



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S4. Culture and Identity in English Specialised Discourse

Saturday 2 September: 9.30-11.30am

Convenor: Guiseppina Cortese (University of Turin)

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The seminar will focus on the textual, semantic and pragmatic features of English specialised discourse as recorded in settings where local or disciplinary cultural identities are altered, integrated or redefined by international – and hence intercultural – communication. Within such specific domains of international communication, the seminar seeks to assess to what extent the cultural allegiance of discourse communities expressing themselves in English to their (linguistic, professional, social, national) reference group(s) is affected by the use of English as a lingua franca. Special attention will be devoted to conflicts arising from divergent values, the resolution of which provides an opportunity to construct and negotiate new identities.

Negotiating Identity: Hypertextual Representations of Food and Beverage Communities

Sandra Campagna (University of Turin)

This paper deals with advertising discourse, “one of the most dynamic and innovative forms of discourse today” (Bhatia 2005) and more specifically with hypertextual configurations of giant global companies representing the food and beverage industry worldwide. The present study has two main overarching aims. First, to investigate how representative giant global companies in the given sector construct their global/local identity through similar/different promotional campaigns targeted for specific cultural communities. Second, to examine how a final product is constructed (both visually and verbally) through a process of “resemiotization”, to borrow Iedema’s terminology, (Iedema 2003), that is, is presented, processed and projected on the semiotic landscape as a result of the various changes occurring in the crucial phases of its construction.

Legal Advice in Cross-cultural “Immigration Contexts”: Schema Conflicts and Discourse Negotiations

Maria Grazia Guido, Donatella Pace & Mariarosaria Provenzano (University of Lecce)

This paper focuses on the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in Italian situations of “legal advice” to African migrants and asylum seekers. It claims that, precisely because

the schemata the advisors rely on are the products of a Western legal tradition, they are often unavailable to the immigrants' conceptualizations of their own legal systems. Hence the difficulty for immigrants in accessing legal concepts that, though conveyed through ELF, are alien to their own native cultures and specialized semantic systems (as Guido illustrates), and the need to develop negotiation strategies to make Western laws accessible to non-Western immigrants (as Provenzano and Pace exemplify).

Anglo-Saxon Legal Court Wear: Specialised Discourse or Lingua Franca?

Shaeda Isani (Stendhal University, Grenoble)

This paper proposes to analyse the visual semiotics of professional dress code in the light of the theories and conceptual tools of text-based specialised discourse and genre analysis and poses the question of its subsequent status as a form of specialised discourse or professional lingua franca. Based on a comparative analysis of the dedicated court wear required of English barristers and the dress code of American trial lawyers, the discussion explores the concept of discourse community and specialised discourse in terms of the triadic dynamics of encoder-representamen-decoder and presents a number of paradoxical findings with regard to the specialised discourse/lingua franca continuum.

Legal Translation and the Contemporary Multi-Cultural Context

Giulia A. Pennisi (University of Palermo)

This paper explores recent theoretical and practical changes in the context of translation activity, with a special focus on the translation of legal discourse/legal texts. Being the translation activity a communication process in its own right (Bhatia, 1997), a reliable translation should communicate the content of a document, choosing terms and concepts according to the similarities and differences existing between the legal systems involved. Examples will be provided to show the strategies applied by legal translators in order to mediate the conflicts arising from the different socio-cultural traits and legal constraints of the various nations involved in the translation process.

“Old wine in new bottles?”: Language Choice and Narrative Patterns in Contemporary Educational Discourse

Martin Solly (University of Florence)

This paper, which forms part of a wider survey of the languaging strategies underlying contemporary educational discourse, starts from the premise (Wells 1999) that the language used for talking about education reflects the different perspectives of those involved; administrators responsible for educational planning and provision use a different language to educationalists concerned with research. The language choice and narrative patterns of a number of national and international documents written in English are examined in order to investigate this claim. The paper also looks at how the use of a common language in these texts impacts on the construction and negotiation of new educational concepts / identities.