Introduction

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> *[…] cultural factors do not necessarily lead to communicative problems; on the contrary, they can be a major source of comity and enrichment.*
>
> (Spencer-Oatey, 2009: 6)

This issue of *Textus* has a long story behind it. It stems from the 10th ESSE Conference entitled 'Specialised lexis in specialised corpora: Specialised discourse communities in business and management' held in Turin in 2010. The two-day conference was so involving that the publication of a volume seemed the most obvious result (Salvi and Tanaka 2011). A main objective of the Turin conference, first of the book and now of the present publication, is to raise our awareness of different norms of communication and promote mutual understanding in intercultural contexts.

In addition, this issue has a unique focus on virtual encounters and includes the analysis of instances of language connected to various semiotic forms and visual images typical of computer-mediated communication. Research findings are presented here with the intent to observe the construction of identity (personal, institutional and social), the establishment of social relations, as well as the underlying ideology. This type of approach is made possible thanks to direct collaboration between scholars, and in some cases, practitioners, from different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds. Dynamics between east and west have also proved to be extremely positive and productive.

Assuming that culture is progressively deterritorialised, Rita Salvi's introductory article traces some of the issues at stake when

analysing language in intercultural settings. Particularly, she examines the strategies adopted by corporations to establish their identity in relation to an unpredictable global audience. Her study applied Soja's (2001) three-dimensional theory of space to explore the local/global relationship in identity construal.

All the articles included in this issue focus on identity, and most importantly they cover a large variety of contexts and situated encounters in online communication.

Janet Bowker deals with two aspects of managerial and organisational discourse. First, the comparison between American and Malaysian interaction in both mono-cultural and intercultural settings shows how discourse and language preferences develop during professional workshops. Second, the ensuing construction and maintenance of identities is analysed through both face-to-face and webcast, audio-conferencing exchanges.

Roberta Facchinetti analyses the communicative strategies adopted by the websites of British and Italian micro, small and medium enterprises. The results of her corpus-based research study are useful for eliciting differences in linguistic choices due to different cultural approaches towards consumers.

The position of English as a lingua franca is the core of Franca Poppi's analysis of corporate identity. Poppi compiles a corpus from the online news archive of an internationally operating company. Language is explored in terms of both 'projected identity' and 'applied identity', according to the type of identity the company wants to present to its stakeholders.

Adopting a cross-cultural perspective, Cristina Gatti analyses organisational culture with a focus on the construction of corporate identity. She argues that the identity-building process is strongly based on narratives of the past which produce the historical identity of the company, in line with its social identity. As a linguistic device, metaphors in the narratives are found to conceptualise corporate culture through memory.

Fashion and sport have become increasingly important in business communication at an international level. Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli illustrates the results of her inquiry into the construction of brand identity by three Italian fashion companies. Also in this case, the use of English as it appears on their websites, analysed with text mining software, shows similarities and differences according

to the type of brand identity each company chooses to present to the global market.

Dealing with the sports field, Dermot Heaney focuses on the construction of national and professional identity, by examining the case of Fabio Capello as the 'foreign' manager of the English football squad. The research proves that the limits and constraints of English as used by a non-native speaker affect the way in which identity is shaped in the public sphere.

English as a lingua franca has been widely used in the field of ecology, a topic discussed in the media to encourage greater awareness about environmental issues. Alessandra Molino examines the rhetorical strategies adopted by multinational companies in their Sustainability Reports. The author gives evidence of the increasing standardisation in the discursive construction of this type of documents, although differences remain in the approach of sustainability values.

Italian companies have accepted the dare to build their 'green' identity. Maria Cristina Caimotto focuses on the process of Anglicization which influences the language used by Italian companies to promote their identity as environmentally-friendly enterprises. In this field, it is argued that English is used to convey cultural values of modernity in order to match consumerism with ecology.

The construction of identity is also apparent in certain genres as, for example, in Gaetano Falco's study of corporate annual reports from an interdiscursivity perspective. Given the multiple types of documents collected under the web-page of 'Annual Reports', Falco affirms that each of them shows similar kinds of corporate facts in different ways, but they shed light on each other so as to shape the company identity and communicate it to the addressees.

Interdiscursivity in genres is also the topic investigated by Giulia Adriana Pennisi who compares European and American law journals. Epistemic markers elicited in two sub-corpora indicate that their use is relevant in American research journals dealing with socio-cultural changes in relation to constitutional domains, whereas the same markers appear in European research journals to strengthen the constitutional identity within the EU.

The two concluding articles both deal with blogs, which are considered the new frontier of virtual communications. After

describing the general features and purposes of blogs, Judith Turnbull analyzes the blogs posted by EU Commissioners. As they are collected from different cultural backgrounds, the analysis underlines their personal identity, compared with her/his professional identity shaped for institutional purposes. A "personal-talk" approach seems more evident in female Commissioners' messages.

Clinical blogs are the object of Barbara Cappuzzo's research. Despite the scientific topic, she maintains that the blogs examined fulfill pragmatic persuasive functions and bloggers adopt different forms of evaluative language to support their opinions and appeal to their colleagues' interest. Moreover, the use of personal pronouns analyzed in the corpus shows a sense of group-belonging and knowledge sharing.

This issue of *Textus* opens up several opportunities for reflection. First, drawing on case exemplifications, it could contribute additional insights into the negotiated culture as the product of differentiated settings. Second, it shows the impact of cultural differences at various levels, such as national and organizational, or group and individual. Third, the issue of the impact of language on culture and communication is discussed also in comparative terms, including non-native English speaking environments. Intercultural communication studies, such as these collected in this *Textus* issue, offer insightful information about the micro-processes of cultural change.

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