who come to Italy choosing to do so because of food and wine (*Visititaly* 2023*)*, which may be why many top terms are related to food and events linked to food and wine, for example, "cured meat", "local cuisine", "pecorino cheese", "wine route".

Although there are clearly differences in the keyword lists illustrated above, the three corpora under investigation seem to have common recurring topics, such as outdoor activities, cultural heritage in its various forms, as well as an interest in natural aspects; however, an in-depth investigation into the context is necessary before providing assumptions regarding the websites' intentions.

The next section illustrates how the keywords were analysed after defining the classification process.

4.2. *Semantic fields*

A classification process for the data was devised in order to analyse and refine the selection of keywords. Undoubtedly, the categorization of keywords is a fairly subjective process, as ideological and socio-cultural issues are often raised when categorizations are made and words are classified. An example of this is "bell tower" (*Italia.it*), which was classified under history, architecture and religion. For someone familiar with wine regions in the USA, the keyword "wine country" (*VisitTheUsa*) may bring to mind both food and drink as well as nature. Furthermore, as illustrated in these examples, some concepts often overlap, therefore many words can be assigned to more than one category. In order to identify the categories, an initial analysis was conducted by examining 10 concordance lines for each of the top 100 keywords for each corpus in order to better understand the context that emerged from the data. The keywords were then grouped into the following categories: 'Arts & Culture', 'Nature', 'Technology', 'Health' and 'Multipurpose' (general descriptive terms). More specifically:

Arts & Culture includes lexical items related to cultural, historical, and religious heritage, architecture, visual arts such as paintings and sculptures, filmmaking and literature, as well as sports and other outdoor activities, and entertainment in general, including performing arts and amusement parks. Arts & Culture also embraces food and drink, and tourism services such as tours and homestays.

Nature refers to nature-based attractions such as national parks, beaches, flora and fauna, mountains, seas and oceans as well as nature-based activities such as trekking.

Health includes terms related to well-being/health treatments such as thermal baths.

Multipurpose terms include lexical items, usually adjective + noun, which are used in reference to a variety of attractions.

Each of these categories is considered a dominant theme by itself with references to other subthemes.

Table 1 provides a representative overview of the five themes through keyword groupings. The total number of categorizations for each corpus does not add up to 100 for the reasons outlined above.

As can be seen in the Table, the category with the most items for all three corpora is 'Arts & Culture', which is not surprising given that, unlike the other categories, it comprises a wide range of subcategories. Within this category some similarities and

CATEGORIES	***CORPORA***		
	VISBRIT	***VISUSA***	***IT***
ARTS &CULTURE	**90**	**107**	**108**
Architecture	13	10	17
Entertainment	12	14	1
Food & Drinks	13	12	13
History	18	12	20
Literature	1	---	---
Museums & galleries	9	10	5
Outdoor activities	18	47	38
Religion	---	---	4
Shopping	1	---	3
Tourism services	3	2	4
UNESCO heritage sites	2	---	3
NATURE	**35**	**33**	**35**
TECHNOLOGY	**---**	---	**1**
MULTIPURPOSE	**5**	**8**	**18**
HEALTH	**---**	**1**	**5**

Table 1. Semantic fields of the keywords identified in the *VisBrit*, *VisUSA* and *IT Corpora*

differences can be noted among the three corpora. All three websites appear to dedicate similar attention to terms related to food and drinks; indeed, this category is known to be attractive the vast majority of people. References to history are more prevalent in the UK and Italian websites compared to the USA, which may be explained by their longer histories. The number of occurrences relating to ‘museums and galleries’ is similar for VisitBritain and VisitTheUSA, but lower for Italy. Another difference can be seen in ‘outdoor activities’, where the US and Italian websites appear to put more focus on them than the UK website. These findings appear to support the marketing strategies employed by the institutional boards. For instance, among the highlights on the Italian website, museums are found at the bottom of the page as opposed to what can be found on the other two websites, perhaps in an attempt to focus on the less-known attractions of the Italian tourist industry. Reference to ‘religion’ is only found in the Italian corpus, while ‘literature’ appears only in the top 100 UK keywords. ‘Shopping’ has very few references in all three corpora as do tourism services. Reference to UNESCO heritage sites is found in both the UK and Italian websites, but not in the top 100 US keywords.

It is interesting to see that all three websites place great importance on the natural world, which reflects the attention that tourists place on nature and the search for a break from hectic urban life. Quite surprisingly, there is little or no reference to ‘technology’ or ‘health’. In fact, considering the health-related issues linked to the lockdown period and the ensuing increase in the use of technology which has since continued, one would have expected to see more reference to both of these categories. Finally, turning to the 'multipurpose terms', the Italian corpus has more occurrences compared to both the UK and the US corpora.

5. Results and discussion

The findings of the investigation of the three tourism boards appear to be line with the "Global guidelines to restart Tourism" (UNWTO 2020), which, among the various recommendations, include the creation of campaigns to incentivize the domestic market and the promotion of new products and experiences targeted at individual and small groups of travellers, including special interest, nature, rural tourism, gastronomy and wine, and sports. Indeed, the keywords and expressions chosen for the various campaigns invite tourists to experience things from a fresh perspective.

In particular, the three corpora aim at showcasing fresh and exciting experiences, focusing on renowned heritage, contemporary culture and an innovative food and drink scene as well as the call to the wild, as the following excerpts exemplify:

1. "Discover **epic trails**, rivers to kayak, castles to conquer and wild woods to explore." (*VisBrit Corpus*)
2. "A **quirky seaside city** filled with diverse cuisine, vintage shopping and **adrenaline fuelled adventure**." (*VisBrit Corpus*)
3. "Step into a land of castles, world-renowned rugby and a **whole host of myths and legends**." (*VisBrit Corpus*).
4. "Imagine this landscape as the pioneers saw it at the American West Heritage Center, a 65-hectare outdoor **living history** museum. Experience the Old West hands-on and learn about mountain men, farmers and adventurers." (*VisUSA Corpus*)
5. "Visit perennial Florida […] to discover natural treasures, first-rate cultural attractions and **hidden gems**." (*VisUSA Corpus*)
6. "**Unusual places** in Molise: 3 destinations for curious visitors. Intrigued by destinations off the beaten tourist track? We recommend searching for the "tratturi", ancient beaten-grass sheep tracks along which shepherds, from pre-Roman times until a couple of centuries ago, would move their flocks each […]" (*IT Corpus*)

There are also interesting examples in which the text writers focus on the association between tourism and relevant motivations, such as curiosity, discovery, and adventure. This finding seems to lend weight to other studies (e.g. Ciasullo *et al.* 2019; Petousi *et al.* 2023) which have shown "that curiosity represents the starting point of the potential tourist's decision-making process. Curiosity directly and strongly influences a visitor's attitude towards a destination, the individual's response to the holistic destination attributes, and the willingness to recommend or revisit other places" (Petousi *et al.* 2023). Indeed, the idea outlined by the three websites is to promote exciting experiences that are able to revive interest in the country's tourism offer.

Moreover, the language employed in the corpora highlights current trends in sustainable tourism, both in hospitality and recreational activities, in an attempt to attract those tourists willing to travel more sustainably and who have probably changed their behaviours and habits significantly motivated by the aftermath of the pandemic

(Gómez-Prado *et al*. 2023). It is therefore no surprise that, among the top frequent multi-word terms, there is a predominance of words related to sustainability motivation, as the following examples show:

1. "Why we love the Scottish Islands? **Jaw-dropping landscapes**, big open skies, friendly communities all wrapped in lashings of legend – the wilds of the Scottish Islands will stay with you forever." (*VisBrit Corpus*)
2. "With sweeping backcountry beauty, endless outdoor opportunities and plenty of **small-town charm**, Northwest Montana's Kootenai Country is a dream destination for adventure seekers." (*VisUSA Corpus*)
3. "Red Rocks Park & Amphitheatre is a **local favorite** for hiking amid the giant boulders, but Red Rocks is even more beloved for its legendary concerts in the only naturally formed, acoustically ideal venue in the world." (*VisUSA Corpus*)
4. "Green hills and picturesque coastlines, cities of art and medieval villages, parks and **nature reserves**, to be explored on foot or by bicycle." (*IT Corpus*)
5. "Angel's Flight, one of the most **attractive zip lines** in Italy. An adrenaline-filled adventure, from the heights of unspoilt nature." (*IT Corpus*)

Participation in outdoor activities has significantly increased since 2020 due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The text writers focus on accessible activities that are enjoyed outdoors, such as hiking, nature trails, horseback riding, revealing a form of personalization in communication. Indeed, the promotional messages seem to establish a direct contact with tourists, showing greater closeness to the clients and their needs, as illustrated in the following corpus extracts:

1. "Step into nature with tufty-haired ponies, wild countryside and a labyrinth of bike trails. The Cairngorms is a playground for wildlife lovers, **hill climbers**, thrill seekers and more." (*VisBrit Corpus*)
2. "With its tranquil **walking trails** and 1,000-year-old 'Major Oak' tree, this historic forest is a joy to explore." (*VisBrit Corpus*)
3. "Satisfy a Yearning for **Outdoor Adventure**? Start exploring Big Sky Country at Swords Rimrock Park, where trails leading to the river cliffs offer mountain views and **picturesque historic sites** including Skeleton Cliff and Boothill Cemetery." (*VisUSA Corpus*)
4. "Bozeman's proximity to several mountains, forests and lakes means visitors have **outdoor adventures** galore. […] Mountain climbing, hiking, fishing the lakes and exploring plateaus, basins, canyons and valleys are all recreational options here […]" (*VisUSA Corpus*)
5. "Lush lands, silent slopes and **breathtaking views** make the Veneto Dolomites the ideal destination for **cycling enthusiasts**. So, if you're like us, and holidays and relaxation are synonymous with two wheels, we recommend a cycle tour – you can thank us later!" (*IT Corpus*)
6. "Huge enjoyment and a broad range of well-organized services and facilities for all winter sports: 20 km of downhill slopes and much the same for **cross-country skiing**, not to mention sledding, ice skating, snowshoe excursions […] Do you like flying? Here, you can thrill yourself with kite-drawn snowboard." (*IT Corpus*)

Nowadays, "tourists are increasingly interested in sustainable tourism, which takes into consideration cultural, environmental and social development" (Tanković and Mušanović 2022: 1). This tendency is clearly present in all three official tourism boards, where sustainability communication aimed at informing, engaging and motivating stakeholders regarding the sustainability actions of a destination is used (*ibid.*).

As mentioned previously, tourism researchers are exploring the current tourism trends in response to increasing consumer actions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, if on the one hand those patterns that were expected to arise as a response to the Coronavirus pandemic are not particularly evident in the corpora, such as a focus on new technologies in tourism or on health and safety indications, other trends connected to the pandemic are in fact present. For instance, some trends that may at first seem dictated by more general shifts in customer behaviour can also be related to some extent to the effects of Covid-19, e.g. the interest in local organic food and drinks, sustainability, and heritage and iconic city attractions which are far removed from mass tourism. Examples include reference to Pesaro and Urbino in Italy, Brighton and Colchester in the UK, and Boise, Idaho in the USA.

One stage of the analysis involved discourse analysis, in an attempt to understand words as "mediated cultural products which are part of wider systems of knowledge" (Hannam and Knox 2005: 23). Therefore, the analysis focused on language use above the sentence level: in other words, language in context. For this reason, some keywords in the dominant semantic fields were also further examined in their specific contexts to demonstrate the ways certain themes are constructed. The discursive strategies were exposed through the analysis of concordance and co-texts.

The most dominant theme present in all three corpora is 'nature', which shows how the tourism industry worldwide is continuing to invest in nature tourism in an effort to meet the requests of sustainability-conscious consumers. In particular, the keywords that are related to this category are "national park" in the *VisBrit Corpus,* "national park" and "state park" in the *VisUSA Corpus* and "natural park" and **"**snow park" in the *IT Corpus*. Indeed, nature-based tourism has grown steadily and become the most rapidly expanding sector within tourism worldwide, with a focus on outdoor recreation (Bell *et al.* 2007; Balmford *et al.* 2009; CBI 2020; World Bank 2020). Recent research (see Templeton *et al.* 2021; Monaco and Marotta 2022) shows that not only have national parks seen record numbers of visitors in the post-lockdown era globally, but also that, whereas in the pre-Covid era national parks depended heavily on international travellers, in the post-lockdown period there has been an increase in domestic tourists. This datum is in line with the most recent literature on post-Covid tourism, as reported by the UNWTO (2021), where domestic tourism showed positive signs in many markets after 2020 as people tended to travel closer to home, not only because of travel restrictions, but also because of people's lower inclination to travel abroad during the pandemic. The following excerpts from the corpora coincide with the tourism trends focusing more on increased awareness of environmental sustainability and landscape, heritage preservation, and outdoor activities, all features that people missed during Covid, as exemplified by other studies (Orîndaru *et al.* 2021, Skryl and Gregoric 2022). Moreover, there is a presence of sustainability narratives, such as "travel like a local", and "simple pleasures", which recall the new tourism models which prioritize sustainable-led actions. However, the 'new' always recalls the need to return to the past: throughout the corpora there is a sense of nostalgia as proposed by Dann (1996):

1. "the **national park** boundary loops from the border with England, deep into South Wales, and encircles four vast mountain ranges. Here, simple pleasures are paramount: wildflower-strewn trails, country pubs with log fires, and dark skies full of stars." (*VisBrit Corpus*)

2. "Rugged yet beautiful, wild yet welcoming – the North York Moors **National Park** is full of surprises. […] it's bursting with bombastic scenery. Historical hot property – evident in its castles, citadels and 2,000-year-old Hadrian's Wall. Travel like a local: step into nature with tufty-haired ponies, wild countryside." (*VisBrit Corpus*)

3. "[…] stopping for a hike and picnic amid redwoods at Limekiln **State Park** or enjoy the simple pleasure of a stroll on tranquil Pfeiffer Beach. Keep an eye out for soaring California condors and humpback whales offshore." (*VisUSA Corpus*)

4. "Natural works of art beckoning to be explored. Among nearly 1.5 million visitors a year, adventure sports enthusiasts rappel through the canyons at Arches **National Park** while more sedate nature lovers admire the vistas and vegetation […]" (*VisUSA Corpus*)

5. "[…] while Bryce Canyon **National Park** in Utah is home to hiking trails, hoodoo rock formations and spectacular stargazing tours. Visitors can also immerse themselves in all the USA's natural wonders by camping under the stars. **National** and **state parks** feature campgrounds of all sizes, each with their own set of social distancing guidelines." (*VisUSA Corpus*)

6. "[…] inside the Regional **Natural Park** of Portofino, in the scent of the Mediterranean scrub: panoramic and not very demanding, this wonderful hiking trail starts from the seaside village of Camogli and arrives in Portofino […] (*IT Corpus*)

7. "[…] if you want to tackle it, abandon any ambitions of a hard-core cyclist and step into the shoes of an explorer. Every now and then get off the saddle and let yourself be charmed by a church, get lost on the trail of a **natural park**, in a fishing village. You won't regret it." (*IT Corpus*)

Another dominant subcategory is 'food and drinks', which is not surprising since gastronomic tourism is a growing area in the tourism hospitality, marketing, and regional development field (Dixit and Prayag 2022). Among tourist and gastronomic promotion events, gastronomic festivals have become an increasingly popular alternative. A food festival is an event that highlights the region or local specialty food or food-related activities and programs linked to a growing awareness of the need for more sustainable food production and culinary systems (e.g. Gössling and Hall 2013; Hall 2020). During lockdown there was a huge interest in 'buying local' or 'growing your own', considered as ways of consuming more sustainably (Schoolman 2020). Knowing where and how one's food is grown is seen as mitigating those concerns associated with global food systems and this need can also be met through food tourism (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen 2019; Everett and Aitchison 2008).

Throughout the corpora, there are various keywords associated to the 'food and drinks' subcategory, such as "food festival", "local food", "farmers' market", "culinary tradition". As the following extracts from the corpora show, the communicative and persuasive strategies adopted on the three websites focus on two main roles played by food, more specifically (i) as a cultural experience of local foodways; (ii) of food within the culture, lifestyle and environment of a community, so that one may "taste place" (Hill and Fountain 2021):

1. "[…] immerse yourself in **local food** and culture, look to the region's vibrant festivals[…]" (*VisBrit Corpus*)
2. "[…] foodie's dream. Bursting with flavour, Brighton comes alive with its **local food** and produce. Head out onto the streets of the city to discover the tastes that make up its fashionable food and drink scene." (*VisBrit Corpus*)
3. "[…] the culinary movement begins at the **farmers' markets**. Menus are created in harmony with the seasons to highlight locally grown items at their peak." (*VisUSA Corpus*)
4. "[…] if you ask where to find the best **local food** and drinks in the Willamette Valley, don't be surprised if you get something more like a dissertation than a recommendation. "Local" is taken seriously here." (*VisUSA Corpus*)
5. "[…] cycling through historic villages, castles and characteristic geological rock formations hosting a rich biodiversity, discovering excellent **local food** and wine, with the chance to enjoy tastings on site." (*IT Corpus*)
6. "Finally, let yourself be tempted by the flavours of the **local cuisine**, genuine and simple, like the people who live here, in typical ancient villages, far from commonplaces." (*IT Corpus*)
7. "Aquileia's **typical dishes** have roots in the broader Friulian food and wine culture, with specialities influenced first by the ancient Romans and then by the Habsburg Empire. Herring with vegetables is a delicacy worth trying, which is served with warm polenta." (*IT Corpus*)

Looking at the least dominant categories, it is worth noticing that there is only one keyword that has been assigned to the 'technology' category, namely "digital nomad", and it appears only in one corpus, the *IT Corpus*. According to the Macmillan Dictionary, a digital nomad is "someone who uses technology, especially a laptop and a wireless network, to work remotely from anywhere in the world". Digital nomading existed long before Covid-19, but with the pandemic remote work has become both more feasible and popular. Unexpectedly, the USA and UK websites do not promote any tourism services for digital nomads, while the Italian website adopts the ego-targeting technique (Dann 1996) to address digital nomads directly and draw their attention to how perfect their stay could be in some Italian regions:

1. "This is one of the reasons why **digital nomads** often opt for Southern Italy and the Italian Islands, where you can get more favourable temperatures throughout the year, a lower cost of living than in other parts of Italy and the ability to travel effortlessly from the sea to the mountains." (*IT Corpus*)
2. "Friuli-Venezia Giulia presents itself as an ideal destination for Italian **digital nomads**, and also to foreigners, who want to discover unique regions, full of attractions and opportunities. Not to mention where the quality of life is very high." (*IT Corpus*)

3. “Brindisi is the world hub for **digital nomads** in Italy. Working by the sea is a dream of many people: if you are not bound by office hours, Apulia could be your perfect destination. If you have ever considered living and working in Brindisi, this could be the right time.” (*IT Corpus*)

Another semantic field which is not at all frequent is ‘health’; in fact, there is no direct reference to health issues related to Covid-19 on any of the three websites, while the *VisUSA Corpus* and *IT Corpus* do refer to travelling for wellness purposes, specifically to hot springs and thermal baths: “Hot spring tourism literally refers to people participating in travel mainly for soaking in the thermal/mineral springs and undertaking a related series of leisure activities. In general, hot spring tourism is labeled “SPA tourism” as a broader definition that is agreed on by most scholars” (Huang *et al*. 2022: 3).

However, there is a difference between the two corpora that refer to health, namely on the USA website springs are promoted as just another natural attraction to enjoy, among the many others without giving details about their benefits, while the Italian website focuses more in depth on the beneficial effects, with a focus on the beauty of the natural environment:

1. “After a thrilling bike ride, paddling adventure or mountain climb, a visit to Carson **Hot Springs**, a natural attraction since 1849, is the cure.” (*VisUSA Corpus*)
2. “Within the 22-square-kilometer park, you can experience the **hot springs** for yourself with a spa day along Bathhouse Row at the heart of the park. Or, for a memorable view of Hot Springs, put on your hiking shoes and follow the West Mountain Trail for panoramic vistas.” (*VisUSA Corpus*)
3. “[…] a spa where you can pamper yourself, and above all the wonderful thermal park: 600 square metres pf pools, surrounded by the natural beauty of Tuscia. The strength of these outdoor **thermal baths** is that the beneficial effects of the waters are combined with the relaxing healing powers of nature […]” (*IT Corpus*)
4. “The island of Vulcano has a wild, rugged nature. It has been known since ancient times for its therapeutic **thermal springs** and mud baths, making it a popular destination for relaxing holidays. […] the Great Fossa Crater is a truly unmissable attraction.” (*IT Corpus*)

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand to what extent official tourism websites of three countries considered as top tourism destinations (the UK, the USA and Italy) take into consideration the new tourism trends arising as a consequence of the global pandemic. Moreover, the research also intended to highlight the discursive and linguistic strategies put into practice by the official tourism boards. The findings lend weight to previous research which argues that the tourism sector is slowly bouncing back by diversifying products and markets, and promoting mainly domestic and regional tourism, as well as depending heavily on sustainability and related activities in an attempt to reallocate tourists to new destinations to tackle issues of over-tourism. The patterns seem to be the same in all three corpora with some slight differences which are not, however, mainstream. The results also underline the need or the desire to return to a 'normal' life: therefore, all three tourism boards lack direct references to Covid or any particular restrictions. Moreover, there is a wide range of strategies of tourism discourse illustrated by Dann (1996), namely ego-targeting, nostalgia, and nature. The new patterns concern the desire to discover a new side of tourism.

Although the study can contribute to the increasing literature on the promotion of tourism trends in the post-Covid era, there are some limitations. Due to space constraints, not all categories have been illustrated and explained in detail, which can lead to an overgeneralization of the assumptions made in this study. The research was conducted on three nations that are diverse in terms of the kind of tourism they provide, thus a true comparative analysis needs to take into consideration a more in-depth socio-cultural investigation.

Further research might include a cross-cultural analysis of European countries to understand to what extent countries are following the general guidelines enlisted by the European Parliament in order to attract regional and domestic tourism considered in a wider sense, as European citizens.

References

Abbas A., D. Ekowati, F. Shuairidi, R.M. Fenitra and M. Fahlevi 2022. Integrating cycle of Prochaska and DiClemente with ethically responsible behavior theory for social change management: post Covid-19 social cognitive perspective for change. In A. Pego (ed.), *Challenges and Emerging Strategies for Global Networking Post COVID-19*. Hershey: IGI Global: 130-155.

Assaf A. and R. Scuderi 2020. COVID-19 and the recovery of the tourism industry. *Tourism Economics* 26/5: 731-733.

Baker P. 2006. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum.

Balmford A., J. Beresford, J. Green, R. Naidoo, M. Walpole and A. Manica 2009. A global perspective on trends in nature-based tourism. *PLoS Biol*. 7.

Bell S., L. Tyrväinen, T. Sievänen, U. Pröbstl and M. Simpson 2007. Outdoor recreation and nature tourism: a European perspective. *Living Rev. Landsc.* Res. 1/2.

Björk P. and H. Kauppinen-Räisänen 2019. Destination foodscape: a stage for travelers' food experience. *Tourism Management* 71: 466-475.

CBI 2022. The European market potential for nature and eco-tourism. Available at: https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/nature-tourism/nature-eco-tourism/market-potential.

Celce-Murcia M. and E. Olshtain 2001. *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ciasullo M.V., R. Tommasetti, O. Troisi and M. Vesci 2019. Curiosity as Brazilian tourist motivation in visiting Europe. *Rev. Bras. Pesqui. Tur*. 13: 140-160.

Čuić Tanković A. and J. Mušanović 2022. Exploring direct and indirect effects of sustainability communication on destination reputation. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 25. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212571X22000415.

Dann G. 1996. *Language of Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Wallingford, UK: CABI Publishing.

Dixit S.K. and G. Prayag 2022. Gastronomic tourism experiences and experiential marketing. *Tourism Recreation Research* 47/3: 217-220.

Dube K., G. Nhamo and D. Chikodzi 2021. COVID-19 pandemic and prospects for recovery of the global aviation industry. *Journal of Air Transport Management* 92/c. Available at https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeejaitra/v_3a92_3ay_3a2021_3ai_3ac_3as0969699721000053.htm.

Everett S. and C. Aitchison 2008. The role of food tourism in sustaining regional identity: a case study of Cornwall, South West England. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 16: 150-167.

Gómez-Prado R., A. Alvarez-Risco, J. Sánchez-Palomino, M.M. Anderson-Seminario and S. Del-Aguila-Arcentales 2023. Current trends in sustainable tourism, hospitality, and recreation. In A. Alvarez-Risco, M.A. Rose and S. Del-Aguila-Arcentales (eds), *Sustainable Management in COVID-19 Times (Advanced Series in Management*, Vol. 30). Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited: 65-80.

Gössling S. and C. Hall 2013. *Sustainable Culinary Systems. Local Foods, Innovation, and Tourism & Hospitality*. London: Routledge.

Hall C. 2020. Biological invasion, biosecurity, tourism, and globalisation. In D. Timothy (ed.), *Handbook of Globalisation and Tourism*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar: 114-125.

Hannam K. and D. Knox 2005. Discourse analysis in tourism research: a critical perspective. *Tourism Recreation Research* 30/2: 23-30.

Hill R. and J. Fountain 2021. Expressing sense of place and terroir through wine tourism encounters: antipodal reflections from France and New Zealand. In S. Charters, M. Demossier, J. Dutton, G. Harding, D. Marks, J. Smith Maguire and T. Unwin (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Wine and Culture*. London: Routledge. Available at https://researcharchive.lincoln.ac.nz/items/4737947e-75ed-4ca0-a452-f89f1658ea7a.

Hoyos-Estrada S. and J. Sastoque-Gómez 2020. Marketing digital Como oportunidad de digitalización de las PYMES en Colombia en Tiempo del Covid-19. *Revista Científica Anfibios* 3/1: 39-46.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2021. How to save travel and tourism in a post pandemic world. Available at: https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/02/24/na022521-how-to-save-travel-and-tourism-in-a-post-pandemic-world.

Huang X., Y. Zhang and C. Li 2022. Assessing the compensatory potentiality of hot spring tourism in the COVID-19 post-pandemic environment. *Sustainability* 14/14: 1-19.

Ketter E. and E. Avraham 2021. #StayHome today so we can #TravelTomorrow: tourism destinations' digital marketing strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 38/8: 819-832.

Kilgarriff A., P. Rychly, P. Smrz and D. Tugwell 2004. Sketch Engine. In *Proceedings of the 11th EURALEX International Congress*: 105-116.

Kilgarriff A. 2009. Simple maths for keywords. In M. Mahlberg, V. González-Díaz and C. Smith (eds.), *Proceedings of Corpus Linguistics Conference CL2009*. University of Liverpool, UK.

Knollenberg W., L.N. Duffy, C. Kline and G. Kim 2021. Creating competitive advantage for food tourism destinations through food and beverage experiences. *Tourism Planning & Development* 18/4: 379-397.

Monaco S. and I. Marotta 2022. Tourism in transition? The post-COVID tourist flows in the Vesuvius National Park. *Fuoriluogo* 12/2.

Orîndaru A., M-F. Popescu, A.P. Alexoaei, S-C. Căescu, M.S. Florescu and A-O. Orzan 2021. Tourism in a post-COVID-19 era: sustainable strategies for industry's recovery. *Sustainability* 13: 67-81.

Petousi D., A. Katifori, M. Boile, L. Kougioumtzian, C. Lougiakis, M. Roussou and Y. Ioannidis 2023. Revealing unknown aspects: sparking curiosity and engagement with a tourist destination through a 360-degree virtual tour. *Multimodal Technologies and Interaction* 7/51.

Report A9-0033 2021. REPORT on establishing an EU strategy for sustainable tourism. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0033_EN.html.

Schoolman E.D. 2020. Local food and civic engagement: do farmers who market local food feel more responsible for their communities? *Rural Sociology* 85/3: 806-839.

Skryl T.V. and M. Gregoric 2022. Tourism in the post-COVID age. In V.S. Osipov (ed.), *Post-COVID Economic Revival*, Volume II. London: Palgrave Macmillan: 8-15.

Streimikiene D. and E. Korneeva 2020. Economic impacts of innovations in tourism marketing. *Terra Economicus* 18/3: 182-193.

Tanković A.Č. and J. Mušanović 2022. Exploring direct and indirect effects of sustainability communication on destination reputation. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management* 25: 1-10.

Templeton A., K. Goonan and A. Fyall 2021. COVID-19 and its impact on visitation and management at US national parks. *International Hospitality Review* 35/2: 240-259.

UNWTO - World Tourism Organization. 2020. *Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism*. Available at: https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-05/UNWTO-Global-Guidelines-to-Restart-Tourism.pdf.

UNWTO - World Tourism Organization. 2021. *COVID-19 and Tourism 2020: A Year in Review*. Available at: https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-12/2020_Year_in_Review_0.pdf.

Vargas A. 2020. Covid-19 crisis: a new model of tourism governance for a new time. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 12: 691-699.

VisitBritain.org. 2022. *Visitbritain-launches-multi-million-pound-global-campaign-drive-inbound-tourism*. Available at: https://www.visitbritain.org/visitbritain-launches-multi-million-pound-global-campaign-drive-inbound-tourism.

World Bank 2023. Tools and resources for nature-based tourism. World Bank, Washington, DC. 2020. Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34433.

World Economic Forum 2020. Annual Report 2020-2021. Available at: https://www.weforum.org/reports/annual-report-2020-2021/.

Sitography

https://www.italia.it/en

https://www.macmillandictionary.com

https://www.visitbritain.com/en

https://www.visititaly.eu/

https://www.visititaly.eu/

https://www.visittheusa.com/

www.cor.europe.eu

www.sketchengine.co.uk

LIAISON INTERPRETING IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS: THE LEGAL INTERPRETER AT THE CROSSROADS

Fabiola Notari
(University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy)

Abstract

In the ever-growing and competitive global marketplace, companies must look for new ways to gain a competitive advantage. One of these ways is to negotiate provisions orally while drafting the contract *in istanti* with four hands. This practice – meant to foster trust, cooperation, and fair understanding – has made it imperative to seek collaboration with interpreters to navigate diverse laws, business practices, and above all, cultural differences. In this more nuanced, deeply interpersonal form of transaction, *liaison* interpreting in contract negotiations presents itself as a complex, challenging, and fruitful area of expertise. Yet, no previous study has explored this domain, whose originality for interpreters lies in that it combines two challenging aspects: the legal language of contracts with cooperative negotiation strategies in the business field. To address this gap, the study examines an authentic, interpreter-mediated meeting between German buyers and an Italian ceramic tile manufacturer. In this scenario, English serves as the lingua franca for the negotiation. Drawing on Wadensjö's (1998) framework for interpreting roles and renditions, along with Duranti's (2004) concept of Agency for related ethical and socio-cultural aspects, the interpreter's choices are ultimately evaluated from a purely unbiased and descriptive perspective within the cognitive-pragmatic framework of Relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986). Findings reveal that legal interpreters need to constantly redefine and reconsider their role in this "hybrid" setting (Bhatia and Nodoushan 2015), thus blurring the boundaries between the purist vision of the *impartial interpreter* tasked with addressing crucial legal matters, and the *involved cross-cultural mediator* engaged in renegotiating identities and meanings when mutually beneficial business outcomes are expected to be achieved. The paper concludes with suggestions for future research, emphasizing the need to abandon broad interpreting *clichés* in favour of defining *ad hoc* quality standards for this area of expertise lying at the crossroads between legal and business domains.

> Hybridity is a journey into the riddles of recognition […] The issue is not whether to be for or against hybridity; the debate concerns another question: Hybridity so what? What is the significance of hybridity? To take this further means to unpack hybridity in its varieties and to distinguish patterns of hybridity. Meanwhile the other side of this question is: boundaries so what?
>
> (Pieterse 2001: 220-224)

1. Introduction

In the ever-growing pace of competition in the international business arena (Helmold *et al*. 2022; Jones 2022), negotiating tailored agreements designed to foster trust, collaboration, and fair understanding is crucial if a company is to build and sustain a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Kickul and Lyons 2020; Maude 2020).

As part of this process, the asynchronous and impersonal technique of redlining [1], traditionally carried out via e-mail or fax (Jung and Krebs 2019), is now being actively implemented in buyer-seller face-to-face negotiations.

This emerging approach, in which contracts are drafted *in istanti* with four hands, represents not merely a procedural shift but a paradigmatic reconfiguration of business negotiation dynamics (Townley 2022). Echoing the time-honoured principle that relationships, even in business, primarily develop through human interaction, the use of collaborative negotiation strategies gains added significance in our interconnected global marketplace. This transformation brings with it an array of challenges that range from navigating linguistic barriers to reconciling diverse laws, standards, business practices, and broader cultural differences (Helmold e*t al*. 2020).

Drawing from the theory of "The Social Construction of Reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1966), we can gain deeper insights into this phenomenon. Specifically, this theory lends weight to the argument that 'reality' is not a fixed, objective entity, but is rather constructed and nurtured through the cumulative effects of individual and collective human interactions.

This sociological lens illuminates how differing perceptions of trust, legal obligations, and even the concept of 'deal' can be socially constructed during face-to-face international business contract negotiations. In this context, the traditional practice of redlining experiences a transformative evolution. Contractual norms are no longer merely applied in isolated, independent revision processes; instead, they are actively and collaboratively constructed through direct human interaction, reflecting the diverse traditions and practices that come into play.

Subsequently, the interpreter emerges as a crucial figure, functioning much like a bridge-builder, mediating not just language but also the unspoken assumptions and cultural underpinnings concerning what is fair, what is expected, and what is off-limits.

Importantly, this invisible framework does not solely impact the immediate deal but gradually evolves into a "social script" (Meng 2008), establishing a precedent and offering pragmatic guidance for future collaborations. Furthermore, this mutual comprehension can be instrumental in swiftly addressing potential conflicts, whether they manifest as legal disputes or cultural misunderstandings (Stallard 2001).

Delving into these complexities is operationally crucial and presents a fertile ground for scholarly investigation, particularly with the emergence of audioconferencing, videoconferencing, and telepresence technologies (Karl *et al*. 2022). These technologies have already become the new norm for business interactions in a post-pandemic world

[1] "The process of reviewing a contract, adding, modifying, or deleting contract language, and indicating where such changes to the contract have been made so that they are conspicuous to the other party" (Guth 2007: 94).

(Standaert *et al.* 2022) and may further extend their reach by facilitating practices once regarded as logistically challenging, such as real-time, collaborative contract drafting.

Obviously enough, these circumstances are expected to open up new opportunities and perspectives for professional interpreters worldwide, with companies seeking their assistance to build friendly long-term relationships and prevent costly disagreements. Yet, to the author's best knowledge, no previous study in Dialogue Interpreting (DI) has explored this area of expertise, whose originality for interpreters lies in that it combines two challenging aspects: the legal language of contracts with cooperative negotiation strategies in the business field [2].

1.1. *Defining the field of study*

Considering the paucity of research in the domain, the first challenge the practice of interpreting in contract negotiations still faces is that of its name, scope, and distinguishing features. In that respect, in this paper I propose to include the research subject at hand under the broader category of *liaison interpreting* (Gentile *et al.* 1996; Russo 2013; Smirnov 1997). The reasoning behind this rationale is multifaceted, encompassing both practical and strategic perspectives.

First, the French term *liaison* emphasizes the idea of *connecting* paths to improve mutual understanding and cooperation between the parties (Gentile *et al.* 1996). This aspect is obviously essential for success in international contract negotiations, where the transfer is not limited to the interlingual transposition of an existing contract but is embedded in a highly heterogeneous brokerage activity (Garrett 2005). Second, within the broader definition of DI, the term *liaison* allows for distinguishing smaller-scale private settings from public service interpreting in institutional contexts (i.e. courts, police stations, and healthcare services) (Hale 2011). Whereas in the latter, power asymmetries between primary participants are inherently easy to define (Pöchhacker 2016), in contract negotiations, the symmetry between business peers (Lee 2022) suggests multiple goals that may dynamically oscillate, even during the same meeting, between genuine collaboration and cut-throat antagonism along a cline from "cooperative and friendly" to "competitive and hostile" atmospheres (Morris *et al.* 1998: 362).

Specifically, as suggested by the analysis of authentic legal negotiations (Townley 2022), nothing is coincidental in this discursively complex arena. Parties active in the negotiation typically plan their goals carefully before the meeting. They identify the "target point" and the "resistance point" within a "zone of possible agreement" (ZOPA) where the "best alternative to a negotiated agreement" (BATNA) is the most advantageous alternative course of action a party can take if the negotiation as planned fails (Fisher *et al.* 1999) (see Appendix, Figure 1).

In this dynamic context, it emerges that the main challenge for interpreters lies in striking a fine balance. They need to be visible enough to facilitate communication

[2] The fairly rich body of research on DI has either considered legal interpreting in public service settings (see Erickson *et al*. 1978; Pokorn and Mikolič Južnič 2020; Roberts 2002; Skaaden 2019; Tipton and Furmanek 2016; Wodak-Engel 1984) or business negotiations *per se* (see Blinstrubaité 2000; Braun and Kohn 2012; Fatehi 2008; Krajewska 2021; Smirnov 1997; Xiang *et al*. 2020; Zheng and Xiang 2018), with contract language remaining firmly anchored within the privileged realm of legal translation (see Alcaraz and Hughes 2014; Engberg 2020; Gurduza 2019; Šarčević 1997).

while remaining unobtrusive enough not to alter a negotiation course that has been intricately charted in advance (Fatehi 2008; Forsyth 2009).

1.2. *Research hypothesis*

Given the foregoing, the impetus for the current research was to advance our understanding of how the intricacies surrounding the interpreter's role unfold in real-world contexts, in light of the concern that "we often simplify things for focusing on pure genres, whereas in real-life situations, genres are most often found in hybrid forms" (Bhatia and Nodoushan 2015: 124).

Extrapolating further, the research hypothesis posits that *liaison* interpreting in business contract negotiations necessitates a unique blend of interpreting strategies and sets of criteria, distinct from those employed in purely legal or business contexts. The allusion is to some good old-fashioned rules, which, if taken *per se,* would imply irreconcilable behavioural patterns on the part of the interpreter. On the one hand, the figure of the 'mitigator' (see Merlino 2009) tasked with smoothing things over in exploratory phases of business meetings; on the other, the catch-all expression of the 'conduit metaphor' (see Reddy 1993) in courtroom settings. However, just as imposing unintended face-saving behaviours (Goffman 1967) may alter the consensual resolution of a dispute on terms and degree of reciprocal concessions, the 'invisibility ideal' (see Martínez-Gómez 2015) may be incapable of addressing the active, intervening, and flexible role that interpreters play to promote mutual understanding, which is the necessary and sufficient condition for the parties to reach a real, lasting agreement.

This situation clearly calls for new and more nuanced ways of conceptualizing the role of legal interpreters in this "hybrid" (Bhatia and Nodoushan 2015) setting lying at the crossroads between legal and business domains.

1.3. *Research objectives*

Based on the author's professional experience, the article presents a case study centred around an authentic recorded meeting. The investigation focuses on an interpreter-mediated contract negotiation between German buyers and an Italian ceramic tile manufacturer, where English serves as the lingua franca for the negotiation.

The primary objective is to explore interpreting strategies from a purely unbiased and descriptive perspective within the cognitive-pragmatic approach of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986). This decision is motivated by the absence of specific codes of conduct or best practices to refer to, as well as the modest size of this first exploratory study, both of which suggest the need for caution in making strong conclusions and advancing formal prescriptive models.

Building upon this foundation, the overarching goal of this study is to provide initial insights into the uncharted territory of liaison interpreting in international business contract negotiations, serving as a stimulus for subsequent research and laying the groundwork for the development of more comprehensive ethical frameworks and training programs for interpreters.

Given the author's dual role as interpreter and researcher, extra caution has been exercised to enhance methodological rigour and minimize potential bias, which in turn ensures the study's validity and establishes a replicable model for future research in the field. Therefore, in pursuit of harmonizing objectivity with innovation, this study embraces a distinctive multi-dimensional analytical approach. This approach thoughtfully combines the reliability inherent in established models while simultaneously breaking through their traditional analytical confines to address the unique nuances of the field under scrutiny.

Accordingly, Wadensjö's (1998) Analytical Framework is utilized for the systematic categorization of interpreting renditions and roles. The rationale for selecting this framework is based on its widespread use in DI studies, ease of replication, and its potential to facilitate cross-field comparisons in upcoming research.

Subsequently, Duranti's (2004) Model of Agency is incorporated to delve deeper into the ethical and socio-cultural aspects of the interpreter's role. This refinement of the analysis is meant to assess how interpreters can demonstrate the capacity to exercise autonomy, make impactful decisions, and engage ethically across languages and cultures in the specialized domain under investigation.

Ultimately, this integrated framework, innovatively synthesizing and expanding upon established methodologies, may extend its utility beyond its current scope to various professional domains within DI studies. In an era characterized by increasing interdisciplinarity, the interplay of diverse cultural landscapes, and the rapid progression of artificial intelligence, the framework underscores the imperative to retain complexity in analysis. It challenges the idea of a limited or partial perspective on interpreters, advocating instead for a deep comprehension of their intricate function. Such an understanding is critical to prevent the oversimplification of complex intercultural interactions, ensuring that interpreters are recognized as indispensable, rather than replaceable, in navigating these multifaceted dynamics.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next Section delves into the core concepts of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986), setting the theoretical stage for the study. Section 3 rigorously outlines the methodology employed, which not only serves as a critical foundation but also guides the case study analysis detailed in Section 4. The paper concludes with final thoughts and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

Data discussed in Section 4 are interpreted in the light of Relevance Theory. Initially developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) as a theory of communication, it focuses on the dual nature of human communication as (i) ostensive behaviour and (ii) inferential process geared to the maximization of relevance. According to this cognitive-pragmatic approach, every act of ostensive stimulus to be effective must convey a presumption of its own "optimal relevance" identified as a positive trade-off between "contextual effect" and "processing effort" *(ibid.)*.

It now appears reasonable to argue that such principles may be applied to the interpreting process by viewing the act of interlingual transposition as an instance of "secondary communication" (Gutt 1990), where the concept of "relevance" emphasizes the need to *interpret* the original message by selecting those "communicative clues" (Gutt 1991) that most closely correspond to the requirements of the target situation.

This clearly presupposes that the idea of context cannot be reduced to a stable set of situational constraints but also incorporates a crucial cognitive dimension (Baker

2006) identifiable with the set of assumptions participants use in actual exchanges in interaction [3] (Mason 2006).

Ruling out the possibility of entertaining the notion of interpreters as "invisible pipe[s], with words entering in one language and exiting – completely unchanged – in another language" (Morris 1999: 6), this approach allows for a wide range of possibilities regarding the degree of involvement of the interpreter whose most difficult task is "to adjust one set of premises/assumptions to the set necessary for communication in a different linguistic/cultural environment" (Mason 2006: 361-362).

In this "clue-based interpretative use of language across language boundaries" (Zhonggang 2006: 48), the core relation between source discourse (SD) and target discourse (TD) may be well understood in terms of the graded notion of "interpretative *resemblance*" (Gutt 1990: 154 emphasis added), which, as suggested by its name, avoids the contentious and rigid concept of 'identity' (see Hostová 2017) and places the notions of "direct translation" and "indirect translation" (Gutt 1990: 154) on a *continuum*. While the former identifies renditions acting as interlingual quotations of the SD, the latter tackles the lesser or greater degree of changes the SD may undergo to become cognitively/pragmatically optimally relevant for the target audience [4].

Rather than reflecting a misguided attempt to echo the hackneyed and contested dichotomy between 'free' and 'literal' renderings (see Baker 1998), this theoretical approach provides the opportunity to fine-grain the analysis of interpreting choices on the basis of "the sharing of explicatures and implicatures" between SD and TD (Gutt 1998: 48). As such, it will be used in the case study that follows to complement existing taxonomies (Gavioli and Baraldi 2011; Mathis and Yule 1994; Wadensjö 1998) while expanding on the idea that assigning pre-defined and fixed roles to justify the interpreter's choices may lead to "problems of inconsistency" with roles always being "partially undefined" (Anderson 2002: 212) simultaneously "context-shaped" and "context-renewing" (Schegloff 1984). This contention may hold especially true in hybrid settings where, as it is posited, clichés typically associated with either of the fields embedded in the genre may need to be deconstructed, redefined, and critically stretched to address culturally diverse, interdisciplinary flexible, globalized scenarios.

Before delving into the case study, it may be well to answer in advance a possible objection: that the relevance-oriented approach in question could make a case for the 'anything goes' mentality, as long as communicative efficiency between the parties is achieved. However, as previously stated, the purpose of this study is not to prescribe specific interpreting strategies but to explore them in real-life professional contexts where the imperative for effective communication must align with ethical and social-cultural considerations.

[3] As the reader can observe, the principle of "optimal relevance" (Sperber and Wilson 1986) is not actually one followed by the interpreter, but one followed by the parties using the interpreter. Therefore, the interpreter's task is to consider the participants' evolving process of understanding, recognizing its dynamic nature and absence of rigid rules.

[4] This approach implies that the notion of 'fidelity' and 'faithfulness' (see Baker 1998) to the SD is not limited to instances of "direct translation", as it is also possible to consider instances of "indirect translations" (Gutt 1990) as equally faithful renderings of the SD, since the *tertium comparationis* for determining whether an interpreting strategy is effective, is "optimal relevance" (Sperber and Wilson 1986), which is achieved by maximizing contextual effects while minimizing processing efforts.

3. Methodology

3.1. *Data collection*

The primary data for the analysis was collected from a two-hour, face-to-face business negotiation the author took part in as a freelance interpreter. The meeting was partially audio-recorded with the consent of all participating parties. Post-negotiation written consent was acquired for academic use of the recording. Adhering to ethical guidelines, a non-disclosure agreement was implemented, and all personally identifiable information was anonymized before analysis.

3.2. *Context and participants*

The recorded negotiation occurred after a prior encounter on the preceding day, which was dedicated to welcoming the buyers and arranging a showroom visit. It included representatives from an Italian ceramic company and a German buyer interested in floor tiles for an architectural showroom in Hannover. The discussion framework comprised (i) the interpreter, (ii) an Italian sales manager with assistance from an Italian lawyer, and (iii) two German managers. The negotiation was conducted in English as a *lingua franca* to accommodate the multilingual participants. Overall, it followed a cooperative approach, with the Italian sales manager particularly keen on presenting advantageous offers to secure new customers through a win-win strategy.

3.3. *Data storage*

All audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored on a password-protected computer owned by the Italian lawyer engaged in the negotiation. Initially, these files were kept for final contract review, as evidence in case of renegotiations or alterations to the agreed-upon conditions, or in the event of unjustified abandonment during pre-contractual negotiations. Once the contract was definitively signed, or if there was no legal necessity to retain these files, they were scheduled for deletion. Access to these files was strictly limited to the researcher for the purposes of this academic study.

3.4. *Sampling strategy*

Excerpts from the recorded negotiation were selected for analysis using a dual-criteria approach. First, segments were chosen to ensure confidentiality, focusing on those containing minimal sensitive information or details that could be easily anonymized. Second, the analysis primarily focused on excerpts that prominently showcased the interpreter's strategies, thus omitting those entailing lengthy and tangential or off-topic discussions.

3.5. *Transcription*

The selected excerpts were initially transcribed using Express Scribe software to create a basic text. For a more in-depth analysis encompassing prosodic elements such as pauses and intonation, the open-source Praat software (Boersma and Weenink 2019) was utilized [5]. In the analysis (Section 4), the transcription conventions established by

[5] Although these prosodic features are included in the transcription for comprehension purposes, it is worth noting that they are not the primary focus of this study's analysis.

Jefferson (2004) were adhered to, as outlined in Table 1. Additionally, for the sake of clarity, an English translation accompanies each Italian turn in the conversation.

.	falling intonation
,	continuing intonation
?	rising intonation
[	the point at which speakers start to talk in overlap
=	no time lapses between the latched utterances
(number)	silence measured in seconds
(.)	a micropause – silence under 0.2 second
:	stretching of the preceding sound
CAPITAL	especially loud talk
>word<	compressed or rushed speech
hhh	exhalation
hh	inhalation

Table 1. Transcription conventions (adapted from Jefferson 2004)

3.6. *Research design and analytical framework*

The study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the linguistic and decision-making strategies employed by interpreters in international business contract negotiations. The research integrates two established frameworks: Wadensjö's (1998) Analytical Framework for rendition types and interpreter roles, and Duranti's (2004) Agency Framework.

Wadensjö's Analytical Framework

Rendition types, as displayed in Table 2, are divided into "close renditions", which closely adhere to the original utterance, and "divergent renditions" a broader category encompassing seven of the eight types that allow for various modifications to the original content. This analytical framework not only resonates with the concept of "interpretative resemblance" (Gutt 1990: 154), discussed in the theoretical framework (Section 2), but also provides practical categories that have demonstrated effectiveness in various specialized fields within DI studies. This suggests its suitability for application in an uncharted field, such as the one examined in this study.

As detailed in Table 3, Wadensjö's Analytical Framework categorizes interpreter roles into "reception" and "production", with the latter incorporating Goffman's (1981) framework. While it is true that Wadensjö's "reception format" complements Goffman's production format effectively[6], her categories of listener roles as "reporter", "recapitulator" and "responder" roles, seem to align more with speaker roles rather than with

[6] Specifically, Wadensjö (1998) suggests that an interpreter taking or being given a reporter's role in the reception format would be expected to speak only in the restricted sense of 'animator' of someone else's speech; by taking or being given a recapitulator's role, an interpreter would be expected to speak as both animator and author of the production format, whereas interpreters taking the role of responder would relate to their talk as animator, author and principal.

	Rendition Type	Description
Close Renditions	Close	A rendition that mimics the explicit content of the original.
	Expanded	Includes more explicitly expressed information than the original.
	Reduced	Includes fewer explicitly expressed pieces of information than the original.
	Substituted	A combination of expanded and reduced renditions.
	Summarized	Correspond to two or more preceding originals.
	Two-part	Conveys one original utterance into two or more renditions.
Divergent Renditions	Non-renditions	The interpreter's addition has no explicit correspondence in the source.
	Zero-renditions	Parts of the original left without translation.

Table 2. Rendition Types as defined by Wadensjö (1998)

traditional listener roles. Not dissimilarly, Wadensjö (1998: 91) clarifies that her listener roles denote "different *modes of listening* (and subsequently reacting)" and advocates that distinguishing different modes of listening would help "more thoroughly elucidate how individuals demonstrate their own opinions and attitudes concerning rights and responsibilities in interaction" (*ibid*.: 92).

Taking into account these observations, the current study adopts a more comprehensive approach by providing a holistic description of how these formats integrate into a unified perspective to define the roles of the "reporter", "recapitulator", and "responder", as described in the 'Description' section (Table 3). Accordingly, in the subsequent analysis (Section 4), exclusive emphasis is placed on the utilization of Wadensjö's terminology for enhanced readability, leaving its relationship with Goffman's (1981) model to be readily inferred from the provided table (Table 3).

Reception Format (Wadensjö 1998)		**Production Format** (Goffman 1981)	**Description**
Reporter	➔	Animator	Listens and memorizes recently spoken words by another speaker, akin to a "repeat-after-me" exercise. Is responsible for the physical action or verbal expression during the interaction, but the content and the structure of the message are not of their own creation as they originated from someone else or are attributed to someone else (i.e. animator).
Recapitulator	➔	Animator, Author	Re-establishes and summarizes what the previous speaker said. Ascribes the ultimate responsibility and authority behind their utterance to someone else (i.e. animator) but takes on and/or is ascribed responsibility for composing and organizing the utterance (i.e. author).

→

Responder	➛	Animator, Author, Principal	Introduces their own content, engages in two-way conversation, and uses non-verbal cues akin to direct interlocutors. Is simultaneously the animator (i.e. the utterer of the words) and the author of the utterance (i.e. creator of the structure of the message) and would be understood as carrying the responsibility and authority for what is said (i.e. principal, as does not ascribe to someone else the ultimate responsibility for what is said).

Table 3. Interpreter's relationship between reception format and production format (adapted from Wadensjö 1998

Duranti's Agency Framework

To delve deeper into the ethical and socio-cultural aspects of the interpreter's role, the study incorporates Duranti's (2004) Model of Agency. Within this model, "Ego-Affirming Agency" refers to entities that have "some degree of control over their behavior", while "Act-Constituting Agency" pertains to entities "whose actions in the world affect other entities" (*ibid*.: 453-454).

As a novel contribution, this study introduces a third dimension: 'Ethic-Defining Agency' which builds upon Duranti's (*ibid*.: 453) third, previously unnamed facet of agency, which he explicitly describes as "the property of those entities whose actions are the object of evaluation".

Table 4 adapts Duranti's (2004) Model of Agency for the context of this study. While agency is represented in a tripartite structure, it is essential to understand it as a unified, interdependent concept [7]. Throughout the case study, the analysis might occasionally focus on one subcategory of agency over the others for targeted scrutiny to examine their real-world flexibility [8] and adaptability. However, this focus does not undermine the ongoing relevance of the other dimensions, as outlined in Table 4. In essence, it is assumed that all dimensions are present and function in accordance with the principles provided in the same table, even if they are not explicitly analysed. This approach allows us to explore how individual dimensions of agency manifest in specific contexts while maintaining a comprehensive view of the overarching, integrated concept of agency.

[7] The term 'highly interdependent' signifies that each dimension of agency—Ego-Affirming, Act-Constituting, and Ethic-Defining Agency—are not isolated constructs but interact reciprocally. For example, an interpreter's decision to adopt a particular interpreting strategy (Act-Constituting) may be influenced by their sense of professional identity (Ego-Affirming), and, in turn, be subject to ethical scrutiny (Ethic-Defining). These dimensions, therefore, do not operate in isolation but are co-constitutive.

[8] 'Flexibility' is intended here as adaptability to various situational and contextual factors. For instance, 'Ego-Affirming Agency' could manifest in nuanced ways based on the expectations of specific stakeholders, the complexity of the discourse, or even the power dynamics at play. Similarly, 'Act-Constituting Agency' could range from having a direct, tangible impact on dialogues to serving a more background role of clarifying and facilitating communication. Finally, 'Ethic-Defining Agency' accommodates different ethical and legal considerations, which can also be context-dependent. In essence, the individual flexibility of each dimension allows for a tailored, context-sensitive approach, especially useful in hybrid settings that intersect various professional domains.

Category	Definition
Ego-Affirming Agency (Duranti 2004)	This agency type focuses on the interpreter as an active, conscious, independent, and deliberative agent who exercises control over their actions. It involves actions and decisions that warrant distinct recognition separate from that accorded to the contracting parties.
Act-Constituting Agency (Duranti 2004)	This agency type centres on the interpreter’s ability to make impactful decisions that go beyond influencing their actions alone. Interpreters, in this role, become co-constructors of the shared negotiation reality. They have the capacity to influence not only their own actions but also the negotiation environment and the negotiation process, affecting both semantic and pragmatic aspects of communication.
Ethic-Defining Agency	This agency type emphasizes unique ethical considerations intrinsic to the interpreter’s role. It acknowledges that, in contrast to the contracting parties, interpreters are subject to a separate set of expectations and responsibilities guided by ethical and professional standards. While interpreters actively influence the negotiation process, this role is constrained and guided by the need to maintain the autonomy of the contracting parties and the integrity of the transaction. The interpreter’s actions ensure that the final agreement faithfully embodies the intentions of the parties involved, distinguishing them as specialized agents within this complex dynamic.

Table 4. Categories of agency in liaison interpreting in business contract negotiations

4. Analysis

4.1. *Excerpt 1: “Basically they want to be sure…”: explicitation strategies, summary renditions, reported speech*

IL = Italian lawyer; ISM = Italian sales manager I = interpreter; GB = German buyers	
(1) IL:	Okay (.) >digli pure che quanto alla garanzia è assicurata l’assenza di vizi e difetti secondo l’articolo 1490< quei vizi che rendono i prodotti INIDONEI ALL’USO cui sono destinati o ne DIMINUISCONO in modo apprezzabile il valore (.) e poi la garanzia è esclusa DOPO la posa in opera o in caso di USO INCORRETTO da parte dell’acquirente *Okay, tell them, as far as the guarantee is concerned, that the absence of flaws and defects is guaranteed pursuant to Article 1490. Those flaws that render the products unsuitable for their intended use or significantly reduce their value. In addition, the warranty does not operate following the installation or in case of incorrect use attributable to the buyer.*
(2) I:	The warranty assures the BUYER that the products are free from flaws and defects pursuant to article 1490 of the ITALIAN CIVIL CODE (.) meaning those flaws which eh: make the products UNSUITABLE for their intended use or considerably DECREASE their value (0.1) warranty of any kind is also excluded in case of INCORRECT USE by the buyer and after the: INSTALLATION
(3) GB:	Ehm: but you fully guarantee that the goods match the samples right? something like a lack of conformity clause (.) to guarantee that wood effect we saw yesterday like ehm: real reclaimed WOOD as you called it with that ehm: embossed effect (.) that’s exactly what we’re looking for (.) no GLOSSY EFFECT that looks like >I mean< like fake marble (.) just that DARK >dark< tobacco colour with irregular brown strakes (.) it’s a matter of design you know (.) we don’t want trouble here

→

(4) I:	In pratica loro vogliono la certezza che riceveranno esattamente lo stesso materiale che hanno scelto ieri con- con sempre con lo stesso effetto legno >le venature la tonalità e la ruvidità tutto< (.) l'effetto tabacco scuro non il naturale (.) eccetera eccetera (.) fa tutto parte del design del loro showroom soprattutto NON VOGLIONO nessun effetto lucido che: sembri finto marmo quindi chiedono se garantite la conformità al campione tipo una clausola di confor[mità *Basically, they want to be sure that they will receive exactly the same material they chose yesterday, the same- the same wood effect, veining, tone and roughness … everything, the dark tobacco effect, not the natural one, etcetera etcetera. It's all part of the showroom's design, and they especially don't want any glossy effect that looks like fake marble, so they ask if you can guarantee that the products conform to the samples, kind of like a lack of conformity clause*

Table 5. Excerpt 1. *"Basically they want to be sure…"*: explicitation strategies, summary renditions, reported speech

The analysis of Excerpt 1 (Table 5) reveals several noteworthy features. In most instances, the roles of the impartial interpreter and the cross-cultural mediator do not appear to be mutually exclusive. Specifically, when dealing with critical legal matters, the interpreter's primary goal is to balance accurate renditions of the SD while also ensuring a smooth flow of conversation and cross-cultural understanding to prevent later disagreement (Al Nuaimi 2021).

From a cognitive-pragmatic perspective, achieving "optimal relevance" (Gutt 1991) in communication between the parties may encounter challenges, mainly due to the German buyers' lack of familiarity with the Italian private law norms that govern the contract[9].

As a result, in the interpreter's first rendition (2), the contextual assumption *Italian civil code*, which is implicated in the SD, is made explicit. This is achieved through an "expanded rendition" followed by the explanatory device *meaning* to provide clarification, hence positioning the interpreter as a "responder" (Wadensjö 1998).

These procedural and linguistic strategies enrich the content of the SD by reshaping a "weak implicature", that may not be readily accessible to the German buyers, into a relevant stimulus (Sperber and Wilson 1986). This approach can meet the cultural expectations of the German buyers, who typically regard exactness and transparency as part of the broader principle of fairness (Schroll-Machl 2016).

On a more comprehensive level, the use of this "expanded rendition" (Wadensjö 1998) illustrates the interpreter's efforts to address both practical and ethical challenges associated with her role. Despite being directly addressed by the Italian party (*tell them*) (1), the interpreter maintains neutrality precisely through proactive measures aimed at ensuring a constructive flow of conversation. This complexity adds depth to the concept of 'Ethic-Defining Agency', demonstrating a commitment to benefitting both

[9] General terms and conditions of purchase of goods and supply services in the ceramic district of Modena and Reggio Emilia typically designate Italian law as the applicable law, expressly excluding the Vienna Convention (see bibliography for website references). Notwithstanding variations in wording, conceptual consistency can be noticed, roughly expressed as follows: *These General Terms and Contracts shall be governed by and construed in accordance with Italian law. The United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods of 1980 (Vienna Convention) is expressly not applicable* (see bibliography for website references).

parties rather than solely serving the interests of the client who commissioned the interpreting services.

The interpreter's visibility in balancing legal accuracy and cross-cultural communication becomes more pronounced in the second intervention (4). Here, the interpreter chooses to play the role of a "recapitulator" and provides a "summarized rendition" (Wadensjö 1998) of the buyers' request *(they want to be sure that they will receive exactly the same material that they chose yesterday)*. In this way, only the most important details of their demand are conveyed (*the same wood-effect, veining, tone, and roughness...*), following the "communicative clue [10]" (Gutt 1991) *basically*, which is added by the interpreter in the TD.

Notably, in this abridged interpretation, the "zero-rendition" (Wadensjö 1998) of excluded elements is balanced by the inclusion of other "communicative clues" (Gutt 1991). These clues consist of discourse fillers (*everything),* and ellipses (*etcetera etcetera*) (4). They explicitly communicate to the Italian party that the German party referenced additional details, which are not present in the TD [11]. Overall, this strategy appears to be justified by the fact that the Italian sales manager can readily deduce from contextual assumptions the nature of these details, as he had previously described the tiles using the same terminology the day before, making him more knowledgeable about them than anyone else.

If we consider a fundamental aspect of human communication to be the cooperative effort in expressing and understanding intentions (Grice 1975), we can conclude that via this "summarized rendition" (Wadensjö 1998), the interpreter aims to report not only the 'informative intention' of the SD, which undergoes restructuring in the TD, but primarily its 'communicative intention' (i.e. the buyers' primary concern about receiving lower-quality goods).

In this specific case, the notion of "relevance" denotes tailoring the message for the Italian party, which is more likely to speak practically and less inclined to revisit previously agreed-upon issues. From this vantage point, it may be easier for them to recognize the importance of offering the counterparty not just a 'formal legal warranty' (*the warranty assures the buyer that the products are free from flaws and defects pursuant to Article 1490 of the Italian Civil Code*) (2) but also a 'warranty of trust'. In doing so, it may reassure the Germans that the Italian party is not attempting to 'muddy the waters' and exploit the ambiguity of legal terms (*flaws that render the products unsuitable for their intended use or significantly reduce their value)* (1) to reject any implicit warranty in the future.

Bridging diverse needs and aspirations, the interpreter takes on a role beyond being a mere linguistic conduit and becomes an entity exercising "Act-Constituting Agency"

[10] The term "communicative clue" refers to hints or signals within communication that "guide the audience to the interpretation intended by the communicator", emphasizing the significance of clues that facilitate the desired interpretation in communication (Gutt 1991:127).

[11] This observation both complements and enriches the perspective advanced by Gallai (2022), who underscores the critical importance of preserving discourse markers and other procedural devices in the Target Discourse (TD) to facilitate optimal communication. However, while Gallai primarily focuses on the challenges of maintaining these elements during the interpretation process, the analysis of this case study reveals that such linguistic devices can also be intentionally incorporated by the interpreter into the TD as part of a broader communicative strategy. This additional insight highlights the interpreter's "agency" (Duranti 2004) within the communication process.

(Duranti 2004), attempting to influence the parties' cultural understanding and reception, thus contributing to the co-constructed reality of the negotiation setting.

Finally, although the "zero quotative" approach (Mathis and Yule 1994) is usually defined in purely legal settings as the canonical form or "*the* sign of professionalism" (Bot 2005: 239 emphasis in the original), this excerpt may also lend credence to the idea that in real-world "hybrid" contexts (Bhatia and Nodoushan 2015), a grey area may emerge and potentially justify the use of indirect speech formulations in "summarized renditions" (Wadensjö 1998) (4) to achieve communicative effectiveness for the benefit of both parties.

4.2. *Excerpt 2: "Let's say it's just like wine…": suspended turns, quotative strategies, semantic creativity*

IL = Italian lawyer; ISM = Italian sales manager I = interpreter; GB = German buyers	
(5) ISM:	Allora su questo punto dobbiamo essere chiari (0.1) non mettiamo nei nostri contratti proprio una clausola di non conformità (.) diciamo che di solito tutte le: ceramiche del comprensorio seguono la raccolta degli usi della camera di Commercio di Modena (0.1) >ecco< mettendo nei contratti che le indicazioni contenute nei cataloghi quanto a tonalità e venature (.) sono indicative e assolutamente NON vincolanti per i materiali di seconda terza scelta e stock (.) invece la prima ha tolleranza al 5% *Well, on this point, we must be clear … we don't include a lack of conformity clause in our contracts per se, let's just say that all ceramics in the area usually follow the collection of practices of the Modena Chamber of Commerce...stating in contracts that any indication contained in the brochures, such as tone and veining, is merely indicative and absolutely not binding for the second, third choice, and stock materials, whereas the first has a tolerance of 5%.*
(6) I:	Tolleranza nel senso (.) rispetto al campione no? Che siete responsabili solo oltre il 5% *You mean tolerance …with reference to the sample, right? That you're only liable over 5%.*
(7) ISM:	Esatto *Right*
(8) I:	So: Mr. XXX says that this point must be made clear (.) their contracts don't usually include a strict non-conformity provision (0.1) all manufacturers of the ceramic district follow the practices of the Modena Chamber of Commerce (.) a:nd in their contracts they state that any indication (.) in brochures is not binding fo:r stock material second and third choice products (0.1) >Only first choice products are guaranteed against non-conformity< BUT with a tolerance of 5% which means that LIABILITY arises only OVER 5% NOT BELOW.
(9) ISM:	La ceramica è un materiale variabile è impossibile garantire i prodotti in toto *Ceramic is a variable material, it's impossible to guarantee products in toto*
(10) I:	You know (.) ceramic is a variable material (.) it is impossible to provide a full warranty
(11) GB:	Variable? What do you mean?

→

(12) I:	Variabile [in che senso?
(13) ISM:	[Allora bisogna spiegargli più o meno questo (.) >poi interrompimi se vuoi per la traduzione < (.) Le mattonelle di prima sono lavorate per avere un assorbimento sotto lo 0,5% nel senso di resistenza all'acqua in ambienti tipo i bagni (.) e per non rimanere macchiate nel caso ci cadano sopra prodotti come le vernici o lo sporco negli ambienti lavorativi (.) C'è una lavorazione molto complessa dietro queste mattonelle e usiamo molti prodotti chimici come la cristallina o la terra che è un prodotto naturale (.) quando tutti questi prodotti si mischiano anche la minima variazione di calore può dare origine a delle differenze soprattutto NEI COLORI SC[URI *So, it is necessary to more or less explain this to them. Feel free to interrupt me at any time for the translation. Tiles of first choice are produced in order to have an absorption rate of less than 0,5%… in terms of water resistance in environments such as bathrooms, or that they do not become stained if products such as varnish or filthy materials fall on their surface in workplaces. There's a highly complex production process behind these tiles, and we use lots of chemical products such as crystalline and obviously clay, which is a natural product. When all of these products get mixed, even the slightest variation in heat can cause some sort of variation, even more noticeable in dark colours*
(14) I:	[Okay tiles of first choice are produced eh: in a way that they have an absorption below 0,5% (.) meaning that they don't absorb water in bathrooms or if other products like (.) eh: varnish fall on their surface (.) they don't get stained (0.1) this implies a very complex production process where so many materials get mixed (.) chemical and natural and (.) you know (.) even the slightest heat variation in the: furnace can lead to some sort of variation >especially in dark colours <
(15) ISM:	Per questo i responsabili della qualità controllano le mattonelle di prima subito dopo l'uscita dal forno per confrontarle con i campioni (.) così: (.) per portare il processo produttivo verso la perfezione e all'uniformità (.) per fare le mattonelle il più possibile uguali ai campioni (.) Quando parliamo del 5% si tratta di variazioni minime e impercettibili (0.1) ci sono tanti fattori che entrano in gioco quando si valuta la ceramica *This is why quality managers inspect the tiles of first choice as soon as they exit the furnace to compare them to the samples and bring the production process closer to perfection and uniformity. To make the tiles as close to the samples as possible! When we talk about 5%, we're talking about minor and imperceptible variations. There are numerous factors that come into play when evaluating ceramic tiles*
(16) I:	So: quality managers check the products immediately after the backing process to monitor the situation before it's too late a:nd this is how they strive for perfection (.) before production is over (.) The tolerance of 5% in case of non-conformity means UNNOTICEABLE differences (0.2) in my capacity as interpreter (.) if I may say so hhh let's say it's just like wine which is produced in the same way but from one bottle to another may taste somehow DIFFERENT and-and still remain the SAME wine of the same winery of the (.) >same year<

Table 6. Excerpt 2. *"Let's say it's just like wine…"*: suspended turns, quotative strategies, semantic creativity

In Excerpt 2 (Table 6), the analysis of discourse patterns reveals yet another facet among the main challenges posed by this hybrid setting: its dynamicity. Crucial to note here is that the hard-won balance achieved between the impartial interpreter and the cross-cultural mediator in Excerpt 1 can easily be disrupted. This could necessitate an unexpected shift towards the role of the cross-cultural mediator, which represents one end of the ideal continuum.

In the presented case study, in response to the buyers' request for more information about the value of the 5% tolerance binding the exclusion of the non-conformity warranty, the Italian sales manager seized the chance to emphatically promote the company's image beyond ascetic legal technicalities (*There's a highly complex production process behind these tiles*) (13).

As a result, and against expectations, the subsequent discussion over the non-conformity clause did not focus on discrepancies between the legal systems or legal concepts relevant to the negotiation.

Quite consistently, in this fluid setting, the interpreter does not adhere to a predetermined turn-by-turn schedule. Unlike in more structured and homogeneous legal domains such as courtroom settings, the interpreter here acts as a gatekeeper. By taking an active role in the turn-taking organization and making her coordinating role explicit, the interpreter exhibits 'Ego-Affirming Agency'. This manifests itself in both affirming professional identity and showcasing the ability to keep the conversation moving forward effectively.

In particular, a "suspended rendition" (Gavioli and Baraldi 2011) is employed to initiate a clarification request (*You mean tolerance...with reference to the sample, right? That you are only liable over 5%*) (6). In this instance, the interpreter assumes the role of a "responder" (Wadensjö 1998) with the aim of resolving potential ambiguities that, if left unaddressed or inaccurately translated, could lead to misunderstandings or legal disputes.

By using this strategy, the interpreter demonstrates 'Ethic-Defining Agency', aiming for transparency and fair communication to make sure the German buyers are equally informed. Subsequently, the extra information gained through this two-way conversation is shared with the buyers using an "expanded rendition" *(ibid.*). This is implemented via an explicitation strategy and facilitated by the "communicative clue" (Gutt 1991) *which means* (8). This clue is added by the interpreter to the TD [12] to reduce the buyers' cognitive effort, thus achieving a better balance between "contextual effect" and "processing effort" (Sperber and Wilson 1986).

The frequent shifts in roles between "responder" (6) and "recapitulator" (4) (Wadensjö 1998) could explain why, in the need to report what the sales manager values most (*we must be clear on this point*) (5) through a "close rendition" (*ibid.*), the interpreter finds it necessary to explicitly specify that she is now assuming the role of a "reporter" (*ibid.*). To signify this transition, she employs an "assertive speech act" (Austin 1962) (*Mr. XXX says that*) (8), which is used to present the utterance with a higher level of authority, clearly indicating that the subsequent statement was *de facto* uttered by the Italian sales manager [13].

Finally, the creative role of the interpreter becomes even more apparent in the last turn. Recognizing the genuine challenges faced by German buyers in understanding

[12] See note 11.

[13] Obviously, this type of specification would be unnecessary in the field of courtroom interpreting, where it is well understood by the parties that the task of the interpreter is characterized by uniformity in the "zero-quotative" approach (Mathis and Yule 1994).

the technicalities of tile manufacturing, the interpreter leverages insights from previous industry experience to introduce a comparison often heard at trade shows and exhibitions.

Expressing "Ego-Affirming Agency" (Duranti 2004), the interpreter explicitly takes the initiative acting as a "Responder" (Wadensjö 1998) (*in my capacity as interpreter, if I may say so*) (16) and broadens the semantic sphere of the SD to illustrate the nature of the five per cent tolerance range for first-choice products (*let's say it's just like wine*) (16).

Through this action, the interpreter aims to help the buyers understand that akin to the subtle differences between bottles of the same wine, slight variations in tiles are both natural and to be expected, even when produced under nearly identical conditions. More subtly, this parallel between the tiles and wine, an Italian product typically well-received in Germany, encourages the German buyers to view the tiles as a representation of the specialized craftsmanship from the ceramic district of Modena and Reggio Emilia, as if they were actually handmade.

Pragmatically, this "non-rendition" (*ibid.*) displays the interpreter's "Act-Constituting Agency" (Duranti 2004). This approach aims to elicit a deeper connection with the product on the part of the buyers, ultimately shifting the conversation towards a more emotionally engaged purchase. Overall, this strategy aligns with the Italian sales manager's objective of moving beyond technical or legal jargon to establish a more interpersonal connection with the German buyers. Specifically, the focus is on highlighting the dedication invested in elevating the product to an exceptionally high level of quality, which in turn presents the company in the best possible light (*bring the production process closer to perfection and uniformity*) (15).

4.3. *Excerpt 3: "We are willing to grant you…but not the right to rescission": maintaining the art of power talking, legal equivalence and the 'frozen' nature of contracts*

IL= Italian lawyer; ISM= Italian sales manager I= interpreter; GB= German buyers	
(17) IL:	>È senz'altro possibile riconoscervi il diritto di richiedere la sostituzione della merce difettosa< ma non la risoluzione che vorrebbe dire secondo la legge italiana risarcimento del danno e la restituzione di TUTTE prestazioni già effettuate >anche pecuniarie< *It is certainly possible to grant you the right to have the defective or damaged goods replaced but not the right to rescission, which would include, pursuant to Italian law, compensation for the damage and return of all previous performances attended by the parties, including monetary payments*
(18) I:	There's really no problem (.) ehm in granting you hh the right to have the defective products replaced but not the RESCISSION (.) rescission in the Italian civil law entails the COMPENSATION OF THE DAMAGE (.) plus the return of all previously rendered performances >also previously made PAYMENTS<

→

(19) ISM:	Per venirvi incontro NOI come XXX azienda leader nel settore ci impegnamo concedendovi il diritto a un pieno risarcimento del prezzo pagato per il trasporto della merce difettosa e di farci carico di tutti i costi relativi alla sua sostituzione *However, to meet you halfway, we, as XXX, a leading company, commit ourselves to grant you the right to a full refund of the amount paid for the return of the defective goods as well as all costs associated with the replacement*
(20) I:	=To meet you halfway we as XXX a leading company can commit ourselves to grant you a FULL REFUND of the amounts paid (.) for the RETURN of the defective products (.) and all costs for their REPLACEMENT
(21) IL:	Non verrà però riconosciuto altro risarcimento hhh per danno emergente e lucro cessante, siano diretti che indiretti (.) e siamo anche disposti a concedervi un significativo sconto se le merci sostitutive non dovessero essere IMMEDIATAMENTE disponibili *However, no other compensation, whether direct or indirect, shall be recognised for emerging damage and loss of profit. Furthermore, we are willing to grant you a substantial discount if substitute goods are not readily available*
(22) I:	But any compensation for loss of profit (.) or emerging damages hhh whether direct or indirect SHALL BE EXCLUDED (.) We: are also willing to grant you a significant discount if the substitute goods aren't immediately available

Table 7. Excerpt 3. *We are willing to grant you…but not the right to rescission"*: maintaining the art of power talking, legal equivalence and the 'frozen' nature of contracts

Excerpt 3 (Table 7) depicts additional communicative contexts in which liaison interpreters may be involved. Obviously, due to space and privacy constraints, it is not possible to report the entire dataset here. However, it does seem desirable to offer some perspective on how the 'pursuit of balance' and 'dynamism' as seen in Excerpts 1 and 2, respectively, must ultimately reconcile with the need to preserve the "frozen" nature of legal language (Trosborg 1992). This aspect acquires an additional point of interest when we consider that, during spoken interactions, the preservation of the enduring character of the language of the law is often closely intertwined with "powerful" and "powerless" speech styles (O'Barr 1982; O'Barr and Atkins 1980).

This challenge is particularly prominent in highly sensitive negotiation contexts, where legal language plays a crucial role in persuading the counterparty to accept specific offers or agreement terms [14] (Rolland 2021). In such scenarios, the liaison interpreter faces the formidable task of achieving "legal equivalence" (Šarčević 1997), which entails the need to maintain both legal accuracy and the art of persuasive communication used by the parties.

In the case study under discussion, the German party's counterproposal [15] gave rise to a distributive bargaining situation which resulted in reciprocal interplay and mutual

[14] In negotiation contexts, legal language strategically merges the task of defining terms with broader communicative objectives. Its strategic application goes beyond mere legal definitions, intertwining the clarification of clauses with their persuasive presentation. This approach incorporates highlighting the benefits of specific terms to enhance their attractiveness, and framing restrictive clauses in ways that emphasize their role in mutual protection. Such a nuanced use of legal language effectively shifts perceptions, turning potential constraints into elements of mutual security and benefit.

[15] In the case analysed here, when confronted with a standard contractual clause presented by the

deflection, with cooperation patterns that could be genuine, feigned or a mixture of both. Implied purposes and objectives (Austin 1975) can be observed in the strategic linguistic behaviour of the Italian party, which balances the need to establish some resistance points (*but not the right to rescission*) (17) (*However, no other compensation, whether direct or indirect, shall be recognised*) (21) with the assessment of the marketability of the other party's interests. This latter aspect is demonstrated by a shift in language from objective and impersonal to more interactive, through a combination of formulations using the pronoun 'you' *(it is certainly possible to grant you the right)* (17), (*to meet you halfway)* (19). This evolves into a greater emphasis on subjective expressions featuring the self-mention exclusive pronoun 'we' (*we, as XXX, a leading company, commit ourselves to grant you)* (19), *(we are willing to grant you*) (21).

Consequently, strategic planning and critical decision-making are used to make the proposal sound like a special offer that the Italian sales manager, in the name and on behalf of the company (*we, as XXX, leading company*) (19), is securing exclusively for the clients in question. This deliberately interpersonal approach in the creation of a "bargaining zone" (Fisher *et al*. 1999) is strictly maintained by the interpreter acting as "reporter" via "close renditions" (Wadensjö 1998) (18), (20) and (22).

As is evident, the interpreter's focus is now on maintaining the objectivity/subjectivity continuum of the SD rather than reconstructing the message content for the primary speakers as was frequently the case in previous extracts [16]. This passage suggests a crucial point to consider. Even when the interpreter's "Ego-Affirming Agency" (Duranti 2004) is not explicitly required or observable by the negotiating parties, the underlying "Ethic-Defining Agency" remains indispensable to safeguarding the autonomy of those at the negotiating table.

This approach enables the German buyers to hear the proposal as it was originally spoken, with "relevance" (Sperber and Wilson 1986) hinging on the interpreter's ability to maintain the SD's 'we and you' formulations used as deal closer keywords.

In this "faithful renderer of others' utterances" (Hale 2008: 115), where 'how' things are said is just as crucial as 'what' is said, a deep understanding of the legal terminology in different languages is crucial to avoid misinterpretation between different cultural backgrounds. In this cross-border transaction, the Italian term *risoluzione* (17) merits special attention amid various instances of legalese *(compensation for the damage)* (*the right to rescission*) (17), *(the right to a full refund)* (19), *(emerging damage and loss of profit)* (21). As can be seen, shared common ground and "optimal relevance" (Sperber

Italian lawyer (see Appendix, Figure 2) regarding the seller's liability in the event of non-conforming goods, the German party expressed the need to negotiate the provision and to have it re-written on the basis of an alternative provision (see Appendix, Figure 3) taken from a template containing numerous boilerplate clauses written by pro-buyers. In this scenario, the interpreter was tasked with offering sight interpreting services to the Italian party. Although the Italian sales manager and the lawyer could actually read better than negotiate orally, they found it particularly helpful to have someone checking the text for them while they could take notes, thus listing the most important points to be discussed later during the negotiation (see Excerpt 3, Table 7). Finally, having reached a compromise regarding the seller's liability, the ensuing task performed by the interpreter was to get a recap of the main points agreed upon (see Appendix, Figure 6) and assist the parties in drafting a preliminary agreement clause in anticipation of the final, definitive agreement (see Appendix, Figure 7).

[16] In Excerpt 1 (Table 5) and Excerpt 2 (Table 6) she is directly addressed via the use of the imperative form (*tell them*) (1), the self-mention inclusive 'we' (5), and the direct pronoun 'you' (13).

and Wilson 1986) for reaching an agreement regarding the seller's liability strongly depends on the interpreter's capacity to recognize a false cognate in this term which does not match semantically with *resolution* but correlates, in terms of legal effects, to another TD technical term, i.e. *rescission*.

This emphasis on intricate terminology might initially imply that the hybrid field under investigation presents 'nothing new under the sun'. This is particularly so because interpreters in specialized fields are traditionally well-acquainted with challenges encompassing extensive technical vocabulary. However, a comparison of this hybrid field with more traditional and homogeneous legal and economic settings reveals a different account.

Firstly, as Hale (1999: 57) notes, "most of the problems interpreters face in the courtroom are completely unrelated to specialized terminology, but relate mainly to the pragmatic aspects of the discourse [17]". Secondly, although trade shows, sales meetings, and other commercial exchanges do pose their own terminological challenges, these are often consistent within a specific industry sector [18].

With these considerations in mind, it becomes clear that, after all, there might indeed be 'something new under the sun' in the hybrid context under examination. Here, legal terminology is undeniably an integral component of the negotiation process. Furthermore, mastery of this specialized terminology entails more than just accumulating a broad lexical repertoire. It demands an 'encyclopedic and intertextual understanding' (see Notari 2019) rooted in both system-specific and culturally bound contexts (Tiersma 1999). This implies that the understanding and usage of such terms may not be universally applicable across varying legal cultures [19] (Alcaraz and Hughes 2014).

These distinctions may pave the way for a targeted approach to training and practice in this highly specialized field. Specifically, they suggest that the most effective preparation involves more than just memorizing legal terms in a bilingual fashion; it also entails employing a contrastive approach inspired by comparative law (see Engberg 2020; Monjean-Decaudin and Popineau 2019). This procedural knowledge, at least with respect to the most common contractual terms and conditions, may help interpreters anticipate potential issues [20], and approach them as routine practice.

[17] This becomes particularly evident upon recognizing that much of an interpreter's work in judicial arenas entails interpreting direct and cross-examinations. During these examinations, the focus is often not on specialized legal terms but rather on ensuring accurate, real-time interpretation of questions about events, behaviours, and interactions, which also require navigating the power dynamics and manipulative strategies frequently present.

[18] In simpler terms, the specialized terminology used in such commercial settings tends to be standardized in a given field, across different companies, irrespective of their geographical location, and usually devoid of cultural connotations. As a result, interpreters can frequently prepare themselves by leveraging readily available informational resources such as brochures, leaflets, and websites, a task made increasingly easier due to the widespread availability of digital material.

[19] The difficulties associated with overcoming conceptual and terminological inconsistencies from a cross-cultural perspective emerge clearly upon examining the model developed by Šarčević (1988: 439) (see Appendix, Figure 4 and Figure 5). In particular, failing an identical concept in the TL, even a "functional equivalent", which designates an institution or concept with the same function in the TL, may not achieve full equivalence, but rather "partial equivalence" or "near equivalence" (*ibid.*). For our purposes it is important to note that even though partial equivalence represents a higher degree of optimal congruence, the interpreter still has the duty, if necessary, to alert the parties to any shift in meaning which may result in unintended legal effects.

[20] Such as the one concerning the term *rescission* (17) in this section.

5. Conclusion

After a thorough review of the dataset, fundamental peculiarities emerged as significant predictors of the originality and uniqueness of this "hybrid" setting (Bhatia and Nodoushan 2015). Although not conclusive, findings from the analyses reveal that the role of legal interpreters in international business contract negotiations extends beyond traditional classifications. This extension is succinctly encapsulated within the 'Complex Matrix of Interpretive Agency', as detailed in Table 8, representing a foundational yet evolving framework for the ongoing development and refinement of results in the field.

Aligning with the research hypothesis of this study (see Section 1.2), it is observable that the interpreter's agency does not adhere to a simple one-to-one correspondence with specific rendition types or roles. Rather, it unfolds within a sophisticated and adaptable matrix, underscoring the need for interpreters to constantly redefine and reconsider their role in the dynamic and fluid nature of this context.

This complexity often results in blurred boundaries between the purist vision of the *impartial interpreter* tasked with navigating crucial legal matters, and the *involved cross-cultural mediator* engaged in renegotiating identities and meanings when mutually beneficial business outcomes are expected to be achieved.

Such observations raise questions about the complex issue of the interpreter's role (Biagini *et al.* 2017), adding to the relevant literature in DI, which has already discussed the topic in a variety of settings using terms such as "member of a triadic exchange" (Mason 2001), "middleman," "broker," "go-between," "gatekeeper," "facilitator," "advocate," and even "conciliator" (Wadensjö 1998).

This paper, therefore, is not so much a resolution but an invitation for further analysis, hence encouraging interpreters and specialists to work towards the development of stimulating contributions to the emerging field of *liaison interpreting in international business contract negotiations.* The expectation is that the novel methodological approach proposed in this first exploratory study will be replicated in additional research with an awareness that "agency" (Duranti 2004), as explored here, encompasses rather than being subsumed by the concept of role and interpreting strategies (Wadensjö 1998).

A deeper exploration is crucial for a more thorough understanding of how interpreters operate in this hybrid context, manifesting their autonomy, decision-making capacity, and professional identity. These insights, potentially enriched by combining qualitative discourse analysis with corpus linguistics, may help us better understand how interpreters' role shifts, strategic choices, and the use of "communicative clues" (Gutt 1991) collectively contribute to ensuring that renditions are not only optimally relevant and contextually pertinent, but also socio-culturally and ethically appropriate.

Hopefully, such a joint effort will overcome the inherent challenges of collecting sufficient data and obtaining the necessary permissions to publish research results that can map patterns of systematicity in mediating between predefined and fixed interpreting *clichés* pertaining to either field embedded in the genre. Steps taken in that direction are clearly necessary for the identification of *ad hoc* quality standards that can help interpreters position themselves as communicators in this context. Awareness of these aspects will improve their capability of choosing consciously between different possible renderings of a message, guided by relevant literature and the experiences of other colleagues in the field.

The current exploratory paper may also have several practical implications for interpreter training by demonstrating the need for students to learn to be effective members of interprofessional teams. At the same time, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding both the integrity of individual genres and their intertextual and interdiscursive nature (Bhatia 1997, 2004; Bhatia and Nodoushan 2015). Zooming in on specialists' discursive performance in real-world contexts may help "shift the focus from context-independent meaning to context-dependent understanding", placing the figure of the interpreter as a "human conceptualizer at the centre of attention" (Engberg 2023: 17). Likewise, whether or not interoperability and knowledge coordination among different specialists affect interpreting strategies and their acceptability in terms of agency boundaries will have to be the topic of further research [21].

Agency	**Relevance in Contract Negotiation** (adapted from Sperber and Wilson 1986)	**Rendition Type** (Wadensjö 1998)	**Role** (adapted from Wadensjö 1998)	**Interpreter's Additions and Communicative Clues** (Gutt 1991)	**Excerpt & Turn**
Ego-Affirming (Duranti 2004)	Enhancing understanding and accessibility of legal norms.	Non-rendition	Responder	*(in my capacity as interpreter, if I may say so)*	2 (16)
Act-Constituting (Duranti 2004)	Shaping the communicative exchange to fill cross-cultural gaps and preserve mutual trust.	Summarized	Recapitulator	*(basically)*	1 (4)
Ethic-Defining	Balancing clarity and fairness in communication.	Expanded	Responder	*(Italian civil code) (meaning)*	1 (2)
Ethic-Defining	Preserving original intent and contractual precision + Clarifying legal concepts to reduce cognitive load.	Close + Expanded	Reporter + Responder* (*post-suspended turn)	(*Mr. XXX says that*) + (*which means)*	2 (8)
Ethic-Defining	Ensuring legal accuracy and facilitating persuasive communication.	Close	Reporter	--	3 (18), (20) (22)

Table 8. Complex matrix of interpretive agency in liaison interpreting in business contract negotiations

[21] In the author's experience, lawyers do not always attend contract negotiations, particularly in the case of relatively small businesses, where the practical knowledge of the sales manager, who may require the presence of an interpreter, is typically trusted. When lawyers are asked to attend these negotiations and it is agreed to submit the terms and conditions to Italian contract law, interpreters may find themselves working either with experienced Italian civil lawyers who, given their area of expertise, do not speak English fluently, or with younger lawyers who may appear to be more at ease with the field of comparative law and more fluent with foreign languages, but less experienced in distributive bargaining strategies. These variables have the potential to alter the behaviour of the sales manager, who may adopt a more formal attitude, hence leaving the interpreter with pleasantries, clients' reception and more informal explanations, while always remaining available to intervene to convince the clients with more technical details.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to extend her sincere gratitude to the peer reviewers for their insightful and constructive comments, which have encouraged further exploration and refinement of the study. Special appreciation is also extended to Christopher Williams and Denise Milizia for their invaluable support and guidance throughout the publication process.

References

Alcaraz E. and B. Hughes 2014. *Legal Translation Explained*. London/New York: Routledge.

Al Nuaimi Y.M. 2021. Setting the stage and pre-contract negotiations in international contracts. *Tikrit University Journal for Rights* 5/2:1-24.

Anderson B. 2002. Perspectives on the role of interpreter. In F. Pöchhacker and M. Shlesinger (eds), *The Interpreting Studies Reader*. London/New York: Routledge: 209-217.

Austin J.L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Austin J.L. 1975. *How to do Things with Words* (2nd edn). Edited by J.O. Urmson and M. Sbisà. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Baker M. 1998 (ed). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Baker M. 2006. Contextualization in translator-and interpreter-mediated events. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38/3: 321-337.

Berger P.L. and T. Luckmann 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday & Company.

Bhatia V.K. 1997. Genre analysis today. *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'histoire* 75/3: 629-652.

Bhatia V.K. 2004. *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-based View*. New York: A&C Black.

Bhatia V.K. and S. Nodoushan 2015. Genre analysis: the state of the art (an online interview with Vijay Kumar Bhatia). *Online Submission* 9/2: 121-130.

Biagini M., M.S. Boyd and C. Monacelli 2017. *The Changing Role of the Interpreter: Contextualising Norms, Ethics and Quality Standards*. New York: Routledge.

Blinstrubaité A. 2000. Interaction in liaison interpreting. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 8/2: 125-133.

Boersma P. and D. Weenink 2019. Praat: Doing phonetics by computer [computer program], version 6.0.56, available at http://www.praat.org.

Bot H. 2005. Dialogue interpreting as a specific case of reported speech. *Interpreting* 7/2: 237-261.

Braun S. and K. Kohn 2012. Towards a pedagogic corpus approach to business and community interpreter training. In B. Ahrens, M. Albl-Mikasa and C. Sasse (eds), *Dolmetschqualität in Praxis, Lehre Und Forschung. Festschrift Für Sylvia Kalina*. Tübingen: Narr: 185-204.

Duranti A. 2004. Agency in language. In A. Duranti (ed), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell: 451-477.

Engberg J. 2020. Comparative law for legal translation: through multiple perspectives to multidimensional knowledge. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law-Revue Internationale de Sémiotique Juridique* 33/2: 263-282.

Engberg J. 2023. Frame approach to legal terminology: what may be gained from seeing terminology as manifestation of legal knowledge? In L. Biel and H. Kockaert (eds), *Handbook of Terminology*: Volume 3. Legal Terminology. Amsterdam: John Benjamins: 16-36.

Erickson B., E.A. Lind, B.C. Johnson and W.M. O'Barr 1978. Speech style and impression formation in a court setting: the effects of "powerful" and "powerless" speech. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 14/3: 266-279.

Fatehi K. 2008. *Managing Internationally: Succeeding in a Culturally Diverse World*. Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore: Saga Publications, Inc.

Fisher R., W.L. Ury and B. Patton 1999. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving in*. London: Penguin Books.

Forsyth P. 2009. *Negotiation Skills for Rookies*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish.

Gallai F. 2022. *Relevance Theory in Translation and Interpreting. A Cognitive-Pragmatic Approach*. New York: Routledge.

Garrett G.A. 2005. *Contract Negotiations: Skills, Tools, and Best Practices*. Alphen aan den Rijn: Wolters Kluwer.

Gavioli L. and C. Baraldi 2011. Interpreter-mediated interaction in healthcare and legal settings: talk organisation, context and the achievement of intercultural communication. *Interpreting* 13/2: 205-233.

Gentile A., U. Ozolins and M. Vasilakakos 1996. *Liaison Interpreting: A Handbook*. Melbourne: Melbourne University.

Goffman E. 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. New York: Pantheon.

Goffman E. 1981. *Forms of Talk*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Grice H.P. 1975. Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J.L. Morgan (eds), *Syntax and Semantics*. New York: Academic Press: 41-58.

Gurduza G. 2019. *Legal Translation. An Analysis of Business Contracts in Italian and Translated into English*. [MA Thesis]. University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

Guth S. 2007. *The Contract Negotiation Handbook: An Indispensable Guide for Contract Professionals*. North Carolina: Lulu Press Inc.

Gutt E.A. 1990. A theoretical account of translation without a translation theory. *Target* 2/2: 135-164.

Gutt E.A. 1991. *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gutt E.A. 1998. Pragmatic aspects of translation: some relevance-theoretic observations. In L. Hickey (ed.), *The Pragmatics of Translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: 41-53.

Hale S. 1999. Interpreters' treatment of discourse markers in courtroom questions. *Forensic Linguistics* 6: 57-82.

Hale S. 2008. Controversies over the role of the court interpreter. *Benjamins Translation Library* 76: 99-121.

Hale S. 2011. Public service interpreting. In K. Malmkjær and K. Windle (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1-9.

Halliday M.A. 1985. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

Helmold M., C. Lee, A. Aleksandraviciute, M. Zakaryan, D. Filingeri and D. Vlasova 2020. *Negotiations in Europe. Successful International Negotiations: A Practical Guide for Managing Transactions and Deals*. Berlin: Springer.

Helmold M., T. Dathe and F. Hummel 2022. *Successful Negotiations: Best-in-Class Recommendations for Breakthrough Negotiations*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Hostová I. 2017. *Identity and Translation Trouble*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Jefferson G. 2004. Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (ed.), *Conversation Analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins: 13-31.

Jones G. 2022. Crises and international business. In R. van Tulder, A. Verbeke, L. Piscitello and J. Puck (eds), *International Business in Times of Crisis: Tribute Volume to Geoffrey Jones*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited: 27-32.

Jung S. and P. Krebs 2019. *The Essentials of Contract Negotiation*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Karl K.A., J.V. Peluchette and N. Aghakhani 2022. Virtual work meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic: the good, bad, and ugly. *Small Group Research* 53/3: 343-365.

Kickul J. and T.S. Lyons 2020. *Understanding Social Entrepreneurship: The Relentless Pursuit of Mission in an Ever Changing World*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.

Krajewska K. 2021. Business interpreting: a world of dialogue between conferences and communities. *Acta Neophilologica* 2/XXIII: 269-286.

Lee Y. 2022. Dynamics of symmetrical communication within organizations: the impacts of channel usage of CEO, managers, and peers. *International Journal of Business Communication* 59/1: 3-21.

Martínez-Gómez A. 2015. Invisible, visible or everywhere in between? Perceptions and actual behaviors of non-professional interpreters and interpreting users. *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 20: 175-194.

Mason I. 2001. *Triadic Exchanges*: *Studies in Dialogue Interpreting*. Manchester/Northampton: St Jerome Publishing.

Mason I. 2006. On mutual accessibility of contextual assumptions in dialogue interpreting. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38/3: 359-373.

Mathis T. and G. Yule 1994. Zero quotatives. *Discourse Processes* 18/1: 63-76.

Maude B. 2020. *International Business Negotiation: Principles and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Meng H. 2008. Social script theory and cross-cultural communication. *Intercultural Communication Studies* 17/1: 132-138.

Merlino S. 2009. La mitigazione nell'attività dell'interprete: il caso di una trattativa d'affari. In L. Gavioli (ed), *La mediazione linguistico-culturale: una prospettiva interazionista.* Perugia: Guerra: 231-257.

Monjean-Decaudin S. and J. Popineau-Lauvray 2019. How to apply comparative law to legal translation: a new juritraductological approach to the translation of legal texts. In L. Biel, J. Engberg, R.M. Ruano and V. Sosoni (eds), *Research Methods in Legal Translation and Interpreting*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge: 115-129.

Morris M.H., J. Brunyee and M. Page 1998. Relationship marketing in practice: myths and realities. *Industrial Marketing Management* 27/4: 359-371.

Morris R. 1999. The gum syndrome: predicaments in court interpreting. *Forensic Linguistics* 6: 6-29.

Notari F. 2019. Mastering numbers in legal discourse: pragmatic perspectives and translation issues. *La Torre di Babele* 15: 95-128.

O'Barr W.M. 1982. *Linguistic Evidence: Language, Power, and Strategy in the Courtroom*. New York: Academic Press.

O'Barr W.M. and B.K. Atkins. 1980. "Women's language" or "powerless language"? In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker and N. Furman (eds), *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.

Pieterse J.N. 2001. Hybridity, so what? The anti-hybridity backlash and the riddles of recognition. *Theory, Culture & Society* 18/2-3: 219-245.

Pöchhacker F. 2016. *Introducing Interpreting Studies*. London: Routledge.

Pokorn N.K. and T. Mikolič Južnič 2020. Community interpreters versus intercultural mediators: is it really all about ethics? *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 15/1: 80-107.

Reddy M.J. 1993. The conduit metaphor: a case of frame conflict in our language about language. In A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (2nd edn.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 164-201.

Roberts R. 2002. Community interpreting. In *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 4*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins: 157-175.

Rolland K.F. 2021. *The Persuasive Negotiator: Tools and Techniques for Effective Negotiating*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Russo M. 2013. Liaison interpreting. In C.A. Chapelle (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell: 3394-3400.

Šarčević S. 1988. Terminological incongruency in legal dictionaries for translation. *Euralex Proceedings*: 439-446.

Šarčević S. 1997 *New Approach to Legal Translation*. The Hague/London/Boston: Kluwer Law International.

Schegloff E.A. 1984. On some questions and ambiguities in conversation. In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds), *Structures of Social Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 28-52.

Schroll-Machl S. 2016. *Doing Business with Germans: Their Perception, Our Perception*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Skaaden H. 2019. Invisible or invincible? Professional integrity, ethics, and voice in public service interpreting. *Perspectives* 27/5: 704-717.

Smirnov S. 1997. An overview of liaison interpreting. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 5/2: 211-226.

Sperber D. and D. Wilson 1986. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stallard A. 2001. Joining the culture club: examining cultural context when implementing international dispute resolution. *Ohio St. J. Disp. Resol.* 17: 463-486.

Standaert W., S. Muylle and A. Basu 2022. Business meetings in a postpandemic world: when and how to meet virtually. *Business Horizons* 65/3: 267-275.

Tiersma P.M. 1999. *Legal Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tipton R. and O. Furmanek 2016. *Dialogue Interpreting: A Guide to Interpreting in Public Services and the Community*. London/New York: Routledge.

Townley A.R. 2022. *Analysis of Authentic Legal Negotiation Discourse: Towards an ELP Pedagogy* [PhD Thesis]. Macquarie University.

Trosborg A. 1992. The performance of legal discourse. *HERMES-Journal of Language and Communication in Business* 9: 9-18.

Wadensjö C. 1998. *Interpreting as Interaction*. London/New York: Longman.

Wodak-Engel R. 1984. Determination of guilt: discourse in the courtroom. *Language and Power:* 89-100.

Xiang X., B. Zheng and D. Feng 2020. Interpreting impoliteness and over-politeness: an investigation into interpreters' cognitive effort, coping strategies and their effects. *Journal of Pragmatics* 169: 231-244.

Zheng B. and X. Xiang 2018. Between invisibility and over-visibility: self-perception and user expectations of liaison interpreters in business settings. *Babel* 64/1: 1-32.

Zhonggang S. 2006. A relevance theory perspective on translating the implicit information in literary texts. *Journal of Translation* 2/2: 43-60.

Websites

Fiandre. General Sales Conditions. At https://www.granitifiandre.com/doc/cataloghi_catalogues/cataloghi/SALES_CONDITIONS_fiandre_standard_size.pdf.

Florim. Sales Conditions. At https://florim-share.thron.com/page?id=e2105093-f3e0-476a-b721-c0459bbc993b#/contents.

Marazzi Group. General Terms and Conditions of Sale. At https://www.marazzi.it/app/uploads/2023/10/mg_condizioni_generali_vendita_en.pdf.

Mosaic Home Interiors. General Terms and Conditions of Sale. At https://mosaictileco.com/Catalogs/Quintessenza/Tech/Warranty13.pdf.

Quintessenza Ceramiche. Terms and Conditions of Sale. At https://www.quintessenzaceramiche.it/download/condizioni-di-vendita/qc-terms-and-conditions-of-sale-eng-2/.

Settecento Manifattura Ceramica. General Conditions of Sale. At https://www.settecento.com/en/pdf/condizioni.pdf.

APPENDIX

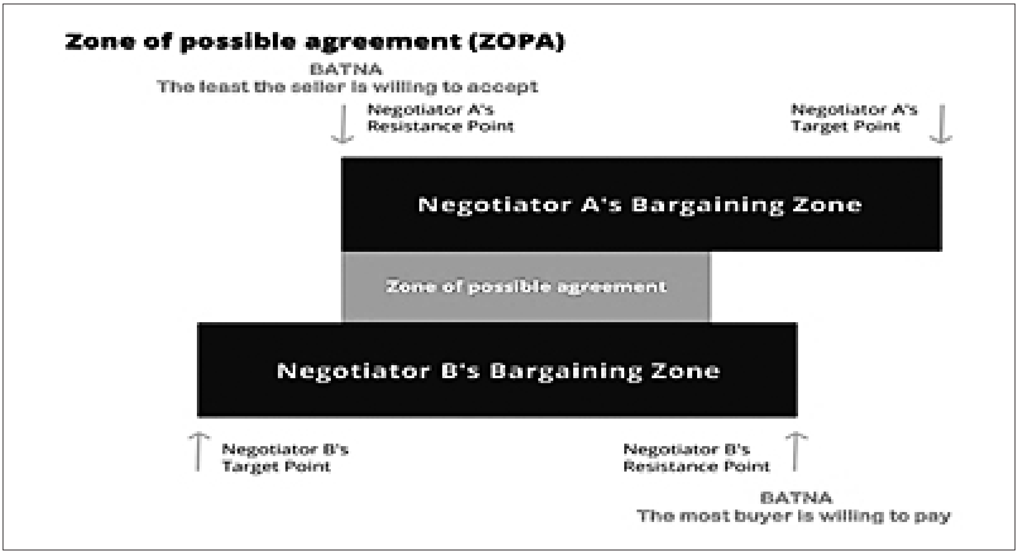


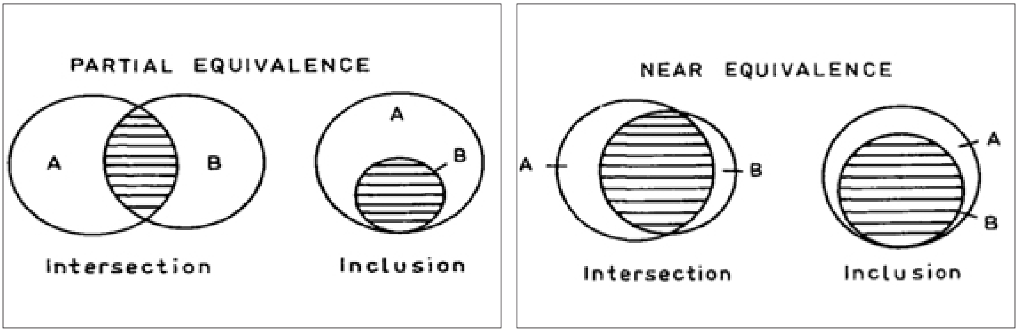
Figure 1. Zone of possible agreement (ZOPA) (Fisher *et al.* 1999)

Pursuant to the warranty obligation of the Seller, the latter undertakes to replace the defective and / or damaged product within the limits of the Contract and without any further obligation of indemnification for direct and / or indirect and / or consequential damages caused by defective Products to the Buyer and / or third parties, save for the mandatory provisions of law.

Figure 2.. Standard contractual clause presented by the Italian party regarding the seller's liability

Buyer has the right to inspect the Goods on or after the Delivery Date. Pursuant to the warranty obligation of the Seller, if Buyer rejects any portion of the Goods, the Buyer has the right, effective upon written notice to Seller, to: (a) rescind this Agreement in its entirety; or (b) require replacement of the rejected Goods. If Buyer requires replacement of the Goods, Seller shall, at its expense, within 18 days replace the nonconforming Goods and pay for all related expenses, including, but not limited to, transportation charges for the return of the defective Goods and the delivery of replacement Goods.

Figure 3. Standard contractual clause presented by the German party regarding the seller's liability



Figures 4-5. Partial Equivalence (Šarčević 1988: 439) and Near Equivalence (Šarčević 1988: 439)

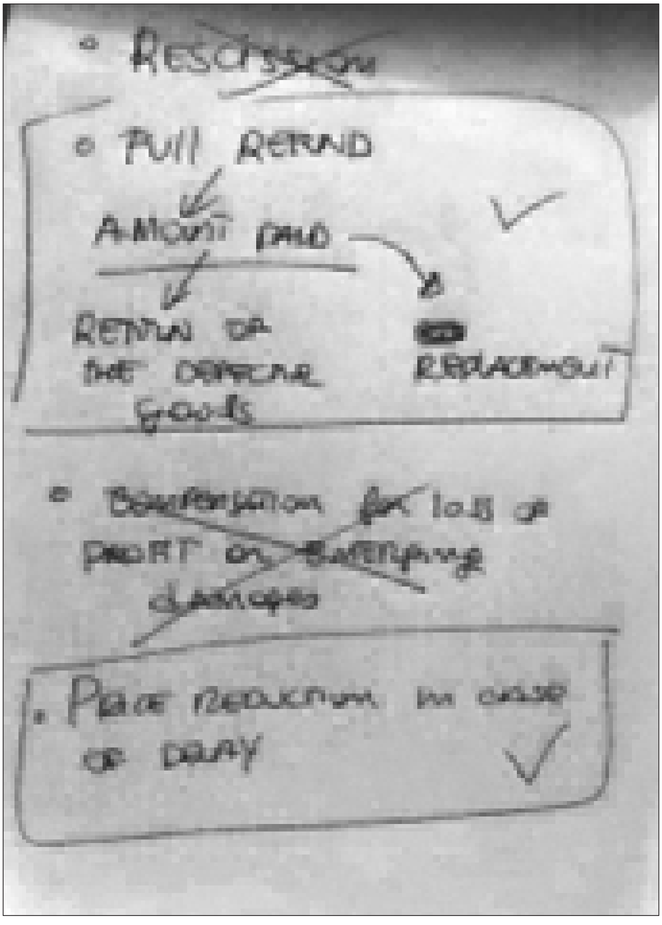


Figure 6. Interpreter's notes on the main points agreed upon regarding the seller's liability.

In the event that flaws and defects are ascertained, pursuant to the warranty obligation of the Seller, the Seller shall replace the faulty product with conforming goods with equal characteristics and of identical or superior value without any additional expense to the buyer; should this not be possible the Seller shall apply a significant price reduction in the same proportion as the value that the Goods actually delivered had at the time of the delivery bears to the value that conforming goods would have at that time. Alternatively, following the return of the faulty products, the Buyer shall have the right to a refund of the price paid plus the transport cost. In any case, rescission and any other compensation for loss of profit or emerging damages, direct or indirect, shall be excluded.

Figure 7. Definitive agreement clause regarding the seller's liability

"I FOUND THIS LAW FIRM ON GOOGLE REVIEWS, AND I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED" A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF POSITIVE LAW FIRM CLIENT REVIEWS AND BUSINESS OWNER RESPONSES IN THE US AND THE UK

Gianmarco Vignozzi
(University of Pisa, Italy)

Abstract

This paper proposes a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of positive online reviews of US and UK law firms and the corresponding business owners' responses. The aim is to better understand and describe their linguistic nature and their structure, and assess whether and to what extent cross-cultural variation occurs. The methodology used to carry out the analysis combines different approaches to linguistic inquiry. It starts with a lexico-grammatical description of reviews and responses through corpus methods, then continues with a move structure analysis that focuses on rhetorical differences between British and American reviews and responses and ends with an attentive cross-cultural analysis on the usage of positive evaluative adjectives in reviews, conducted through the lens of appraisal theory. The cross-cultural analysis indicates that US reviews and responses are more oriented towards experience-sharing, recommendation, and publicity. By contrast, the UK's samples are characterized by a more attentive expression of politeness and conversational rituals. Moreover, the adjectives used to express positive evaluations reveals an interesting tendency: that of foregrounding communication and social skills in US reviews and technical and professional skills in UK reviews.

1. Introduction

In today's digital society, online tools for expressing evaluative feedback are part of nearly every aspect of our lives. Before buying a product or using a service, it has become natural, if not essential, to surf the internet and check whether we are making the right decision based on what other people have previously said. Because of this wide-ranging phenomenon, consumers and clients living in the digital age are often referred to as *prosumers* (producers + consumers) who have the power to influence future decisions of their peers through the product and service reviews they share on the web (Vásquez 2014). Therefore, it goes without saying that all business entities that have an online presence, which has become a vital requirement to keep pace with the market, are affected by digital reviews and should carefully consider their potential as digital marketing tools, e.g. for building credibility, trust, and rapport with both prospective and habitual clients (Liu *et al*. 2020).

According to a recent legal marketing survey (Reuters 2022), clients often rely on online feedback before choosing the law firm that best suits their needs. Consequently, a law firm with a strong and effective digital identity has the edge over others and is likely to get more enquiries, thereby increasing the chances of securing big and lucrative cases. This makes it essential for law firms to curate their online presence in all its aspects, from the production and dissemination of pre-service consumption promotional content, such as online ads and law-related blog and vlog [1] posts, to the careful monitoring of which and how many post-service consumption materials, such as reviews and testimonials, circulate on the internet.

Some studies from the field of linguistics have concentrated on the increasing attention paid by American and British law firms in particular to the contents published on their websites, which are clearly exploited to promote the expertise and, most of all, the reliability of the lawyers working at the firm. In Vignozzi (2022a, 2022b), for example, I focused on the emerging genre of attorneys' video FAQs, which are short videoclips uploaded to law firm websites where lawyers answer a series of questions prospective clients may have on the range of services they offer. The research showed that video FAQs are carefully targeted towards the receivers, constantly siding and sympathizing with the citizen at the expense of the legal system, which is repeatedly framed as a dangerous enemy from whom only skillful lawyers can grant protection. Cavalieri (2018) also explored how videos popularizing legal issues are embedded in some successful British law firm websites in order to reach nonexperts (i.e. clients) effectively and engage them. No linguistic studies, however, concentrate on post-service genres, i.e. on those texts produced directly by former law firm clients, to observe, for instance, the extent to which their wording may contribute to the promotion and to the construction of the digital identity of law firms.

Against this background, this paper aims to bridge this gap in research and carry out a linguistic analysis of the genres of online law firm client reviews and business owner responses. Specifically, the study focuses on a corpus of positive-polarity Google reviews, and their corresponding responses, of British and American law firms. The reason for concentrating on positive reviews is twofold. Firstly, they contribute the most to the promotion of the law firm and to the creation of a successful online identity; hence they are the type of reviews lawyers wish to elicit with their services. Secondly, as several studies have demonstrated (cf. Bridges and Vásquez 2018; Melian-Gonzalez *et al.* 2013), positive online reviews tend to be more numerous than negative ones and have a higher reach and impact on the web. The present research aims to define some of the key lexico-grammatical features of online law firm reviews and responses as textual genres, fuelling the ongoing debate on how, and to what extent, web-mediated genres affect consumers' choices (Nofal *et al.* 2022). Moreover, the analysis also tackles cross-cultural differences and specificities as reviews/responses to US- and UK-based law firms are analysed comparatively to unveil whether different cultural contexts of production play a relevant role in the actual linguistic and rhetorical realization of reviews and responses. The initial research hypothesis would be that, despite sharing the same language (English), positive reviews of US and UK law firms should differ in the way they are worded. This is because the distinct cultural contexts in which they are

[1] Vlogs are a particular type of blog for which the medium of the posts is video.

produced have been shown to play a crucial role in the formulation of politeness rituals (e.g. complimenting, greeting, apologizing) (Vignozzi 2019).

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on online reviews and responses concentrating on studies carried out from the point of view of linguistics. Section 3 is devoted to the description of the design and compilation of the *ad hoc* corpus built for this study and of the methods used for the analysis. The analysis is presented in Section 4. The first two subsections (4.1. and 4.2.) describe positive reviews and responses as a textual genre highlighting cross-cultural differences between the US and UK corpus components. The third subsection (4.3.) delves into the examination of positive evaluation in terms of adjective choice, comparatively in US and UK reviews. Finally, some concluding remarks are offered in Section 5.

2. Online reviews and business owner responses

Online reviews represent a form of user-generated evaluative feedback posted on the internet by users for an audience of unknown peers. In other words, they are a form of one-to-many computer-mediated communication that has the intent of providing information, help, and advice to fellow consumers or clients (Vásquez 2014). Several studies from a business marketing perspective have pointed to the significance of online reviews for consumer decision-making (e.g. Duan *et al.* 2008; Fan *et al.* 2019; Forman *et al.* 2008). According to a survey carried out by Forbes (2019), 90% of American adults research products and services on the internet and value the transparency that reviews provide before their purchase decision, and 58% post comments or reviews online afterwards (Forbes 2019). Such a big impact on consumers' habits is also related to the diffusion and the facility with which online reviews can be found and accessed through web search engines. In fact, product and service feedback make up a large part of the user-generated content that is published online every day, so much so that an estimate from a decade ago placed the genre of online reviews as comprising 2-4% of the searchable internet (Egbert *et al.* 2013). Nowadays, this figure has very likely increased. Online platforms hosting user-generated reviews have been multiplying in the last decade (e.g. Yelp, Netflix, The Fork, TripAdvisor, or Amazon), and every kind of product, service, or experience has become reviewable. Therefore, this ever-growing importance of online reviews as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Dellarocas 2003) has dramatically changed how consumers inform themselves, and each other, about businesses and products, i.e. from relying upon reviews written by professionals in the field to trusting unverified consumer-generated evaluations (Taboada 2011).

The importance of this pervasive digital genre is reflected in the growing body of research that draws upon online customer review data. Scholars interested in the analysis of discourse have concentrated on the pragmatic and linguistic features of online reviews concerning a variety of topics, such as movies (De Jong and Burgers 2013; Taboada 2011; Vásquez 2014), Amazon-sold products (Miao *et al.* 2019), books (Virtanen 2017), and, last but not least, tourism activities such as restaurants (Chik and Vásquez 2017) and accommodation (Bridges and Vásquez 2018; Cappelli 2013; Cenni and Goethals 2020a; Fina 2011; Napolitano 2018; Vásquez 2014). The majority of these studies are centred on negative polarity reviews that have commonly been associated with the speech act of 'complaining'. However, some works on the linguistic construction of positive reviews, usually associated with the speech act of 'complimenting', have also been carried out (cf. *inter alia* Bridges and Vásquez 2018; Cappelli 2013; Cenni and Goethals 2020a). Another perspective through which reviews have been studied is that of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic variation. For example, Cappelli (2013) and Fina (2011) studied differences between English and Italian travel reviews on TripAdvisor, and Cenni and Goethals (2020a) investigated differences between Dutch, Italian and English reviews on Airbnb.

With the advent of online reviews and their impact on business communication practices, another ancillary genre was born, i.e. business owner responses to online reviews. This new practice of client-relations management started to spread from the tourism industry, for which "responses to the evaluations may repair or consolidate hotel-guest relations" (Cenni and Goethals 2020b: 39), and is now becoming common to all business practices (San-Martín Gutierrez *et al.* 2018). For this reason, businesses have started to make a point of replying to consumer reviews. As far as discourse-oriented studies are concerned, most of the existing body of research focuses on responses to travel reviews (cf. Cenni and Goethals 2020b; Zhang and Vásquez 2014) and generally addresses aspects such as genre description and the analysis of face-strategies in handling responses to complaints and, to a minor extent, to compliments. An interesting result is described by Lui *et al.* (2018) who were able to demonstrate that customized responses, i.e. those that do not follow an impersonal standard template, are more effective in engaging clients in the case of both positive and negative reviews.

Notwithstanding the considerable number of linguistic and cross-cultural studies on online reviews and responses, to the best of my knowledge no studies deal with online reviews (and responses) to law firms and law-related services. The study that is presented in the following Sections seeks to fill this void.

3. Corpus and methodology

The study is based on a self-compiled corpus of positive polarity online reviews to US- and UK-based law firms and the corresponding responses given by business owners or other employees [2]. The review/response interactions were sourced from Google reviews, which has been an integrated feature within the Google search engine since 2014. Google reviews allows customers to publicly post reviews about their experiences with businesses that have a registered account on Google my Business. These reviews can be accessed through Google maps or Google Search, and are automatically displayed when searching for a business or a business category (e.g. "law firms in London"). Reviewers are invited to evaluate their experience with the firm using a five-star rating scale and they are also encouraged to leave textual feedback, with the possibility of attaching pictures as well. After that, business owners can post their response to the review. One of the advantages of getting (positive) Google reviews is that they boost, through an algorithm, the visibility of businesses on Google Search and Google maps, the rationale being that the more positive reviews the higher a business appears on the search ranking.

[2] It was impossible to establish whether the reviews and responses were written by native speakers. Hence, the geographical location of the law firm was chosen as a criterion for selection.

In detail, the corpus consists of 600 reviews and 600 responses. 300 review/response pairs come from US-based law firms. The other 300 pairs are taken from UK-based law firms. Since the focus of the present paper is on positive feedback, the review/response pairs come from law firms scoring, on average, between 4.5 and 5 out of 5 in Google reviews ranking, i.e. those that have a large majority of positive reviews. For the sake of balance and representativeness, the sampling took into consideration reviews *i*) of 10 law firms for each of the two capital cities (Washington DC and London), *ii*) of 10 law firms for each of the most populated cities after the capital (New York and Birmingham) and *iii*) of 10 law firms for each of the two second-most populated after the capital cities (Los Angeles and Manchester). Law firms were identified by entering on Google maps the name of the city followed by “law firm”, e.g. “New York law firm”. For each of the selected law firms, the latest 20 4.5/5-star (i.e. rated as extremely positive) review/response couplets were manually collected by copying and pasting each text into a separate Microsoft Word document [3]. Table 1 gives an overview of the size and the composition of the corpus according to *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2014) corpus software, which was chosen as the main web host of the corpus. Thanks to *Sketch Engine,* each file was also tagged with metadata to indicate *i*) whether the text is a review or a response, and *ii*) whether it belongs to the US or the UK component of the corpus.

Overall, the *Law Firm Reviews and Responses Corpus* (henceforth *LFR Corpus*) consists of 164,355 running words (tokens) per 7,705 unique words (types). The two subcorpora that make up the corpus, i.e. Reviews and Responses, contain respectively 110,235 tokens and 6,893 types and 52,835 tokens and 2,996 types. These counts demonstrate that reviews are both wordier (more than twice as many tokens) and richer in different words than responses. The two subcomponents of the corpus (US and UK) are quite similar in terms of size, with a slight tendency of US reviews and UK responses to contain more word tokens as compared to UK reviews and US responses.

Law Firm Reviews and Responses Corpus (*LFR Corpus*)									
Reviews subcorpus					Responses subcorpus				
110,235 (tokens)		6,893 (types)			52,835 (tokens)		2,996 (types)		
US subcomponent					UK subcomponent				
Law firms	Reviews (tokens)		Responses (tokens)		Law firms	Reviews (tokens)		Responses (tokens)	
Washington	20,151		9,000		London	16,592		8,272	
New York	18,160		7,803		Birmingham	19,590		10,387	
Los Angeles	19,548		7,853		Manchester	17,479		9,520	
	57,859 (tokens)	4,518 (types)	24,656 (tokens)	2,015 (types)		53,661 (tokens)	4,579 (types)	28,179 (tokens)	1,816 (types)
TOTAL COUNTS									
164,355 (tokens)					7,705 (types)				

Table 1. Law Firm Reviews and Responses Corpus composition

[3] Texts were kept exactly as they were found, including grammar and spelling mistakes, and emojis.

As for the methods, the analysis combined quantitative corpus methods and qualitative discourse analysis, thus making this study fall under the broad category of corpus-assisted discourse studies (Partington *et al.* 2013). Corpus quantitative methods were used to explore salient lexico-grammatical aspects of the *LFR Corpus*. More in detail, corpus software *WordSmith tools 8.00* (Scott 2020) and *UAM CorpusTool* (O'Donnell 2008) were used to calculate some exploratory lexical measurements (i.e. type/token ratio and lexical density).

A more qualitative data perusal was undertaken to identify the move structure that characterizes US and UK reviews and responses as textual genres (cf. Biber *et al.* 2007 for a general introduction to move analysis). Move analysis essentially aims at describing the communicative purposes of a text, by classifying units of discourse into rhetorical moves (*ibid.*). A move is therefore intended as a section of text that performs a specific communicative function (Tardy and Swales 2014). Rhetorical moves were identified and manually annotated in each textual file of the *LFR Corpus* building on Cenni and Goethals' (2020a) taxonomy and coding scheme developed for the analysis of positive hotel reviews. The grid elaborated for this study distinguished between five moves in law firm client reviews: *i*) background information, *ii*) positive evaluation, *iii*) recommendations, *iv*) future intentions, *v*) thanking the law firm or the lawyer, and six in responses: *i*) thanking the client, *ii*) acceptance of thanks, *iii*) law firm self-promotion, *iv*) experience with the client, *v*) future solicitation, *vi*) sign off. Furthermore, for the comparative analysis between the US and the UK subcomponents, a statistical test (Z-test [4]) (cf. Brezina 2018 for a practical introduction to the use of statistics in linguistics) was used to verify the statistical significance of the obtained results.

Finally, since "positive evaluation" predictably came out as the most defining move of the *LFR Corpus*, an attentive corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the evaluative adjectives used in US and UK reviews was carried out. This was done by manually assessing the concordances of key adjectives retrieved and explored with the help of *Sketch Engine*. More precisely, I used the "keyword and term extraction" tool of the software that allows users to extract the words (tokens) that appear more frequently (from a statistical point of view) in a corpus than they would in general language, this latter being the reference corpus (cf. Bondi and Scott 2010 for a general introduction to the analysis of keywords in texts). In the case of the present analysis, the software *Sketch Engine* was set up to filter the results by word class and only include adjectives. More precisely, in order to examine salient differences in terms of keyness between Reviews US and Reviews UK, the two subcomponents were set as each other's reference corpus. Once the two lists of adjectives were produced, I concentrated on the 50 most salient ones for each subcomponent and manually selected, through close concordance reading, those that were used to express evaluation. The criterion for evaluation was Hunston and Thompson's (2000) broad characterization as the means through which

[4] The statistical test performed was a two-tailed proportion Z-test, i.e. a test used to compare proportions between two groups. This test is commonly used when you want to determine if there is a significant difference between the proportions of two categorical variables. The two-tailed aspect of the test means that it checks for a significant difference in either direction. In other words, it tests whether the proportions are significantly different and not just whether one proportion is larger or smaller than the other. The tool used for the calculation can be found here: https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/ztest_sample_mean/default2.aspx.

speakers (or writers) express attitudes, judgements, and feelings. This operation produced a list of 16 adjective types for Reviews US and 12 for Reviews UK, which were further analysed through the lens of Martin and White's (2005) "appraisal theory". In particular, the analysis takes advantage of their classification of "attitude" that distinguishes between *i*) "affect", i.e. the characterization of phenomena by reference to emotion, *ii*) "judgement", i.e. the evaluation of human behaviour with respect to social norms, and *iii*) "appreciation", i.e. the evaluation of objects and products (rather than human behaviour) by reference to aesthetic principles.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1. *Reviews and responses as genres: overall lexico-grammatical statistics*

The first operation to determine distinguishing lexico-grammatical features of online reviews and responses was the calculation of their type/token ratio, i.e. the level of lexical variation, and the lexical density, i.e. the percentage of content-carrying words to function words. A high type/token ratio is telling of a large percentage of different words, whereas a high lexical density signals a large amount of information. Starting from lexical variation, a standardized and comparable value for the type/token ratio (henceforth STTR) was computed using the corpus software *WordSmith tools* [5]. The analysis found that the STTR for the reviews subcorpus is 39.55% and for the responses subcorpus 25.10%. If we compare these findings with the general values found for written (between 65-75%) and oral (between 45-55%) English (Biber *et al.* 2021), we can observe that both reviews and responses score more similar results to those found for unplanned oral communication, which is well known for its high degree of repetitiveness and for its limited vocabulary range. Notwithstanding that, the difference between reviews and responses is quite marked with reviews scoring almost 15% more than responses. Thus, this measure seems to suggest an overall stable and specific set of language resources employed for the textual realization of positive reviews to law firms and, even more markedly, of business owner responses. As for the lexical density parameters, which were automatically calculated using *UAM CorpusTool,* the reviews subcorpus yielded a lexical density of 46.36% whereas the responses subcorpus gave 41.23%. Looking at these results in contrast to what is described in the literature on variation between spoken and written English, in which spontaneous speech hardly ever has a lexical density above 40% and written production (both fiction and non-fiction) generally produces values ranging from 40% to 65% (Biber *et al.* 2021), it appears that both reviews (in particular) and responses are highly informative texts, rich in nouns, verbs, adjectives, and lexical adverbs.

On a surface level, these preliminary statistics indicate that the vocabulary range in both subcorpora is close to what is generally found for conversation pointing, perhaps, to the high formulaicity and repetitiveness of positive feedback expression (Vásquez 2014) and of the corresponding response. Moreover, the sectorial nature of the topics dealt with, e.g. the legal issues that brought the client to the law firm and that tend to

[5] The STTR is the percentage established by computing the average TTR of a series of TTR calculations made every 1000 tokens in the corpus. This transforms the output into a comparable value also across corpora of different lengths (Scott 2020).

be repeated among the different reviewers, contributes to the repetitiveness. On the contrary, as regards the information-package, results are on the cline of written discourse, meaning that content words are at the heart of these interactions.

4.2. *Rhetorical moves in US and UK reviews and responses: a quantitative and qualitative overview*

To further explore the characteristics of law firm client reviews and business owner responses as textual genres, their constituting rhetorical moves were identified and described, taking into account the cross-cultural variation. Hence, data for the US and the UK subcomponents of the corpus were compared so as to bring to light potential differences and similarities. The following Tables show the distribution, both as a raw number and as a percentage, of the five moves that were identified in the US and UK reviews (Table 2) and of the six in US and UK responses (Table 3). In addition, the Tables also feature the results of the statistical significance test (Z-test) performed when comparing the results obtained for Reviews and Responses US and UK. The test proved that the differences in the distribution of moves between the US and the UK subcomponents are statically significant on all occasions. For both reviews and responses, moves are sorted in their most common order of appearance, meaning that, even though some degree of variation may occur, this is the order that was found in the majority (more than two thirds) of the texts in the *LFR Corpus*.

Rhetorical Moves	Reviews				Statistically significant difference Reviews US vs Reviews UK (Z-test)	
	Distribution in Reviews US		Distribution in Reviews UK			
Background information	583/600	97.34%	419/600	69.83%	Yes	Z=12.75, p<0.001
Positive evaluation	600/600	100%	600/600	100%		
Recommendation	571/600	95.28%	501/600	83.50%	Yes	Z=6.54, p<0.001
Future intentions	213/600	35.50%	31/600	5.17%	Yes	Z=13.05, p<0.001
Thanking the law firm or the lawyer	385/600	64.15%	427/600	71.67%	Yes	Z=2.59, p<.05

Table 2. Moves in Reviews in *LFR Corpus*

Rhetorical Moves	Responses				Statistically significant difference Responses US vs Responses UK (Z-test)	
	Distribution in Responses US		Distribution in Responses UK			
Thanking the client	494/600	82.17%	600/600	100%	Yes	Z=10.78, p<0.001
Acceptance of thanks	111/600	18.50%	52/600	8.67%	Yes	Z=4.97, p<0.001
Experience with the client	206/600	34.33%	164/600	27.39%	Yes	Z=2.62, p<.05
Law firm self-promotion	395/600	65.83%	129/600	21.50%	Yes	Z=15.48, p<0.001
Future solicitation	298/600	49.67%	221/600	36.83%	Yes	Z=4.48, p<0.001
Sign off	162/600	27%	264/600	44%	Yes	Z=-6.15, p<0.001

Table 3. Moves in Responses in *LFR Corpus*

4.2.1. *Moves in US and UK law firm client reviews*

To comment on the distribution of moves in Table 2, the passage that most commonly opens the review is "background information", in which clients describe their case, i.e. the reason(s) why they needed to use a lawyer and share information concerning their personal experience with the assisting law firm/lawyer. This move occurs in 97.34% of US reviews, where it stands as the second most recurrent move, and in 69.83% of UK reviews (the fourth most frequent move). This evident frequency disparity could indicate that US clients are more prone to share personal details about their experience with the web and the law company, using it as a way to make their review more subjective and engaging. Excerpts 1 and 2 are two examples of this move respectively in the US and the UK subcomponents of the *LFR Corpus*.

> 1. I live in PA and received a DUI in Maryland. I had already been convicted of 3 DUI here in PA and I did not think I was going to be coming home (facing prison sentence) [...]. (Washington, Law firm 8)

> 2. It is our first time to purchase a property in UK and we are not clear about the details and trick in the conveyancing process. (Birmingham, Law firm 3)

The segment that generally follows the introductory background information is the ensemble of "positive evaluation(s)", which is the core part of the review, i.e. the passage where the client evaluates the service received from the law firm, praising and making covert or overt compliments about the aspects that he/she appreciated the most. As expected, this move is present in all the positive polarity reviews taken into account, irrespective of the cultural context in which the review was produced. This could testify to the homogeneity of the genre and to the way its structure is framed in people's minds: when someone leaves a web review, he/she knows that an evaluative judgement is required. The two passages that follow (Example 3 for Reviews US and Example 4 for Reviews UK) exemplify this move.

> 3. [name], the attorney, took my phone call and made me feel comfortable right off the bat. [name] and his staff set me up with the most amazing doctors, and took care of me throughout the entire process. They were patient, kind, professional, and took the time each time I called them. They frequently checked in with me before and after my appointments to make sure I was doing okay during one of the most stressful times. Appreciate all the help I got from [name] and his whole team. (New York, Law firm 1)

> 4. I have been very pleased with the service provided by [law firm name] and especially [lawyer name]. Through what is obviously a difficult time, the professionalism and responsiveness of [lawyer name] has really helped and I couldn't ask for more. I'd give 5 stars just based on his professionalism so far. (Manchester, Law firm 6)

As can be noticed, in both reviews the reviewers make direct reference to the specific lawyers who assisted them. This seems to be a very widespread practice in law firm reviews. Moreover, as Example 4 illustrates, sometimes the 5-star reviewing scale is overtly mentioned.

Positive evaluations are recurrently followed by a “recommendation”. In this move, the reviewer recommends the law firm and/or the lawyer he/she used to his/her readers, nurturing the word-of-mouth mechanism of web reviews (Example 6).

> 6. I would 100% recommend Lea and this firm to any of my family and friends. (Washington, Law firm 7)

If we assess variation between US and UK reviews, we may observe that this move is more defining of the US subcomponent of the corpus. It occurs in 95.28% of US texts as compared to 83.50% in the UK, thus denoting a preference of US reviewers for offering overt recommendations to peers. In some reviews, reviewers also declare their “future intentions” in the sense that they announce that they would use the services of the reviewed law firm/lawyer again in the future, should the necessity arise (Example 7).

> 7. 10/10 would definitely recommend and hire him again, if needed. (Washington, Law firm 4)

This move is present in 35.50% of US reviews, where it is often intertwined with recommendations, but in just 5.17% of UK reviews. Therefore, the divide between the two subcomponents is quite clear for this rhetorical move making it more central in US reviews. Finally, reviews are frequently closed by a “thanking” that can be targeted at a lawyer or at the law firm in general. These expressions of gratitude tend to be realized through a narrow range of linguistic items, generally involving a thanking formula. Interestingly, this is the only move that is more widespread in UK reviews (71.67%) than in US reviews (64.15%) (Example 8).

> 8. Thank you for taking the time to write this 5-star review. (London, Law firm 9)

Such a result is in line with what Vignozzi (2019) found for British versus American media interviews with politicians, with the former containing more direct expressions of thanking than the latter.

4.2.2. *Moves in US and UK business owner responses*

The move that prototypically opens business owner responses (Table 3) is “thanking the client”. Here the person who writes the response generally remains anonymous; in fact, the plural personal pronoun “we” seems to be the preferred agent in responses, referring to the whole team of lawyers and employees working for the law firm (Example 9).

> 9. [client’s name], thank you so much for the kind words and the wonderful recommendation, we really appreciate. (London, Law firm 5)

This move is the most frequent one in both US and UK subcomponents. However, if in the UK component it occurs in 100% of responses, in US responses it is sometimes omitted (82.17%) and is occasionally substituted by some “acceptance of thanks” formulae (Example 10), which, in fact, are more common in US than in UK responses (18.50% for the US against 8.67% for the UK).

> 10. You’re very welcome. We’re not all bad guys! 👍 (Washington, Law firm 2)

As for the moves “experience with the client” and “law firm self-promotion”, which constitute the body of the response, there does not seem to be a prototypical order of appearance. In the “experience with the client” sequence, the respondent briefly hints at the experience with the client, which is, in all responses, described in very positive terms. The function of this move is clearly that of showing sympathy and engagement with clients. This is often emphasized by addressing clients using their first names (Example 11), which creates a sense of symmetry and closeness.

> 11. [client’s name], it was our pleasure representing you in court and supporting you through the process. We are so happy that everything worked out as planned! (New York, Law firm 7)

A similar move, in terms of purpose, is that of “law firm self-promotion”. In this case, the respondent overtly praises the good work and efforts the lawyers working at the firm are using to dedicate to clients (Example 12).

> 12. We always strive for the best and we are glad it shows in our results. (Los Angeles, Law firm 1)

Interestingly, both moves are more common in US responses, but if for passages describing the “experience with the client” the gap between the US and the UK is narrow, yet statistically significant, (34.33% vs 27.39%), for “law firm self-promotion” it is quite clear that the move is more typical of US responses (65.83% vs 21.50%), thus suggesting greater attention to publicity for US law firms. The move “future solicitation” (49.47% for US responses and 36.83% for UK) indicates the sequence through which business owners show their willingness to offer the client the services of the law firm again in the future. It, has, therefore, a retention purpose. In line with the more promotional nature emerging from the US response, this move is more recurrent in this subcomponent. It is interesting to observe that in some cases, in the UK component of the corpus in particular, these manifestations of availability are accompanied by a hedge that strategically reduces the risk of anxiety as needing a lawyer usually entails being in a situation of distress (Example 13).

> 13. We hope you don’t need us again in the future, but we are only a phone call away if you ever do. (London, Law firm 3)

The move “sign off” is typically found in the closing position, where it is used to terminate the response in a polite way and most commonly involves a wish (Example 14). In keeping with the formulaicity of this speech act, sometimes the same closing sequences are found among different responses. As displayed in example (14), it is common to add the name of the assisting lawyer and/or the law firm to the closing formula in order to personalize the reply and make it more sympathetic.

> 14. We wish you all the best for the future: warm regards from [assisting lawyer’s name] and [law firm]. (Birmingham, Law firm 2)

Sign offs occur in both US (27%) and UK (44%) responses, with a higher concentration in the latter corroborating, again, a greater attention to politeness rituals in the UK subcomponent of the *LFR Corpus*.

4.3. *A focus on positive evaluations in Reviews US and UK*

After concentrating on some lexico-grammatical features of US and UK reviews and responses and investigating their sequential structure through the description of their constituting rhetorical moves, I decided to further explore positive evaluations, which, as previously said, are at the heart of the positive review/response exchange. In fact, "positive evaluation" is the only move present in 100% of the reviews analysed. As the most canonical linguistic realization of evaluation is through adjectives (Martin and White 2005: 58), which are also central to the speech act of complimenting (Liao and Zhang 2023), the analysis concentrated on their usage and functions across American and British reviews and refers to Martin and White's (*ibid.*) appraisal theory categorization that, as explained in Section 3, describes linguistic items as expressions of "affect", "appreciation", or "judgement". Table 4 presents the key evaluative adjective types (Hunston and Thompson 2000), ranked in order of keyness, along with their occurrences, in Reviews US compared to Reviews UK as the reference corpus, and in Reviews UK compared to Reviews US.

Key evaluative adjectives				
	Reviews US	hits	Reviews UK	hits
1	comforting	21	superb	29
2	direct	23	professional	73
3	reliable	38	approachable	25
4	intelligent	19	pragmatic	20
5	passionate	31	brilliant	16
6	lovely	64	knowledgeable	78
7	awesome	27	assertive	11
8	responsible	10	smart	35
9	amazing	88	fast	22
10	sweet	8	informed	39
11	wonderful	55	bright	9
12	reassuring	11	precise	7
13	compassionate	26		
14	sympathetic	13		
15	fantastic	16		
16	creative	12		

Table 4. Key evaluative adjectives in Reviews US and Reviews UK ranked in order of keyness

As expected for positive polarity reviews, all key evaluative adjectives, 16 for Reviews US and 12 for Reviews UK, have obvious and inherently positive meanings. If we take a general look at the array of key adjectives used to express positive evaluations, we can observe that none of them belong to Manes and Wolfson's (1981) narrow list of adjectives that most commonly occur in formulaic (American) English compliments, i.e. "nice", "good", "pretty", "great" and "beautiful". This suggests that adjectivization in positive law firm online reviews is denser than in compliments in conversation. If we analyse the concordances of the adjectives in Reviews US, it emerges that most adjective types are clear expressions of Martin and White's (2005) "judgement" that serve to positively evaluate lawyers' behaviour, i.e. "comforting", "direct", "reliable", "intelligent", "passionate", "lovely", "responsible", "sweet", "reassuring", "compassionate", "sympathetic", "creative". Interestingly, the vast majority of these positive attitudinal evaluations refer to non-technical attributes, most of which indicate some of the so-called "soft skills", i.e. lawyers' interpersonal and communication skills (Example 15). The only judgements that overtly denote lawyers as professional figures, describing some of their technical "hard skills", are "creative" and "intelligent", which are repeatedly used to praise how clever they have been throughout the legal case (Examples 16 and 17).

15. She is highly sympathetic and compassionate. She was the rock steady for me to pass those times. (Los Angeles, Law firm 5)

16. Their range of expertise is helpful to any size of client and they find creative solutions to a wide range of issues and efficacious pathways for desired objective. (New York, Law firm 1)

17. [lawyer's name] is by far the most intelligent and caring for his clients that I've ever witnessed. (Washington, Law firm 10)

The meanings and functions of the adjectives "wonderful", "fantastic", "awesome" and "amazing" are highly dependent on the context (Martin and White 2005). In the *LFR Corpus* they are predominantly (61% of cases) used to evaluate the overall experience with the lawyer and the law firm; hence, they pertain to the category of "appreciation" (Examples 18 and 19). However, in some passages (31% of cases), they are used as expressions of "affect" to express, for example, surprise and happiness deriving from the positive experience with the law firm (Example 20). Moreover, in some instances (8% of cases), "amazing" and "awesome" are also employed as informal positive "judgements" towards the lawyer (Example 21).

18. My experience with [law firm's name] was just absolutely wonderful. (New York, Law firm 4)

19. I am dealing with [Law firm's name] since last 6 months and their service is awesome (Los Angeles, Law firm 3)

20. It was just amazing how they all went the extra mile to keep me calm during this awful experience. (New York, Law firm 4)

21. [Lawyer's name] answered my initial call, not a secretary or an assistant. This man is just awesome! (Los Angeles, Law firm 7)

Moving on to Reviews UK, all the key evaluative adjectives are expressions of "judgement" towards lawyers' behaviour, apart from "superb" and "brilliant" that sometimes (19% of cases) occur as instances of "appreciation" of the service (Example 22).

22. [Law firm's name] is a superb service. (London, Law firm 2)

Instead, none of the analysed adjectives appear to be used to convey "affect". When examining the concordances of the key adjective types that are adopted for "judgement", i.e. "professional", "approachable", "pragmatic", "brilliant", "knowledgeable", "professional", "assertive", "smart", "fast", "informed", "bright", and "precise", it becomes apparent that, unlike the case for Reviews US, many of them explicitly refer to and praise the lawyers' professional capacities, specifically their "hard skills". Examples include "professional", "pragmatic", "knowledgeable", "assertive", "smart", "fast", and "informed" (Examples 23-24), highlighting the lawyers' crucial technical qualities essential for winning legal cases.

23. She was very easy to reach, happy to talk through things on the phone when needed, and extremely knowledgeable and professional throughout. (Birmingham, Law firm 6)

24. Smart, tactical, well organised and pays really close attention to detail. (London, Law firm 1)

Therefore, positive evaluations in Reviews UK seem to foreground the importance of lawyers' expertise and their ability to provide efficient and effective legal services. This slightly differs in focus compared to Reviews US, where a greater emphasis appears to be placed on the non-technical attributes and "soft skills" of the lawyers.

5. Final remarks

Starting from a self-compiled corpus of law firm positive-polarity Google reviews and responses to law firms located in different cities in the United States and in the United Kingdom, the analysis has explored some defining features of online law firm reviews and responses as genres from different angles of linguistic analysis. The preliminary statistics calculated for the two main subcorpora of the *LFR Corpus* (i.e. Reviews and Responses) brought to light some distinctive trends that may help us to describe and understand the lexico-grammatical nature of these two interdependent genres. The lexical variation and lexical diversity parameters disclosed their complex nature as they are quite repetitive, like conversation, but also very rich in content words, like written discourse. This hybridity is shared with other forms of online communication such as social media posts (Tagg 2015).

The rhetorical move analysis identified and described five main moves in reviews and six in responses. This investigation was conducted comparatively, focusing on cross-cultural differences between the US and the UK components of the *LFR Corpus*. As far as reviews are concerned, in general terms, the results highlighted that the most defining move that characterizes the genre unanimously in the US and the UK is "positive evaluation", which hints at the entrenchment of the genre in consumers' minds, regardless of the cultural background of the reviewer. Despite that, significant discrepancies (tested through a statistical significance test) were found for the distribution of the other moves: "background information", "recommendation", and "future intentions" were noticeably more prevalent in US reviews, whereas "thanking the law firm or the lawyer" was more prominent in UK reviews. This would seem to suggest that in the US the genre is more diversified and oriented towards the word-of-mouth mechanisms of experience sharing and peers' recommendation (cf. Vásquez 2014). The results obtained for responses seem to confirm and strengthen the findings from the reviews, as "thanking the client" and "sign off", i.e. two conversational routines generally working as politeness social lubricants, are more defining of UK responses, whereas the other moves "acceptance of thanks", "experience with the client", "law firm self-promotion", and "future solicitation", which can be associated with the perception of responses as a means to publicize and promote the law firm, are more frequently represented in US responses.

The in-depth corpus-based analysis of positive evaluation in American and British reviews brought to light the most prominent evaluative adjectives for the two corpus subcomponents. The findings revealed that in both US and UK reviews the expression of a positive judgement is the most recurrent function of evaluative adjectives. However, an interesting trend surfaced when evaluating the types of adjectives used to express judgements in the two subcomponents. Specifically, in US reviews most adjectives refer to the interpersonal and communicative skills of the assisting lawyer(s), while in UK reviews, they more often highlight technical and professional qualities. This finding holds significant implications for law firms, as it provides insights into what clients value the most and could, for example, be useful in selecting which aspects to prioritize and advertise in their pre-service materials.

Future research should also consider the rhetorical and linguistic features of negative polarity law firm client reviews and corresponding responses in the US and UK. This will contribute to obtaining a comprehensive understanding of this genre and of how it can vary based on the cultural context. Results could, therefore, also be helpful in formulating guidelines for managing law firm reviews.

References

Biber D., U. Connor and T. Upton 2007. *Discourse on the Move: Using Corpus Analysis to Describe Discourse Structure*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Biber D., S. Johansson, G. Leech, S. Conrad, E. Finegan and R. Quirk 2021. *Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Bondi M. and M. Scott (eds) 2010. *Keyness in Texts*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Brezina V. 2018. *Statistics in Corpus Linguistics: A Practical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bridges J. and C. Vásquez 2018. If nearly all Airbnb reviews are positive, does that make them meaningless? *Current Issues in Tourism 21*: 2057-2075.

Cappelli G. 2013. 'A perfect Tuscan experience': destination image and cultural expectations in positive travel reviews in English and Italian. *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* 1: 59-85.

Cavalieri S. 2018. Broadcasting legal discourse: the popularization of family law through YouTube. In J. Engberg, K. Luttermann, S. Cacchiani and C. Preite (eds), *Popularization and Knowledge Mediation in the Legal Field*. Münster: LIT Verlag: 251-270.

Cenni I. and P. Goethals 2020a. Positive reviews on TripAdvisor: a cross-linguistic study of contemporary digital tourism discourse. *ONOMAZEIN* 7: 18-40.

Cenni I. and P. Goethals 2020b. Responding to negative hotel reviews: a cross-linguistic perspective on online rapport-management. *Discourse, Context & Media* 37.

Chik A. and C. Vásquez 2017. A comparative multimodal analysis of restaurant reviews from two geographical contexts. *Visual Communication* 16/1: 3-26.

Dellarocas C. 2003. The digitization of word of mouth: promise and challenges of online feedback mechanisms. *Management Science* 49/10: 1407-1424. At: http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134013.

De Jong I. and C. Burgers 2013. Do consumer critics write differently from professional critics? A genre analysis of online film reviews. *Discourse, Context & Media* 2: 75-83.

Duan W., B. Gu and A.B. Whinston 2008. The dynamics of online word-of-mouth and product sales: an empirical investigation of the movie industry. *Journal of Retailing* 84/2: 233-242.

Egbert J., D. Biber and M. Davies 2013. Developing a user-based method of web register classification. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 66.

Fan M., F. Chao, G. Lin, S. Mingming and L. Ping 2019. Product-aware helpfulness prediction of online reviews. In *The World Wide Web Conference (WWW '19) Association for Computing Machinery*: 2715-2721.

Fina M. 2011. What a TripAdvisor corpus can tell us about culture. *CULTUS* 4: 59-80.

Forbes 2019. Online reviews and their impact on the bottom line. *Forbes* 15 January 2019. At: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2019/01/15/online-reviews-and-their-impact-on-the-bottom-line/.

Forman C., A. Ghose and B. Wiesenfeld 2008. Examining the relationship between reviews and sales: the role of reviewer identity disclosure in electronic markets. *Information Systems Research* 19: 291-313.

Hunston S. and G. Thompson (eds) 2000. *Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and The Construction of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kilgarriff A. *et al.* 2014. The Sketch Engine: ten years on. *Lexicography ASIALEX* 1: 7-36.

Liao X. and Y. Zhang 2023. Stylistic and linguistic variations in compliments: an empirical analysis of children's gender schema development with machine learning algorithms. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 10/151.

Liu Z., S. Lei, Y. Guo and Z. Zhou 2020. The interaction effect of online review language style and product type on consumers' purchase intentions. *Palgrave Communication* 6/11. At: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-020-0387-6.

Lui T., M. Bartosiak, G. Piccoli and V. Sadhya 2018. Online review response strategy and its effects on competitive performance. *Tourism Management* 67: 180-190.

Manes J. and N. Wolfson 1981. The compliment formula. In F. Coulmas (ed.), *Conversational Routine (Volume 2)*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter Mouton: 115-132.

Martin J. and P.R. White 2005. *The Language of Evaluation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Melián-González S., J. Bulchand-Gidumal, and B. González López-Valcárcel 2013. Online customer reviews of hotels: as participation increases, better evaluation is obtained. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* 54/3: 274-283.

Napolitano A. 2018. Image repair or self-destruction? A genre and corpus-assisted discourse analysis of restaurants' responses to online complaints. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines* 10/1: 135-153.

Nofal R., P. Bayram, O.L. Emeagwali, and L. Al-Mu'ani 2022. The effect of eWOM source on purchase intention: the moderation role of weak-tie eWOM. *Sustainability* 14/16.

O'Donnell M. 2008. The UAM corpus tool: software for corpus annotation and exploration. In B. Callejas *et al*. (eds), *Applied Linguistics Now: Understanding Language and Mind / La Lingüística Aplicada Hoy: Comprendiendo el Lenguaje y la Mente*. Almería: Universidad de Almería: 1433-1447.

Partington A., A. Duguid and C. Taylor 2013. *Patterns and Meanings in Discourse: Theory and Practice in Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS).* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Reuters 2022. Client feedback: trends in client feedback for 2022 and beyond. At: https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/client-feedback-trends-client-feedback-2022-beyond-2022-06-28/.

San-Martín Gutiérrez S., N. Jiménez Torres and N. Puente Domínguez 2018. The replies of hotels to clients through TripAdvisor: a big data analysis. *ESIC MARKET* 49/2: 339-357.

Scott M. 2020. *WordSmith Tools version 8*. Stroud: Lexical Analysis Software.

Taboada M. 2011. Stages in an online review genre. *Text and Talk* 31/2: 247-269.

Tagg C. 2015. *Exploring Digital Communication: Language in Action*. London: Routledge.

Tardy C.M. and J.M. Swales 2014. Genre analysis. In K.P. Schneider and A. Barron (eds), *Pragmatics of Discourse*. Berlin: de Gruter: 165-187.

Vásquez C. 2014. *The Discourse of Online Consumer Reviews*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Vignozzi G. 2019. *Assessing the Language of TV Political Interviews: A Corpus-assisted Perspective*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Vignozzi G. 2022a. Embedding oral communication in law firm websites: a study on identity construction through person pro-forms in attorneys' video FAQs. In A. Zanola and B. Doerr (eds), *Oral Communication in English: Established Trends, Good Practice(s), and Future Perspectives*, *Textus: English Studies 1/Language Issue*: 185-209.

Vignozzi G. 2022b. What are Miranda rights?": the case of video FAQs on a criminal law firm website". In V. Bonsignori, B. Crawford Camiciottoli and D. Filmer (eds), *Analyzing Multimodality in Specialized Discourse Settings. Innovative Research Methods and Applications*. Vernon: Vernon Press: 115-139.

Virtanen T. 2017. Adaptability in online consumer reviews: exploring genre dynamics and interactional choices. *Journal of Pragmatics* 117: 77-90.

Zhang Y. and C. Vásquez 2014. Hotels' responses to online reviews: managing consumer dissatisfaction. *Discourse, Context and Media* 6: 54-64.

"I ADVISE A CLERK TO WRITE IN ALL HIS BUSINESS WORDS CLERK LIKE": A DIACHRONIC INSIGHT INTO ENGLISH FOR INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Annalisa Zanola
(University of Brescia, Italy)

Abstract

Business communication in intercultural and cross-cultural contexts has attracted considerable attention for a long time. Nevertheless, this wide area of study and research is still difficult to define, due to its complex nature. It is even more difficult to define who its ideal teacher/trainer and learner are. Daniel Defoe, when writing *The Complete English Tradesman* in 1725, was quite explicit about the importance of defining the specific nature of the language of business ("every trade [1] has its nostrums [2], and its little made words", Defoe 1725). Defoe's advice is a clear implicit understanding that there is an internationally recognized and shared language of business.

The aim of this contribution is that of shedding light on the first manuals of business English (BE) and business communication (BC) and showing how BC in English evolved from national to international, that is, from the essentially British perspective of early studies in business English to the international phenomenon it is today. The study will underline the relevance of some principles of past studies, both in the field of rhetoric and in the history of BE teaching, which should be adapted in a modern perspective to improve students' and teachers' performances, as the main cues to effectiveness and efficiency in intercultural and cross-cultural business communication.

[1] It is worth underlining that, in the 18th century, *trade* did not refer only to *business* or *commerce* but also to all craftsmen and professions who produced or manufactured goods (for an insight on this topic, see Maw 2021: 612-618).

[2] The *Oxford Etymology Dictionary* (https://www.etymonline.com/, s.v. *nostrum*) defines the word as follows: "c. 1600, 'a medicine made of secret ingredients by secret methods', but commonly 'quack medicine', from Latin *nostrum remedium*, our remedy (or some similar phrase), presumably indicating 'prepared by the person offering it', from Latin *nostrum*, neuter of *noster*, 'our', from *nos* 'we', (…). In extended use, 'a pet scheme for accomplishing something' (1749)". The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (https://www.merriam-webster.com/, s.v. *nostrum*) underlines that the word "has often been linked to *quack* medicine and false hopes for miracle cures, but there's nothing deceitful about its etymology. It has been a part of English since at least the early 17th century, and it comes from the Latin *noster* (…). Some think that specially prepared medicinal concoctions came to be called *nostrums* because their purveyors marketed them as 'our own' remedy". Following the Latin origin of the word, we would interpret the word here as a metaphor for the Latin expression.

1. Introducing a diachronic perspective

The distinction between General English (GE) and Business English (BE) was thoroughly discussed at the end of the last century by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) and taken up a decade later by Goddard (2007). While the distinction between the two is almost taken for granted, however, the subtle boundary that divides proficiency in GE from communicative competence in English for a specific profession is less frequently investigated.

According to Goddard (2007: 28), GE courses designed for BE learners are often aimed at students with little experience in either English language use or professional practice or students at an early stage in their careers. The language activities tend to be basic and are not designed to meet any particular needs (Evans 2003). In fact, authentic BE training should be designed for people with professional experience and concrete reasons for taking time to study a foreign language; in other words, it should be focused on specific communication skills, such as presentations, business report writing, emails, etc. The programs should be intensive, of short duration, and with small groups, aiming at bringing all participants – maybe starting at different levels of language proficiency – to write and speak adequately in their jobs rather than reach high levels of decontextualized language proficiency.

Therefore, defining Business English in the broad context of ESP is becoming increasingly difficult due to the rapid changes caused by various social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics (Chan 2020). These include, in particular, the increasing internationalization of the business world, the sharp increase in intercultural and interlingual interaction, increasing mobility, and the growth of public interest in all professions, including that of the specialized language trainer. In this context, and in continents where high-performing economies show advanced forms of curricular integration, the traditional profile of the freelance trainer, a "lone rider" who imposes his or her subject matter in a personal way, is no longer valid (Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang 2013).

Training in BE in the post-Covid era must have solid prior methodological foundations and be based on the real needs of the user (learner), the trainer's minimum requirements, and the trainer's familiarity with the subject (Zanola 2023: 59). In business, needs analysis is strongly conditioned by the purpose of the interaction, the type of relationship existing between the interlocutors, as well as the subject of the discussion. Indeed, some communicative situations in this area may still require only some familiarity with GE of course, without resorting to specialized terminology. There are, however, some identifiable features of BE, such as the fact that most communication takes place in international and cross-cultural contexts in which non-native interlocutors cannot help but use English as their only means of communication (Murata and Jenkins 2009).

In other words, what has differentiated BE from GE for many decades has implications on how BE has been taught, along with the dominant approaches in English language teaching at any given time. With this general view in mind, Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang (2013: 207) referred to it as a "material-led movement rather than a research-led movement that produced a number of successful textbooks and teaching resources inspired by writer’s intuition about, or ‘informed understanding of’, business communication”.

Undoubtedly, BE stems from the need to communicate in a specialized field, yet within an inherently intercultural and/or cross-cultural perspective. The two dimensions are distinguished by Jackson (2014: 3) as follows:

> Cross-cultural communication generally refers to the comparison of communication behaviours and patterns in two or more cultures, while intercultural communication involves interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds […]. Cross-cultural communication research typically compares and contrasts native discourse and communication behaviours (or styles) in different cultures […]. In contrast, intercultural communication research involves an investigation of interpersonal interaction between individuals (or groups) from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This contribution is aimed at highlighting the intercultural dimension embedded in BE and BC from their origins. Although these two concepts have undergone some new shifts in recent decades (Bhatia and Bremner 2012), the issue is far from new: the gradual convergence in terms of research, theory and practice of approaches to the teaching of BE and BC all over the world has developed through the centuries bridging the gap between academia and the professions, the classroom and business (Zanola 2023). BC may be defined as intercultural, cross-cultural and international (Spencer-Oatey 2000). Nevertheless, the first study of the cultural background and rhetoric of national and international sales negotiation practices dates back to the 17th century, with the very first remarks on business discourse by the British novelist Daniel Defoe, as we will demonstrate later in this paper.

The difference between BE and GE started to be focused on in the late 1960s and 1970s, with particular attention to specialist vocabulary and intercultural issues, which were reflected in the coursebooks and materials of the time: these focused largely on texts with comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises, repetition drills, but also on application to real-life situations. A clear move towards communicative skills training in an international business context occurred in 1972 with the publication of the BBC coursebook and video *English for Business*, which incorporated greater emphasis on areas such as listening skills development, dialogue practice and role-plays, therefore accepting the need to develop students’ skills to deal with practical situations. This trend continued during the mid-1970s and 1980s, when BE teaching followed the move in GE teaching towards a more functional and interculturally-based syllabus. The focus was then on functional language and the teaching of formulaic phrases for recommending, agreeing, disagreeing, etc. These were introduced in international business contexts and practised in role-plays of common business situations such as making appointments, making introductions, business lunches, etc.

From the late 1980s the focus shifted to working on intercultural business communication skills. This was largely due to the development of company training programmes in the late 1980s, which began to provide employees with worldwide opportunities to attend courses in presentation techniques, negotiating and effective meeting skills, among other things, and of course led to the publication of books and materials on business communication expertise. This has profoundly influenced BE teaching up to the present day in that the focus on BC skills forms a major component of most current BE courses and coursebooks (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013).

In spite of the fact that the focus on real-world communication is prevalent in much contemporary BE teaching, the issue is by no means new, however. BE was born above and beyond any geographical boundaries, in the world of business, at the very time when awareness of the role of language in the professions was growing: business mindsets and values have contributed to determining the contexts and skills on which BE courses (and texts) have focused and continue to focus. This study explores the origins of this awareness, which precedes by far any date of presumed foundation of the BE field. To this end, our reflection will start from the 17th century in Europe, then follow the development of the idea of BE learning and teaching in the following centuries and dwell on the rich production of BE and BC manuals in the United States in the first decades of the 20th century, due largely to the increasing predominance of American economic power in the world. It is in these manuals that the first examples of any systematic treatment of BE are found, in the perspective of authentic intercultural communication.

2. The 17th century: the origins of business communication in English

The first remarks on the specificity of the English language as applied to business and commerce date back to the 17th century. English literature at that time offered some insightful short remarks devoted to the peculiarities of communication in trade affairs. While describing the ideal background for a good tradesman, North (1669: 116) underlined the importance of what nowadays we would call *humanities* in businessmen's education:

> if reason might be our guide, I should advise our Gentleman to the study of History; and in first place to that concerning our own Nation, and his time will be the better spent, if by Reading he acquaints himself with the Laws of this Kingdom, as far as may be obtained without much labour, for pains: taking and delight can hardly consist together.

North's statement seems to be ahead of its time: the author anticipates here the idea – almost taken for granted nowadays – that businessmen must have a solid cultural background and strong (inter)cultural awareness in order to succeed in their career (Aurner 1958). Only a few decades earlier, Townesend shed light on the specificity of business writing, when declaring (1675: 88): "I advise a Clerk to write in all his business words Clerk like, and not unfittingly".

Though careful in underlining the role of a humanistic background in a clerk's preparation, his book was the first tentative evidence of a deliberate approach to some specialized training. Almost naturally following Townesend's statement, only three years later Baxter (1680) made a statement that seems to us prophetic of what in the last century would become a common reality, namely: considering the language of science as the international language used by scientists, the language of art as the *koiné* language [3] used by art experts, and so on. In other words, we find in Baxter's statement

[3] Oral English is increasingly used as a *koiné* for study, research and professional purposes, and as

(1680: 10) the anticipation of the contemporary definition of 'specialized language': "Words of Art or Science are to be understood according to the use of the men of that Art or Science".

The phrase resonates as an observation for the time in which it was written but at the same time it has an extraordinarily modern meaning. Only a few years ago, a book entitled *The Science of Communicating Science* was published (Cormick 2019), which brought an undeniably brilliant - updated and comprehensive - summary of the most recent psychological and behavioural studies on motivated reasoning, information overload, value judgement, and the nuance of word choice for framing a concept in communicating science: the target audience was primarily made up of scientists obliged to do public engagement, and the book proved to be as useful to them as Baxter's manual was to the tradesmen of his time. In some ways, Baxter introduced the core issue of specialized communication: disseminating specialized contents in a way that is understandable to all is introduced in his book and is increasingly relevant today. In Cormick's (2019: 4) words: "science […] is intrinsically complex, and finding a way to simplify it without dumbing it down to the point of misrepresentation can be a challenge."

It is since the 17th century that academic and non-academic contributions have been produced on the nature of language for professional or specific purposes. As for the language of business, Daniel Defoe's technical writings have strongly influenced English prose in the field (Di Renzo 1998). One of the pioneers of the English novel, Defoe primarily earned his living as a journalist, pamphleteer, proposal writer and freelance business consultant. A born entrepreneur, Defoe developed many projects that included promoting and marketing the first practical diving bell, designing commercial fisheries and improving London's sewer system, producing a series of popular self-help manuals, and founding and editing the first English technical writing journal, *The Projector* (Sherman 1996). To the best of my knowledge, his two major pieces of professional writing – *An Essay of Projects* (1698) and the landmark *The Complete English Tradesman* (1725) – can be considered the first English business writing manuals. The profile of the trader takes on a particular identity starting from Defoe's masterpiece: it constitutes a landmark in the definition of an international professional context that would require ever more attention from linguists and experts in the teaching of English to foreigners in the following centuries.

3. The 18th and 19th centuries: the business 'jargon' was born

In his historical sketch of the origin and development of the middleman organization that served English business before the Industrial Revolution, Westerfield (1915) had the brilliant intuition of considering the 17th century profile of the English merchant and tradesman as the authors of progress in society. According to Westerfield (*ibid.*: 125):

an increasingly standardized lingua franca that is mostly spoken as a second language though being the first language of a limited percentage of speakers (Siegel 1985: 359). Nevertheless, as Hymes (1971) had already anticipated, English is not just any *koiné*, as this would require it to stabilize and become a primary language. On the contrary, the development of English should be approached within the context of its expansion in contents and roles and resulting mixture of different varieties (Zanola 2022, 2023).

> The hand that turned the wheel of commerce was not the producing craftsman but the merchant and tradesman. […] the successful manufacturer became to some degree a *commercant*, organizing his own sales' department. It is important to discover what were the activities of these new men, what were their functions in commerce, and what their connections with statesmen, national policy, and social life.

There was rapid progress in business communication all over the world at the time. This new category of professionals needed multiple skills to succeed in their jobs: their competence in communicating about their own business was one of the most essential abilities. Far from being considered a local or a national issue, language was perceived as a powerful tool in forming a professional identity, that is, the individual's sense of belonging to a particular profession. It is in this historical context that the business 'nostrums' Defoe referred to were born, as Westerfield (*ibid*.: 392) asserts:

> A coffee-house proprietor named Lloyd established a newspaper for his patrons in 1696. It was published thrice a week and contained news from the various ports at home and abroad relative to shipping. *Lloyd's News* during the six months of its existence was a medium of communication for merchants, captains, shippers, and underwriters. It was suppressed by the government and seems to have been succeeded by *news-letters* furnishing shipping and commercial intelligence to the guests at Lloyd's. These were either passed from hand to hand or were read from a pulpit. In 1726 *Lloyd's List* began to be published, and the underwriters developed a special intelligence department of their own. The *List* contained the rates of London exchange on foreign markets, the current prices of stocks and funds, a tide-table, news of the arrival and departure and accidents of ships, both foreign and domestic, etc. Such news was of first importance to merchants and underwriters.

Writers of the time agree in assigning the merchant some special qualities of mind and temperament and broad experience with the world, which is confirmed by Defoe himself, as Westerfield (*ibid*.: 395) points out:

> The subjects in which proficiency of knowledge and use was essential were many. He had to be able to use commercial papers, as bills of exchange, bills receivable and payable, policies of insurance, letters of attorney, receipts, protests, charter-parties, contracts of partnership, charters corporate. Bookkeeping and accountancy and accessory branches of mathematics; local and foreign weights, measures and coins; commercial law and customs; technical knowledge of commerce and banking facilities; physical and commercial geography; processes, methods and materials of production; statistics; knowledge of public affairs and public law; sound knowledge of English and commercial correspondence; acquaintance with the best markets for particular goods; factorage and commission; navigation; etc., etc., all these but intimate how comprehensive must be the learning and interests of the *Universal Merchant* and *Complete Tradesman*.

Chapters II and III of *The Complete English Tradesman* are rich in insightful remarks on the adequate usage of written and spoken language in business, with a special eye on clear communication with or among foreigners. "Part handbook and commercial encyclopaedia, part satire on the hazards and delusions of the market" (Di Renzo 1998: 331), Defoe's manual is a true international business treatise: conceived as a series of business letters, not only does the book offer practical advice on concrete business issues but also rules about clear writing and speaking in English to both natives and non-natives (Defoe 1725: 17):

> As plainness and a free unconstrain'd way of speaking in the beauty and excellency of speech, so an easy free concise way of writing is the best style for tradesmen. He that affects a rumbling and bombast style, and fills his letters with long harangues, compliments, and flourishes, should turn poet instead of tradesman, and set up for a wit, not a shopkeeper.

To some extent, his keen interest in business writing style anticipates the current idea of specialized language for the professions. In his view, effective business letters rely on a kind of 'scientific' attitude. He therefore recommends (*ibid.*: 16) every tradesman

> to take all occasion to converse with mechanicks of every kind, and to learn the particular language of their business; not the names of their tools only, and the way of working with their instruments as well as hands; but the very cant of their trade, for every trade has its nostrums, and its little made words, which they often pride themselves in, and which yet are useful to them on some occasion or other [4].

Like a good Puritan preacher, a tradesman must "suit his language" (*ibid.*: 25) to his audience. The correct choice of words is essential, so that (*ibid.*):

> it is a particular excellence in a tradesman to be able to know all the terms of art in every separate business, so as to able to speak and write to any particular handicraft or manufacturer in his dialect, and it is as necessary as it is for a seaman to understand the names of all the several things belonging to a ship. This, therefore, is not to be understood when I say, that a tradesman should write plain and explicit, for these things belong to, and are part of, the *language of trade* (my italics).

If adopting a jargon specific to a job is a fundamental issue in good business communication ("The nicety of writing on business consists chiefly in giving every species of goods their trading names" (*ibid.*: 32)), Defoe does not underestimate the importance of correct, clear and plain style in business writing and speaking (*ibid.*):

> The end of speech is that men might understand one another's meaning; certainly that speech […] is the best way of speaking. If any man were to ask me, which would be supposed to be a perfect style, or language, I would answer, that in which a man speaking to five hundred people, of all common and various capacities, idiots or lunatics excepted, should be understood by them all in the same manner with one another, and in the same sense in which the speaker intended to be understood.

[4] The word *cant* in this quotation deserves special attention. The item has been associated with beggars for centuries and expanded after 1680 to mean "the jargon of criminals and vagabonds" (https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=cant). In spite of the modern acceptation of the term, which is generally used to signify *hypocrisy* (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cant), in this context the word should be interpreted as free from any negative connotation.

In an extraordinary way, Defoe's statement seems to emphasize the most important principles of business English learning and teaching to foreigners of the following centuries. Vocabulary practice, good writing and speaking well are among the most frequent topics treated in all the manuals published in English all over the world through the centuries. I am therefore going to illustrate the literature on business English which developed from the following century up to the present day, in order to identify a common denominator in all these works and to demonstrate that the literature devoted to this subject precedes our century by a long way.

4. The early 20th century manuals: from BE to BC

At the beginning of the 20th century, the newly born BE specialized domain showed its independent status in some manuals, which were conceived for people (young learners or adults, mainly non-natives) approaching 'practical business' (Pinnavaia and Zanola 2022). I am not considering their contents in detail, but I will underline here how much the specificity of English *for Business* was taken into consideration at the time.

In harmony with what Defoe described in his treatise, in his manual of BE for university foreign students MacClintock (1915) listed *correctness* and *clearness* among the main qualities of good writing and speaking. As for correctness, he devoted half of his book to 'Grammatical Correctness' in terms of what he called 'Inflection, Agreement, Government, Diction, and Arrangement'. In more than three hundred pages, he described the syntax and semantics of English that are essential to teach what Business and English require, in their specific respective meanings (MacClintock 1915: vi):

> Business — It tries to stick close to what you need in actual communications and transactions involving everyday affairs and the basic matters of business. English — It does not undertake to teach business, or a business. It tries to keep as close as possible to its purpose — the purpose of equipping you to express yourself in whatever business you may go into. If you go on to become an advertiser, or a commercial correspondent, or an expert private secretary, or a professional writer on business, you will have to take advanced professional courses to equip yourself for these things.

The importance of exercises for the practice of English in international professional contexts is highlighted in several manuals of BE of the first quarter of the 20th century (Cook 1920; Davis and Lingham 1914; Frisoni 1922; Gallagher and Moulton 1918; Hagar 1914; Hammond and Herzber 1914; Hatfield 1921; Hotchkiss and Drew 1916; Hotchkiss and Kilduff 1915; Lewis 1918; MacClintock 1915; Nagaoka and Theophilus 1925). While some authors of BE books gave priority to practising written skills (Hammond and Herzberg 1914), the vast majority devoted pages to oral skills for the workplace and considered clarity in speech a special topic within them. The first chapter of Hotchkiss and Drew (1916), devoted to 'Essentials of the Business', is divided into the following sub-chapters: "Substance and Style, Clearness in Sentences (Through Unity), Clearness in Sentences (Through Coherence), Correctness in Sentence Structure, Correctness of Diction, Force in Sentence Structure, Force in Diction, The Paragraph". Sub-chapters 2 to 5 are built on the concepts of clearness and correctness, which take their roots directly from Quintilian's categories, that is: correctness, clarity, elegance, and appropriateness. In the same manual we read (Hotchkiss and Drew 1916: 47):

> The aim of business English should be to economize the reader's attention to present ideas so that they may be grasped clearly and quickly with the least expenditure of mental effort. Clearness in sentence structure and correctness of syntax are aids to economy, but no less so is the correct use of words. Good diction is the result of clear and correct thinking, and of unceasing care in the selection of words, the symbols of ideas.

Effectiveness and efficiency in oral performances in BE are a priority for other authors of the same period. Webster (1916: 75) writes:

> The choice of words, and the arrangement of words and syllables should be euphonious. Because such an order is more pleasing to the sensitive ear, it is on that account more quickly and easily grasped; therefore, more economical, forcible, and suggestive.

Sections 4 to 7 underline one of the most popular commonplaces of contemporary BE courses, that is, 'Building speaker confidence[2], or 'Fear of Public Speaking' (Zanola 2019), which is a common issue in the majority of the studies in the field (Webster 1916: 319):

> When it comes to the delivery of your speech, even though you may feel nervous, you must try to appear at ease. A nervous speaker makes an audience nervous. Practice is the big factor in cultivating ease. Be sure you know the gist of your speech and, above all, be able to relate your anecdote tellingly. Try to appear as if every bit of what you said came spontaneously.

Moreover, all these manuals are concerned with preparation for professional oral performances at different levels on topics such as: adapting to the audience and the situation (Hatfield 1921); finding the right topic (Webster 1916); researching and studying the topic (*ibid.*); supporting one's ideas (Gallagher and Moulton 1918); structuring the speech (Hatfield 1921; Carnegie 1941); outlining the speech (Hotchkiss and Drew 1916). The new specialized identity of the BE speaker is considered in these books, which often raise the question of whether the learner (in this case, only the native speaker of English) is able to argue in the specific way that his/her profession requires (Gallagher and Bowdoin Moulton 1918: 105):

> What is the difference between description for the sake of its picturing power and description as adapted to the aims of business? Why is careful description essential in business? How does a story told by a salesman to a customer differ from a story in your selections from literature? What are the characteristics of argument in business? What is the difference between proof and persuasion?

Answers to the above questions are still under discussion, especially when performance-based language assessment is carefully taken into consideration in professional settings (Jacoby and McManara 1999; Taillefer 2007, 2013). It was in the second half of the 20th century that, starting in the United States, the awareness of the strong link between language and job-specific communication emerged in BE manuals designed specifically for business people: these were mainly manuals for native English speakers who had to learn how to write texts typical of the economic sphere or to talk about economic issues in various contexts, from dialogue with a client up to public speaking.

Saunders (1949), for example, provides a thorough and comprehensive collection of business letters and reports, illustrations of *attractive letterheads*, and practical insights into the principles and characteristics of business writing: at a time when women were still excluded from the upper levels of academia, Alta Saunders became the first female Professor of BE and founded the American Business Writing Association (later renamed the Association for Business Communication), declaring the fundamental role of *clearness, correctness, conciseness, and appropriateness* in business writing. In her manual, business letters are more than mere correspondence on business issues (*ibid.*: 133):

> The difficulty of literature is not to write, but to write what you mean; not to affect your reader, but to affect him precisely as you wish. This point was enunciated by Robert Louis Stevenson […] and like other principles which are fundamental to effective expression, it is just as true in business communication as in literature. […] Whereas in literature a writer's primary interest is to express his thoughts, in business letters the writer's primary interest is to convey information to people and to move them to act. […] The theory of communication of the business correspondent […] is that it is his job "to get across to the reader" whatever is on his mind. He places emphasis upon writing-about-something-for-someone-for-some-purposes.

In 1952, Saunders' words were echoed in a manual published in the United Kingdom by an English EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher, Charles Ewart Eckersley, and a refugee from the Continent, Walter Kaufmann, a Jewish German businessman. Their book (Eckersley and Kaufmann 1952) is a splendid example of ante litteram interdisciplinary collaboration between the language trainer and the businessman.

5. From the 1950s to the present day: the workplace perspective

In 1990, a survey carried out by Schleppegrell and Royster (1990) in 55 English language training (ELT) schools (in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Central and South America) revealed that the majority of schools offering ELT programs for business experts did not use authentically business-oriented materials: at the time, quality training for business professionals was too often limited to adapting general English course contents to Business English contexts and texts. Fortunately, a major effort in characterizing BE literature has been carried out in the meantime. Only a few years after Schleppegrell and Royster's review, a piece of research by Reed and Nolan (1997) highlighted the progress made by teachers and textbook authors in incorporating flexibility, interest, and relevance in BE coursebooks: not only were they offering new tools for practising professionally relevant language activities, but they were also overcoming the usual 'Anglo-centricity' (Reed and Nolan 1997: 396) in favour of a wide variety of non-native performances in oral recorded performances. Their survey, however, covered a rather limited quantity of materials for analysis, made up of a list of books, cassettes, and videos. Only a few years later, the basic dilemma for any surveyor started to be in relation to what 'BE materials' actually were: the spectrum which began with the book was more and more often going all the way through downloadable materials from publishers' websites to worksheets freely shared among professionals in discussion groups, chat rooms, and the like. The technical stretch of BE materials was and still is increasing.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there were significant changes in the international publishing landscape as well. Flinders (2005: 159) observes:

> Although coursebooks from the big four – Pearson, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Macmillan – continue to dominate their lists, Macmillan, in particular, has strengthened its BE credentials with some interesting new titles. Language Teaching Publications has been sold to Heinle and Heinle. Other independents, notably Summertown and Delta, have invested in BE.

In other words, the market of BE published materials all over the world has expanded enormously since the beginning of the new millennium. Healthy competition, global publishing and global marketing have meant higher standards, but they have also enlarged the readership enormously: from BE university students up to professionals of different ages and levels of responsibilities, learners are typically adults at work or young adults that will be working soon. For this reason, more and more attention has been given to soft management skills like team development and project management, to intercultural communication skills, and to specific lexical issues (Lario-de-Oñate and Amador 2013). As Bhatia and Bremner (2012: 422) point out, in recent years Business English has joined the field of Business Communication, creating the new area of 'English for Business Communication' (EBC), whose main goal is to

> open up opportunities for managers to see their communication practices in a more informed light, providing new ways of thinking about their discursive practices. […] a comprehensive understanding of the motives and intentions of business practices is possible only if one goes beyond textual constraints to look at the multiple discourses, actions and voices that play a significant role in the formation of specific discursive practices within institutional and organisational frameworks.

Integration of BE and BC is likely to be enhanced in the future. Although linguistic text-based teaching and learning methodologies are suitable to conceptualize communicative purposes in terms of the strategies of writers or speakers, such purposes cannot be fully understood without some appreciation of how they were interpreted by members of the specialist community: the boundaries of genre analysis must be extended beyond the text, to the context and audience response. In this regard, Reed (2007: 168) introduces the new concept of 'collaborative course design', a decisive turning point in language learning methodologies: the business English trainer is required to understand and identify the values of corporate clients, who are entitled to adjust their requirements as BE progresses. BE courses should be negotiated with the learners, as their teacher is a trainer, a coach and a consultant at the same time. Bhatia and Bremner (2012: 419-420) assert that:

> English for Business Purposes needs […] to create appropriate conditions for meeting the interdisciplinary discourse-based demands placed on new students in the academy and to meet the needs of the business community for multidisciplinary communicative expertise. […] This mismatch between the real world of professions and that of the classroom needs to be handled more realistically.

At a pedagogical level, the corresponding challenge is to handle the tension between workplace requirements and ESP practice (Angouri 2018; Bowe and Martin 2007). Earlier studies on the field have supported us in giving evidence of the strong identity of BE in the wider field of ESP. In addition to that, a brief overview of the existing literature demonstrates that the teaching and learning of English for Business cannot ignore the support of the business expert. A focused reflection on the impact of the business expert role of consultant in building up materials that are suitable to teach business communication in English is needed, in the broader context of ESP teaching and research (Goddard 2007). Due to the varied and complex nature of business communication, however, BE studies and programs should be targeted for a specific audience (professionals vs university students): in any case, it should never be standardized or copied from models which are not taken from authentic business contexts. In the words of Aurner (1958: 149-150), "We all agree that the terms of the factory […] are vividly descriptive and highly concrete. But to understand them, we need the right experience and background".

The history of BE teaching seems to demonstrate that only a balanced mixture of communicative competence and business expertise is the key to success.

6. Conclusions

The importance of an excellent command of business language among businesspeople has been known for centuries. As this contribution has underlined, Daniel Defoe anticipated some advice on business that is just as relevant today as when he wrote it. Nevertheless, the complexity of intercultural and cross-cultural issues related to the peculiar nature of BE and BC still requires constant consideration.

Teachers of BE need experience, knowledge, and an interest in business matters, even though most of them have never experienced the world of business. Moreover, as Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) underline, BE teachers should be also good course designers and material providers, efficient collaborators and researchers, and evaluators. In addition to this, these professionals are working in a world where most communication is between non-native speakers (NNSs), and the language of communication is English as a world language (EWL). A major area of study for the BE teacher is also the study of discourse communities and the role of text within those communities. This may involve the use of specific texts, representing the economic and financial trends of the exact time when the teaching material is produced and then used.

As for the learners of BE, their supposed linguistic *correctness* seems to be of increasingly secondary importance with respect to broad business communication. Following Jenkins (2006), we could interpret BE as some international ELF, occupying a third space (or third place or third culture) between English as a Native Language and English as a Foreign Language. Once again, however, the broad idea of business communication evolves over time, creating a continuously changing specimen of the ideal BE learner.

Shedding light on the first manuals of BE and showing how BE language evolved from a national to an international one, I have tried to underline the relevance of some of the principles of past British studies in the field of the history of BE teaching, which should be adapted in a modern international perspective to improve students' and teachers' performances, as the main cues to effectiveness and efficiency in worldwide business communication (MacSwan 2020).

Considering the further difficulty in defining a clear educational and research path for both the European context (Barkhuizen 2021) and the American one (Doyle 2012), pinpointing the identity of BE is nowadays a priority: its long history stems from the need of a professional category to express itself adequately both in written and oral form in the contexts that have always characterized it. The issue of the identity of the trainer in the BE area was and still is fundamental, and leads us to a series of important methodological questions, so clearly listed by Di Renzo (2002: 46):

> At the dawn of the new millennium, our discipline faces the same vexing questions it confronted fifty years ago: Are we primarily practitioners and consultants or scholars and teachers? Do we train or educate students? Should we situate our practice in the classroom or the workplace? Is our subject closer to rhetoric and communication or the natural and social sciences?

BE seems to originate within ESP, which has a recent history, from the 1960s onwards (Johns 2013, which in turn refers to Swales 1988). Nevertheless, if we approach it in terms of communicative practice, its history is much older than contemporary studies claim it to be, dating back to Defoe's time, when communication in trading affairs started to be conceptualized and taught as a result. Once again, the history of a discipline teaches us that we have much to learn from what has been achieved by those who came before us.

References

Angouri J. 2018. *Culture, Discourse, and the Workplace*. London/New York: Routledge.

Aurner R.R. 1958. *Effective Communication in English (with Management Emphasis)*. Cincinnati/Chicago: South-Western Publishing Company.

Bargiela-Chiappini F. and Z. Zhang 2013. Business English. In B. Paltridge and S. Starfield (eds), *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*. Chichester: Wiley & Sons: 193-211.

Barkhuizen G. 2021. *Language Teacher Educator Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baxter R. 1680. *The defence of the nonconformists plea for peace, or, An account of the matter of their nonconformity against Mr. J. Cheney's answer called The conforming nonconformist, and The nonconforming conformist: to which is added the second part in answer to Mr. Cheney's Five undertakings*. London: Printed for Benjamin Alsop. At http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A26911.0001.001.

Bhatia V. and S. Bremner 2012. English for Business Communication. *Language Teaching* 45/4: 410-445.

Bowe H. and K. Martin 2007. *Communication across Cultures. Mutual Understanding in a Global World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carnegie D. 1941. *Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business*. New York: Association Press.

Chan M. 2020. *English for Business Communication*. London/New York: Routledge.

Cook L.B. 1920. *A Project Book in Business English*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Cormick C. 2019. *The Science of Communicating Science. The Ultimate Guide*. Clayton South: CSIRO Publishing.

Davis R. and C.H. Lingham 1914. *Business English and Correspondence*. Boston/New York: Ginn and Company.

Defoe D. 1725 (1987). *The Complete Tradesman (Annotated)*. Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing.

Defoe D. 1697. *An Essay upon Projects*. London: Cockerill.

Di Renzo A. 1988. The complete English tradesman: Daniel Defoe and the emergence of business writing. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 28/4: 325-334.

Di Renzo A. 2002. The great instauration: restoring professional and technical writing to the humanities. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 32/1: 45-57.

Doyle M.S. 2012. Business language studies in the United States: on nomenclature, context, theory, and method. *The Modern Language Journal* 96: 105-121.

Dudley-Evans T. and M.J. St John 1998. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eckersley C.E. and W. Kaufmann 1952. *English Commercial Practice and Correspondence. A First Course for Foreign Students*. London/New York/Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co.

Evans L. 2003. Language, translation and the problem of international accounting communication. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 17/2: 210-248.

Flinders S. 2005. Business English materials. *ELT Journal* 59/2: 156-176.

Frisoni C. 1922. *A Manual of English Commercial Correspondence*. Milan: Hoepli.

Gallagher O.C. and L.B. Moulton 1918. *Practical Business English*. Boston/New York/Chicago: Houghton Mifflin.

Goddard R.J. 2007. *Teaching English for International Business*. Bedfordshire: Authors OnLine Ltd.

Hagar H.A. 1914. *Applied Business English and Applied Correspondence*. New York/Chicago: The Gregg Publishing Company.

Hammond H.W. and M.J. Herzber 1914. *Style-Book of Business English for High-Schools: Business Courses, Regents' and Teachers' Examinations*. New York: Pitman.

Hatfield W.W. 1921. *Business English Projects*. New York: Macmillan.

Hotchkiss G.B. and C.A. Drew 1916. *Business English. Its Principles and Practice*. New York/Cincinnati/Chicago: American Book Company.

Hotchkiss G.B. and E.J. Kilduff 1915. *Handbook of Business English*. New York: New York University Book Store.

Hymes D. 1971. *On Communicative Competence*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Jackson J. 2014. *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*. London/New York: Routledge.

Jenkins J. 2006. Points of view and blind spots: EFL and SLA. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 16/2: 137-162.

Johns A.M. 2013. The history of English for Specific Purposes research. In B. Paltridge and S. Starfield (eds), *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*. Chichester: Wiley: 5-30.

Kankaanranta A. and L. Louhiala-Salminen 2013. What language does global business speak? The concept and development of BELF. *Iberica* 26: 17-34.

Lario-de-Oñate M.C. and M. Vazquez Amador 2013. The intercultural component in Business English textbooks. *Iberica* 26: 171-194.

Lewis E.H. 1918. *Business English*. Chicago: Lasalle Extension University.

MacClintock P.L. 1915. *The Essentials of Business English*. Chicago: Lasalle Extension University.

MacSwan J. 2020. Academic English as standard language ideology: a renewed research agenda for asset-based language education. *Language Teaching Research* 24/1: 28-36.

Maw P. 2021. Provincial merchants in eighteenth-century England: The 'Great Oaks' of Manchester. *The English Historical Review* 136/580: 568-618.

Murata K. and J. Jenkins (eds). 2009. *Global Englishes in Asian Contexts: Current and Future Debates*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nagaoka H. and D. Theophilus 1925. *English and Commercial Correspondence. A Course of Training in the Writing of English*. London: Pitman.

North D. 1669. *Observations and Advices Oeconomical*. London: Printed by T.R. for John Martyn.

Pinnavaia L. and A. Zanola 2022. Teaching English writing in the twentieth century seen through handbooks for mother-tongue and foreign speakers. In S. Oda Doff and R. Smith (eds), *Policies and Practice in 20th-century Language Teaching*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press: 163-188.

Reed B. 2007. Recent Business English publications. *ELT Journal* 61/2: 167-178.

Reed B. and S. Nolan 1997. Business English materials. *ELT Journal* 51/4: 383-395.

Saunders A.G. 1949. *Effective Business English*. New York: The MacMillan Company.

Schleppegrell M. and L. Royster 1990. Business English: an international survey. *English for Specific Purposes* 9/1: 3-16.

Sherman S. 1996. *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century: Accounting for Defoe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Siegel H. 1985. Koines and koineization. *Language in Society* 14/3: 357-378.

Spencer-Oatey H. (ed.) 2000. *Culturally Speaking. Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. London/New York: Continuum.

Swales J. 1988. *Episodes in ESP. A Source and Reference Book on the Development of English for Science and Technology*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Taillefer G.F. 2007. The professional language needs for Economics graduates: assessment and perspectives in the French context. *English for Specific Purposes* 26: 135-155.

Taillefer G.F. 2013. CLIL in higher education: the (perfect?) crossroads of ESP and didactic reflection. *ASp* 63: 31-53.

Townesend G. 1675 (2011). *A preparative to pleading being a work intended for the instruction and help of young clerks of the court of common pleas*. (London: Printed for Israel Harrison, 1675; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011). At http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A63018.0001.001.

Webster E.H. 1916. *English for Business*. New York: Newson and Co.

Westerfield R.B. 1915. *Middlemen in English Business. Particularly between 1660 and 1760*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Zanola A. 2019. Public speaking in Business English academic courses. From university requirements to workplace needs. *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* 1: 181-196.

Zanola A. 2022. Speaking about speaking. Historical foundations of oral communication Studies. *Textus* 1: 17-38.

Zanola A. 2023. *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale*. Rome: Carocci.

Notes on contributors

Roxanne Barbara Doerr (PhD) is a Researcher in English Language and Linguistics at the Department of Economics and Management of the University of Brescia (Italy). She holds a PhD in English Studies, the title of Dr. Phil. from the University of Köln, and the title of Doctor Europaeus. Her current areas of research and publication include English for Specific and Academic Purposes, military discourse, distance learning and teaching, online discourse communities, Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies and Corpus Stylistics. Her most recent publications include the book *Academic Style Proofreading: An Introduction* (Peter Lang 2023) and essays on the above-mentioned research areas in national and international peer-reviewed journals and volumes. Email: roxanne.doerr@unibs.it

Jean Jimenez (PhD) is an Associate Professor in English Language and Translation at the Department of Culture, Education, and Society (DiCES), University of Calabria, where she teaches English for Academic Purposes and English for Specific Purposes to undergraduate and graduate students. She is currently the Coordinator of the degree course in Linguistic Mediation at DiCES. She is a Member of the Faculty Board of the PhD Program Politica, Cultura e Sviluppo (Field of study: Language analysis and interdisciplinary studies). Her research interests include the use of Corpus Linguistics in the second language classroom, corrective feedback in Computer Assisted Language Learning, ESP and EAP (in particular Business English and Tourism Discourses), and language testing. She has presented papers at conferences in Europe and North America, including invited talks at the Institute of Education, University of London, and the Escuela Nacional de Lenguas, Lingüística y Traducción, Universidad Nacional Autonóma de México. Email: jean.jimenez@unical.it

Fabiola Notari is currently pursuing her PhD research at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, focusing on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) within the Doctoral Program in Human Sciences. Her research interests in applied linguistics cover discourse analysis and genre analysis at the intersection of intercultural rhetoric. With a background as a freelance interpreter and translator, she has worked extensively in both business and legal settings, providing linguistic support and translation services. Her educational roles have encompassed teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), as well as directing legal translation workshops. She authored 'Blended learning scenarios for developing students' pragmatic competence in court interpreting' (2020) published in *ESP Across Cultures* and contributed a book review on legal translation to the international journal *Comparative Legilinguistics* (2023). Her forthcoming scholarly contributions include co-authorship on works addressing curriculum design and pedagogical approaches in EAP. Email: fabiola.notari@unimore.it

Ida Ruffolo is a Researcher in English Language and Linguistics at the University of Calaabria, where she teaches English for Academic Purposes and English for Specific Purposes. She holds a PhD in Language analysis and interdisciplinary studies from the University of Calabria and an MA in English Language Teaching from the University of Reading. She is a Member of the Faculty Board of the PhD Program Politica, Cultura e Sviluppo (Field of study: Language analysis and interdisciplinary studies), where she is currently supervising two doctoral students. Her research interests are Corpus Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, and ESP, with particular interest in the language of tourism and environmental discourse. She has presented papers at national and international conferences. Her recent publications concern the promotion of sustainability in hotel websites, and the changing trends in promotional discourse due to COVID19, as well as the pedagogical and practical applications of Corpus Linguistics in the ESP classroom. Email: ida.ruffolo@unical.it

Gianmarco Vignozzi has a PhD in English linguistics from the University of Pisa and is a Researcher in English Language and Linguistics at the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics of the University of Pisa. His main research interests are in the field of corpus-assisted discourse analysis, audiovisual translation, and English for Specific Purposes (legal and political domains). His most recent publications include "Embedding oral communication in law firm websites: a study on identity construction through person pro-forms in attorneys' video FAQs" (*Textus* XXXV 2022), "On the role of gestures in the comprehension of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions in English: a case study comparing the performance of learners with and without dyslexia" (*Lingue e Linguaggi* 2022). Email: gianmarco.vignozzi@unipi.it

Annalisa Zanola (PhD) is a Full Professor of English Language and Linguistics and the Director of the Language Teaching Centre at the University of Brescia (Italy). Her research interests range from applied linguistics and phonetics (*Public Speaking and Workplace Skills*, GRIN Verlag 2015) to the pragmatics of professional communication (*Global English in International Business*, Bright Pen 2012). Her main focus is on the study of oral English proficiency, resulting in an edited special issue entitled *Oral Communication in English* (*Textus* XXXV 2022). Her most recent research has resulted in the publication of a volume on *English for Scientific and Professional Purposes* (Carocci 2023), focusing on language and communication for professional purposes, and the latest trends in public speaking and academic writing. She is the author of several other international contributions on the latest trends in English as an international language, both in professional communication and for scientific purposes. Email: annalisa.zanola@unibs.it

Instructions for contributors

1. *ESP Across Cultures* is a double-blind refereed journal published in open access under the supervision of its Chief Editor and Coeditor (henceforth referred to as 'the editors'), assisted by the Editorial Board for the evaluation of the papers submitted for publication.
2. Save for exceptional cases and at the discretion of the editors, articles submitted for publication must be unpublished works, and must not have been simultaneously submitted to other journals. *ESP Across Cultures* retains full copyright on the published papers.
3. In order to ensure a wide international readership, *ESP Across Cultures* accepts only articles written in English.
4. All contributions should be submitted to the editors, together with the corresponding illustrations (graphs, tables, photographs, etc.). In the final version, the articles will be accepted only as an attachment to an e-mail message to the editor.
5. All contributions will be submitted to the evaluation of the editors. Individual members of the Editorial Board will be asked to give their evaluation on individual proposals for publication, and all members of the Editorial Board will be informed in advance of the articles scheduled to appear in each issue, together with an abstract of each article. The identity of the members of the Editorial Board assessing the articles will be kept confidential. Experts who are not members of the Editorial Board may sometimes be asked to review proposals for publication.
6. The authors bear full responsibility for the opinions expressed in their respective articles, which do not necessarily reflect the position of the editors or of the Editorial Board.
7. Each author is entitled to receive a pdf copy of *ESP Across Cultures* and reprints of his/her published article may be downloaded free of charge.
8. The original is to be presented in the following order: title, name(s) and surname(s) of the author(s), affiliation of the author(s), abstract, text, acknowledgements, references, and appendices.
9. Abstracts should be 250-300 words. Articles should normally be 5,000-7,000 words (including abstract, footnotes, references and appendices).
10. All manuscripts of the final version of the article must be word-processed in Times New Roman font, double spaced throughout on A4 paper.

Format of the article

Title	Font 14, bold, italic, centre
Name & Surname	Font 12, italic, centre
Affiliation	Font 12, italic, centre
Abstract	Font 10
Main headings	Font 12, bold
Body text	Font 12. Quotations included in double inverted commas. Italics to indicate foreign words and neologisms.
Footnotes	Font 11. Footnotes are to be numbered consecutively throughout the article and should appear at the end of each page, not as endnotes. Where required, the number of the footnote should be placed before (rather than after) a comma or full stop (or other form of punctuation) without a space.
Tables & Figures	In the text tables and figures are to be numbered consecutively to correspond to the order in which they are referred to in the text of the article. Each table and figure must carry a title and should not appear in the main body of the text but should be sent in a separate file. Images must be sent in digital format with a linear base measurement of 15 cm and a minimum 200 dpi resolution. Authors must specify which images are to be in colour.
Bibliography	Font 12. Only include in the references section works actually cited in the body of the text. Bibliographical references in the body of the text should be limited to the indication of the author's last surname and the date (year) of publication. In case of more than one publication of the same author with the same date, add an alphabetical sequence (1993a, 1993b, etc.). References, to be inserted at the end of the text, are to be structured as follows: *Books as a whole* - author(s)'s name(s), date of publication, title (in italics), place, publisher; *Books referred to in part* - author(s)'s name(s), date of publication, title of the article, chapter or essay (no special marking), the preposition "In" followed by the references as indicated immediately above, page numbers. *Article published in a journal* - author(s)'s name(s), date of publication, title of the article (no special marking), name of the journal (in italics), volume and number of the journal, and page numbers.