UNIMORE UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali

Knowledge Dissemination in the Digital Era. Language and Episteme

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Epistemology

Plenaries

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Censoring online bullshit

Online bullshit (OB) consists in online claims offered by speakers misrepresenting themselves as being concerned about the truth or falsity of what they're saying. I'll be proposing that practices of OB are epistemically detrimental on both personal and social grounds, and that we on that account have a case for censoring such practices, particularly when the OB involved is communicated anonymously.

Elizabeth Fricker
Oxford University, UK

The prizes and perils of trusting others

In the modern world, we enjoy huge gains from the epistemic and practical expertises of others on whom we depend - both directly, and indirectly, via technology designed by others with expertises we lack. But this dependence engenders risks, as well as gains. Moreover, it may be that one loses something that is part of human flourishing, when one fails to acquire a skill, and relies entirely on devices designed and created by others to achieve a practical end. I consider these matters. In particular, I consider whether the following principle is plausible:

'Other things being equal, it is preferable to exercise a skill oneself, rather than to rely on other people, or machines, to deliver the outputs of this skill for one.'

(the 'OTE' prefix is crucial here, since other things rarely are equal, of course!)
I argue that only a passive hedonist conception of what is valuable in human life would lead to failure to endorse this principle, and that such a passive conception of human value is wrong.

Magnus Jiborn
Lund University, Sweden

In search of the climate filter bubble

Report of ongoing joint work with Emmanuel Genot and Erik J. Olsson, Lund University, and Ulrike Hahn, Birkbeck University of London.
Abstract: Search engines like Google play an increasingly important role for the dissemination of information and, hence, for the shaping of public opinion. Since 2009 Google personalizes search results based on each user's individual internet history. The purpose is to provide users with search results that are more relevant to them given their individual interests. Other large internet actors, e.g. Facebook, use similar methods to tailor the flow of information to individual users.
It is sometimes proposed that such personalization may create what Eli Pariser has called "filter bubbles" (Pariser 2011), where people's prior views are confirmed and reinforced, rather than challenged, when they search for information on the internet. There are few empirical studies, however, that attempt to test whether and to what extent filter bubbles actually exist and affect public debate over real issues. The aim of this study is to test the filter bubble hypothesis empirically in the context of a real issue where people have strong, and opposing, views.
We have chosen the issue of climate change for this purpose. The paper presents and discusses the methods that were developed for the study, and discusses some of the difficulties that we ran into. It also presents some preliminary results.

Erik J. Olsson, George Masterton
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Linking as voting: from Condorcet to Google

When you link to a web page you are in a sense voting for (the importance, relevance, quality etc.) of that web page – at least that is how search engines like Google interpret the link when they decide how valuable the webpage is. But how far can the parallel between linking and voting be drawn? There is a famous result for voting, going back to the French 18th century mathematician Nicolas de Condorcet, which shows that what the majority votes for is, under certain conditions, likely to be actually true. We sketch an analogous result for linking on the web according to what many people link to is, under certain conditions, likely to be actually important or relevant. We then argue that just as Condorcet's observation gives an epistemological justification for democratic voting procedure, this result gives an epistemological justification for ranking webpages on the basis of how many other webpages link to them, as is the case for Google and other search engines (with some qualifications). To be sure, the practical problems in applying the results in practice are also analogous. In the talk we address these issues without unnecessary technicality and with a focus on the philosophical and interpretational issues involved.

Gloria Origgi
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Knowledge and trust in the digital era: for a second order epistemology

I will present my ideas on a “second-order epistemology”, to investigate the reasons, biases, heuristics that guide us in the selection of information from others. A second order epistemology is based on trust and reputation: it allows us to pry apart «good» and «bad» strategies of indirect access to knowledge. Its aim is to act as a critical theory of the society of knowledge. In information-dense societies such as our contemporary hyper-connected societies, the way in which other people value information is more informative about any content than information itself. A competent knower must thus be able to assess other people's evaluations more precisely than the content of information itself. This is a major transformation in epistemology due to the Digital Era, whose consequences on our knowledge processes are still to be estimated.

Marina Sbisà, Paolo Labinaz
University of Trieste, Italy

Credibility in social networks

Social networks are interactional contexts in which people (among other things) report alleged facts, argue for claims, issue forecast, and draw conclusions. The felicitous performance of these speech acts presupposes the speakers' cognitive mastery of the topic dealt with, as regards both the reliability of their sources of information and their capacity to argue soundly. These presupposed features are often merely accommodated, which may result in granting speakers an unmerited degree of credibility. The paper will explore, on the basis of a corpus of examples from social networks, how speakers manage to achieve credibility either by providing indication of their informative reliability and reasoning capacity or by getting these accommodated, and what are the effects of the credibility thus achieved upon the audience. The roles of affiliative connections and of positive feedbacks in generating credibility will also be discussed.

Open sessions

Cathrine Felix
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Online interaction and non-epistemic grounds of belief

Contemporary theories of trust distinguish between online and offline trust. Whereas offline trust is considered as grounded in concrete interaction, online trust is portrayed as blind and as involving a lack of transparency. The thought is that trust in, for example, search engines cannot principally be epistemically grounded in the same sense as offline trust. A common justification for this thought is that search engines are essentially a "black box" and "you can't trust a black box" (Pasquale 2015). I will argue against this common view. Contrary to what is often assumed my thesis is that offline trust is essentially blind and non-transparent, whereas online trust can be epistemically grounded. Even with the help of cues like body-language, another person is more of a "black box" than the algorithms of a search engine. A search engine is principally transparent. Understanding it is just a matter of understanding the algorithms that drives it. Moreover, the “trust” one places in a search engine is essentially bound to its capability to fulfill a task. Unlike a person with potentially hidden motives and good acting skills, a search engine is nothing but a software machine. These points are often overlooked, it therefore seems necessary to qualify what one means by online trust contra offline trust, and pin down the role played by the epistemic grounding in both cases. In this talk I aim to contribute to such a clarification.

Emmanuel Genot
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Gloria Origgi's puzzle of trust & democracy and its empirical grounds

Origgi (2014) argues that the behavior of internet users of online social networks (OSN) and online search engines (OSE) gives rise to a puzzle. As internet users, people seem to blindly trust OSN and OSE operated by private businesses, while adopting, as citizen, a cautious behavior of towards 'real-world' institutions. Origgi also identifies a possible cause for this behavior, namely that users of OSN and OSE co-opt habits inherited from cooperative communication, and have not yet developed strategies for interpreting the cues that trigger a cautious attitude. Finally, she suggests interventions to educate users to enable that attitude. We show that while recent empirical research warrants Origgi's puzzlement, empirical evidence does not warrant her uniform explanation for users' trust. We examine the explanations currently favored by empirical research in the case of two OSNs (Facebook & Twitter) and one OSE (Google Search), and discuss whether the interventions suggested by Origgi would be successful if these explanations are correct. We conclude that they would still be useful.

Ylva von Gerber

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Friction – the cognitive and epistemic importance of face to face communication

The forms for attaining *knowledge* are completely changed after the digitalization of information; both the way we access it and the way we use it. Questions of trust, relevance and reliability must be addressed when we now find ourselves communicating in a written and remote way rather than *face to face* and orally. We have, in a very real sense, left the (ideal) ancient *forum*.
The aim of this talk is to highlight the important cognitive and epistemic differences between the two types of communications sketched above. One important feature of the difference is *dimensions* – a face to face communication adds (at least) one – it is three-dimensional instead of two. Cognitively the third dimension matters as it gives us the possibility to add sensory impressions, to gain more knowledge through facial expressions, tone of voice, postures etcetera – the *space* factor as it were. Epistemologically the third dimension provides us with e.g. the possibility to ask immediate questions, to know who is in fact talking, to see the person, to monitor what has been said and to interrupt – *time* makes this into a *spacetime* factor. The third dimension also adds immediate *friction* as did the ancient *fora*.
Both cognitively and epistemologically I claim that we benefit from immediate response, of all sorts, when interacting in face to face communication; the time as well as the space aspects of written or remote communication do not suffice. As will be shown there are important cognitive and epistemic aspects getting lost if the physical *fora* are to be replaced by, or viewed as equivalent to, written or remote ones.

Linguistics

Plenaries

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Know what? Learning, thinking, and knowing in a digital world

What does it mean to know something? The philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949) distinguished between knowing how and knowing that. Psychologists talk about differences between procedural and declarative memory for that which one knows (Zimmermann 2014). In common parlance, we speak of data, information, and knowledge. While lacking a shared set of terminology, we generally assume that to know something is different than having to look it up.

Growth of the internet is changing both our pedagogy and our everyday beliefs about the value of internalized knowledge. Research by Betsy Sparrow and her colleagues (2011) indicates we are more likely to remember internet search paths than the findings they yield. Work reported by Kaspersky Lab (2015) speaks of “digital amnesia”, that is, our failure to remember the content of what is available through an online search.

In her new book *Mind Change*, Susan Greenfield (2015) argues that digital technologies are bringing about major alterations in the ways people think. Greenfield’s focus is on such issues as the effects of social networking, the ways in which we are learning from the internet (especially from images) rather than from text on paper, and the kinds of learning transfer that video games can produce. In my own work (Baron 2015), I have argued that the rising shift from reading in print to reading on digital screens is potentially reshaping what it means to read. The issue of reading is critical to questions of knowledge, since in literate societies, much of what we come to know is through the written word.

While digital technology is partially responsible for shifts in our understanding of what it means to know, pedagogy in both lower and higher education is reinforcing the change from emphasizing knowledge within our heads to valuing search. This presentation explores the nature and implications of this change.

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Greenfield, S. (2015). *Mind Change: How Digital Technologies are Leaving Their Mark on Our Brains*.

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Research blogs - disseminating knowledge or collaborating towards it?

Writing about scientific or scholarly topics for a wider audience has largely been seen in terms of passing on knowledge from experts to non-experts. The general idea has varied from popularisation or popular accounts to various kinds and levels of public understanding of science, but on the whole experts are positioned at the centre of knowing, reaching outwards to laymen who occupy outer zones. The recognition that the audiences of scientific knowledge outside a particular field of expertise are diverse and heterogeneous and include high-level experts in other disciplinary fields is a relatively recent one. Digital media have accentuated the heterogeneity of the audiences of science writing, and also made it easier for members of the audience to participate in the knowledge-making processes. This paper looks into research blogging, with a specific focus on the ways that readers take an active part in the discourse. While many blogs go without receiving any commentary at all, some are important sites of discussion – and, as I argue, co-construction of knowledge. I draw on a sample of blog discussions in the WrELFA corpus (http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/wrelfa.html), representing different fields and different parts of the world. Many discussion features resemble those in academic conferences, while the apparent presence of outsiders to the academic community is interspersed with expert-to-expert discussions, expanding the range of exchanges.

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Dissemination, discussion, participation? Interrogating the evolution of science policy concepts from knowledge dissemination to citizen science

The prerogative that the public should be involved in publicly funded science first gained ground in the 1970s and 1980s, after several controversial science projects in the Europe and the United States met with considerable public resistance. Lagging several decades behind the advent of big science that saw the expansion of publicly funded research for first military and later economic reasons, initiatives that aimed to make science more accessible to civil society gained in popularity, in concert with political pressure to reframe science as something that was "of society" rather than "outside society" (Merton 1973). These developments ultimately led to the rise of science journalism (by journalists, to explain and critically discuss science before a lay public) and science communication (by PR professionals, to proselytize science from the vantage point of science institutions).
The present discussion on knowledge dissemination highlights the conceptual evolution of the relationship of science, the media, and the public (Lievrouw 1990). In Mode 2 (or perhaps Mode 3) science, civil society has become an important stakeholder (Etzkowitz, Leydesdorff 2000) that is not only explicitly addressed (stage 1: traditional science journalism) and able to comment and criticize (stage 2: digital media communication), but that is also increasingly able to contribute to scientific research via citizen science platforms such as GalaxyZoo and FoldIt. This development raises questions of power among the actors involved, as well as the trajectory of science and research more broadly.
My talk will characterize the interdependence of science, the media, and civil society through these three stages in order to point to tensions between the aspiration and reality of dissemination, discussion and participation in knowledge production. I will draw on theoretical concepts from both the sociology of science and from media and communication studies, and rely on examples from empirical research on online climate change discourse and crowd science platforms to underpin my argument.

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Popular digital knowledge dissemination platforms: aspects of academic writing from *Wikipedia* to *Academic.edu*

Modern approaches to academic writing do not emphasise the "objectivity" of knowledge but focus on the author because academic discourse is seen as central to the processes of knowledge generation and dissemination. This contribution provides a theoretical frame for three case studies and illustrates linguistic features, depending on different platforms, different types of popularisation (readerships) and different genres. It assumes that authors seek to gain academic credibility and establish a personal research identity within their disciplines, even in digital formats that may (still) be considered "less academic". It presents concrete examples and tries to formulate hypotheses on the use of personal pronouns, boosters and hedges, esp. modal auxiliaries. Finally, research proposals will be made, especially for non-native writers and novices to the field.

PhD Workshop

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***Maybe* Britannica Online, but *definitely* Wikipedia: A corpus analysis of hedges and boosters in two online encyclopedias**

The worldwide popularity of Wikipedia as an online encyclopedia seems to be unbroken. Compared to conventional printed encyclopedias the reasons for Wikipedia's success lie in its permanent and free availability through all mobile devices, its regular updates and the fact that everyone can contribute knowledge actively. In general, encyclopedia entries are characterized by objective and neutral language written by trained professionals (Stegbauer 2009). But how far, if at all, do Wikipedia entries differentiate themselves from their "official" counterparts language wise? Are there certain word choices 'produsers' (Bruns 2008) which apply in their Wikipedia entries that are unusual in conventional entries? This study investigates the usage of boosters, such as certainly, of course, definitely, clearly and obviously. Furthermore, it also takes a closer look at the more tentative hedges, i.e. possibly, probably, maybe, seemingly and relatively. Select parts of the BYU Wikipedia Corpus (Davies 2014) are compared to encyclopedia entries of the Encyclopedia Britannica Online. This comparison may shed light on the distinct usages of evaluative markers by writers of these entries and whether Wikipedia entries can be regarded as being more subjective with regard to their language than conventional encyclopedia entries.

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Metaphors in environmental accounting

Metaphors − regarded as “essential to human understanding and as a mechanism for creating new meaning and new realities in our lives” (Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 196) − function as an aid to knowledge dissemination (Oswick, Keenoy, Grant 2002). In recent years there has been growing interest in studying metaphors related to environmentalism: the journey metaphor (Milne et al 2006); global warming wars (e.g., Liversey 2002; Audebrand 2010); nature as a book/machine/organism/network (e.g., Keulartz 2007); ‘Spaceship Earth’ (Deese 2009); and CORPORATION IS A PERSON (Stibbe 2015).
There is a demanding need for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate environmental accountability. In the context of “the CSR turn” in marketing communication (Maignan, Ferrell 2001, 2004), the online CSR standalone report has become key to constructing readers’ knowledge about companies’ social and environmental performance and commitment.
The paper analyses the conceptual metaphors used across three languages, Italian, Chinese and English, in order to highlight corporate perceptions of environmentalism in different cultures. The general corpus is composed by 90 CSR online reports published by top-ranking companies in two sectors: energy and banks. The subcorpus is composed by the environmental section of the 90 CSR reports. In the first place, the environmental sections of 18 reports are scrutinized with an aim to highlight underlying conceptual metaphors used in each language and their possible linguistic representations. Then the subcorpus and the general corpus are investigated for quantitative evidence of certain metaphorical resources.
A preliminary analysis shows that the *green* metaphor is used as an environmentally-friendly symbol in all the three languages, for example, *offerta verde*, *绿色经济*, *green bond*. In Chinese there is a clearer preference for the *green* concept than in Italian and English. Also the metaphor ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IS AN ENEMY is found in all the three languages, such as *challenges of climate change*, *“向雾霾等污染宣战”*, and *la lotta ai cambiamenti climatici*. It is noticed that this metaphor is more used in Italian than in the other two languages. In English there are more metaphors of personification, for example, “reduce disturbance to marine mammals”, “environmental sensitivities”, “short-lived climate forcers”.
The study demonstrates that, whereas Italian, Chinese and English share the same central conceptual metaphors in environmentalist discourse, variations of metaphorical preference may indicate cross-cultural differences in corporate attitudes and perceptions towards environmental issues. The lack of culture-specific metaphors is in line with the global dimension of the debate on environmentalism and with the extended participation framework of internet discourse.

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Researching *Academia.edu*: a quantitative corpus analysis of modal verbs and personal pronouns in scientific papers

This contribution introduces the online platform academia.edu that allows academics to share their research and academic interests. It further compares the usage of the modal verb 'may' in scientific articles from this platform with student papers from my own corpus (SYSU-Corpus) of Chinese writings. Academia.edu reaches far beyond merely downloading papers from different fields of study. It is a social networking website that allows academics to upload their own work, monitor their impact, follow and contact other researchers and research areas as well as to get informed about new job offers. The aim of this presentation is to first introduce this online platform to the academic audience, including types of articles that scholars from various countries contribute, and secondly to discuss in more detail and illustrate the differences in the usage of 'may' between scientific scholars and university students in their academic writings. Chinese are generally described as very polite, less direct and rather tentative. I will attempt to investigate whether the high usage of 'may' in my data is also found in scholarly articles and will draw conclusions based on this.

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Probability adjuncts as hedges on the Web: a cross-cultural analysis

In the digital era we find ourselves, information is made accessible worldwide with a click. The internet has facilitated the dissemination of knowledge across cultures with little or no limitations. Websites authored by different people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds all employ certain linguistic devices to present claims with caution and mitigate criticisms. These linguistic devices technically called hedges include lexical verbs, modal verbs, modal nouns, adjectives, adverbs/ adverbial constructions, reference to a model, reference to limiting conditions, admission of lack of knowledge.
This paper takes a closer look at the use of probability adjuncts (Halliday 1994) or disjuncts that are often used as hedges on the web. ‘Writers can qualify the status of their knowledge by expressing propositions as resting on speculative, deductive, quotative and sensory judgements’ (Hyland 1998:136). The writer’s comment on the style and form of what is being said is emanated by the use of these probability adjuncts, ‘defining in some way the conditions under which ‘authority’ is being assumed for the statement’ (Greenbaum, Quirk 1990:181).
Great-Britain and Ghana sub-sections (representative of native and non-native speakers) of the Corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE) will be compared to determine the differences and similarities in the use of probability adjuncts in conveying the sense in which statements are true or comments on the truth-value of propositions.

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Hyland, K. (1998). *Hedging in Scientific Research Articles*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
Greenbaum, S., Quirk, R. (1990). *A Student’s Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.

Regular papers

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Knowledge dissemination through tourist guidebooks: mind the gap between adults' and children's

The study focuses on tourist guidebooks as an example of knowledge dissemination bringing together different areas in the humanities, including both informative and promotional intent (Cappelli 2006, 2012). In more detail, the paper focuses on the qualitative exploration of a small corpus consisting of specimens meant for adults and for children, in English and in Italian. Guidebooks are a very popular genre in both cultures. However, whereas guidebooks for children have a long-standing tradition in the in the English-speaking world, they are still in their infancy in Italy. Given the many differences in the style and discursive strategies of English and Italian guidebooks and tourist communication in general (Francesconi 2007; Manca 2012; Maci 2013), this raises questions as to how English and Italian guidebooks for children compare and as to whether Italian has developed its own register for this new genre.

The investigation will draw on research on tourist discourse and on the popularization of expert discourse in books for children. Tourist guidebooks are among the most investigated genres in tourism discourse both for their function and for their linguistic features (Cappelli 2006; Nigro 2006; Vestito 2012, to name but a few). Through language, they guide the tourists in their real or imaginary journey and out-of-the-ordinary experience (Dann 1996), contribute to build, develop and lead the "tourist gaze" (Urry 2002) by guiding the "tourist glances" (Urry 2001) both at the pre- and on-trip stages of the tourist experience while "firing imagination" (Dann 1996). They also contribute to close the gap between the tourists' culture and the destination's culture (Fodde, Denti 2005).

Information books for children are an example of popularization of expert discourse aimed at broadening the limited knowledge and understanding of the world of the young audience being addressed (Myers 1989), thus involving recontextualization/reconceptualization processes complying with the specific requirements and background of that audience (Calsamiglia, Van Dijk 2004; Gotti 2005). Far from being a unitary variety (Mallet 2004), children's information texts and resources can either support learning in school or be read at home for interest and pleasure (ibid., p.623). Among the typical features shared is information accuracy, but the material is also presented appealingly, so as to encourage involvement through entertainment, which can be regarded as an effective popularizing strategy (Sezzi, in press). Scanlon and Buckingham (2002) especially highlight the hybrid nature of the genre (i.e. a typical feature of scientific popularization in general – see, for instance, Myers 2003; Masi 2015), which tends to hinge upon visual material, narratives, game-like formats, as well as informal styles of address. In fact, popularization for children often gives rise to new textual forms (Myers 1989), and this is evident, for instance, in the increasingly important role of multimodal strategies (cf., inter alia, Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Unsworth 2007) as explicative and appealing means used in these non-fictional texts (Sezzi, in press).

The aim of the paper is that of identifying presumably different strategies of recontextualisation/ reconceptualisation intralinguistically, across the age spectrum, and in a cross-linguistic/cross-cultural perspective. The corpus under analysis covers both comparable texts and parallel ones, especially as far as guidebooks for children are concerned. Since the latter appear to be an emerging genre in the Italian context, probably under the influence of the Anglo-Saxon model, it is here hypothesized that the Italian texts aimed at a young audience may display a high degree of similarity to the English ones. Special attention will be devoted to the texts' accessibility (a crucial aspect in the translation of the genre, see Liao 2013), as a result of a different recontextualization of 'anchoring' strategies (notably in the form of culture-bound references), pervasive in the genre as a whole and used to bring the information closer to the experience of the lay reader (cf. Sezzi, in press).

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Health literacy and young people: the case of Young Epilepsy website

New media and web 2.0 are having a significant impact on science and technology for the communication of specialized topics between experts and non-experts (Garzone 2007). This is particularly true for health communication where the use of web-mediated genres has radically changed the communication strategies (Candlin 2000; Nicholas et al. 2001; Eysenbach, Kohler 2002) to inform, influence, and motivate individuals, institutions, and communities in making effective decisions to improve health and enhance quality of life. In fact, digital technologies appear to present tremendous opportunities for the dissemination of health-related and rehabilitation information (Parker, Thorson 2009).

In the case of epilepsy, accurate information for individuals with epilepsy and their families, education about the consequences and skills development in self-management are essential components for helping individuals become better partners in patient-centered care (Elliot et al. 2007). Studies consistently indicate that children and adolescents with epilepsy need increasing knowledge about their condition over time, tailored to their growing ability to comprehend the information and its implications.

The purpose of this study is thus to analyze the strategies of knowledge dissemination aimed at enhancing health literacy among young people affected by epilepsy focusing in particular on the case of the "Young Epilepsy" website. "Young Epilepsy" is a UK charity working exclusively on behalf of children and young people with epilepsy and associated conditions. It provides high-quality information to these categories with limited access to medical/scientific knowledge.

The analysis will be carried out on the section of the website directed to children and young people ("For young people" section) and will assess the communicative strategies of knowledge dissemination aimed at clarifying the notions related to the epilepsy and its management among children and young people. From a methodological perspective, the study relies on discourse analytical tools focusing in particular on: 1) the role of multimodality (Kress, van Leewen 1996) and the importance of paratextual information and the contribution of images to the comprehension of the receivers (La Thene-Dacunha 2013); 2) the degree of technicality of vocabulary and the associated popularizing strategies (Calsamiglia, van Dijk 2004) to make it accessible for the lay-audience; 3) the role of metadiscourse in determining the structure of the text (textual metadiscourse, cf. Hyland 2005) and in creating the relationship with the reader (interpersonal metadiscourse, ibid.).

Results will provide a description of the strategies often associated with knowledge dissemination (i.e. intensive use of metadiscourse; forms of reader engagement; systematic use of definitions, analogies, examples, reformulations) in the website and a classification of the images used.

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The dissemination of cultural heritage knowledge in on-line tourist guidebooks and travel blogs

Over the last two decades tourism discourse has increasingly been the centre of scholarly interest (e.g. Dann 1996; Gotti 2006; Fodde, van den Abbeele 2012; Maci 2013). In this paper we focus on two digital genres – the on-line tourist guidebook and the travel blog – that have only recently drawn the attention of researchers in applied linguistics research (e.g. Francesconi 2007; Gerbig 2008; Vestito 2012; Cacchiani 2014; D'Egidio 2014; Diani 2015; Samson 2015). While on-line tourist guidebooks orientate the "tourist gaze" before and during the tourist experience (Urry 2002), travel blogs pertain to what Dann (1996) calls the "on-trip stage" of the tourist cycle, as

they are written by travellers while they are still "on the road". However, both genres are becoming increasingly popular as a source of information on selected places and destinations, offering a complex mix of tourism products and services (Neuhofer et al. 2012), and contributing to the dissemination of cultural knowledge.
The aim of this paper, as part of a wider research on the Lexis of Florentine Cultural Heritage, is to compare the strategies used to transfer and disseminate cultural heritage knowledge through on-line tourist guidebooks and travel blogs in English describing built heritage in the city of Florence, Italy.
Adopting corpus-assisted methods, the present study compares quantitatively and qualitatively the use of linguistic strategies across the two genres wherein description and evaluation are pivotal to enhance destination experiences for diverse purposes. The comparative dimension of the analysis allows to highlight the linguistic realization(s) across the two genres and assess the constrains of the web on the recurring strategies used in cultural heritage knowledge dissemination.

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Knowledge Dissemination, Digital Humanities and crowd-sourcing projects for diachrony

Since the earliest days of corpus linguistics, a remarkable interest in diachronic variation and change has been apparent: we are all familiar with the praise-worthy work carried out by the Helsinki teams, who have spearheaded studies in historical linguistics, historical dialectology, historical sociolinguistics, ELF, and – more recently – contemporary language change. After them, diachronic studies of variation have relied on other corpora, both more extensive from the quantitative point of view, such as COHA, more specialized in geo-historical terms, such as CMSW, 19CSC and the Corpus of Nineteenth-Century English, or focusing on the comparison with earlier corpora, such as FROWN and FLOB. As a result, nowadays the array of sources potentially available for this kind of investigations is notably extensive.
However, such corpora are still far from complete: not only are spoken genres notoriously missing from earlier data collections, but also manuscript sources are rarely found in such corpora, although they might be very valuable on account of the light they would shed on relatively unmonitored usage. This gap is due, first and foremost, to the hugely time-consuming tasks by means of which manuscripts can be digitized, transcribed, and proofread before they can be included in computerized corpora.
In recent years, however, several libraries and archives, especially in North America, have launched crowd-sourcing projects aimed at the transcription of digitized resources, especially as far as Late Modern English and oral history collections are concerned. The aim is both to speed up transcription and editorial processes, and to encourage the public to take part in activities that are traditionally associated with specialized competence; in this way, both the participants' interest and their knowledge of the materials at hand is expanded, enhanced, and maintained. In this contribution I intend to discuss a few examples concerning such projects, highlighting the features they share, the role they may play in teaching activities, and in knowledge dissemination more in general, and the advantages and drawbacks they may present when their materials are considered for inclusion in diachronic corpora.

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Knowledge dissemination and online personal health stories: narrative medicine and self-empowerment

The present contribution is a quantitative and qualitative analysis of online testimonies of patients with rare diseases which have been published by associations dealing with rare diseases. These associations − almost 60 − have been grouped by Eurodis, a European non-governmental on-line federation dealing with rare diseases. In this analysis, almost 600 personal stories have been gathered and analyzed by taking narrative aspects and patterns into consideration. The stories depict the patients' daily struggle with the rare diseases – ranging from the initial symptoms to obtaining a diagnosis and possible solutions to coping with everyday life.

These stories fall into what has been defined as 'Narrative medicine', a broad term encompassing a qualitative research and/or medical approach cutting across various fields of application.

These testimonies are particularly important if one considers that little is known of rare diseases from a medical perspective. They could provide crucial information concerning treatment to laypeople and specialists alike. Moreover, these stories contribute to showing the construction of new identities by individuals struck by rare diseases as they learn to deal with their new condition. Such people could even reposition themselves as experts in communicating specialized knowledge thus enhancing a role of self-empowerment for themselves and others.

The pragma-linguistic area of comparison can then be analysed along several dimensions: firstly, the evolving narratives recounted by each testimony can be considered at both an individual and group level as they develop over time, that is to say endophorically; then, narrative-based medical discourse can be further differentiated and contrasted in its various applications, exophorically; finally, the value of such storytelling to both laypeople and specialists can be compared.

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Forms of knowledge dissemination in the discourse of science

The paper looks at forms of knowledge dissemination from the perspective of rhetoric of science and linguistic analysis. More in detail, it takes the case of science communication to identify continuity and variation in the strategies scientists employ when communicating science to a wide audience. Moving from a list of rhetorical strategies that have proven useful in analysing the discourse of science (e.g. Fahnestock 1999, 2012; Fuller 1998; Ceccarelli 2001; Finocchiaro 2005; Freddi, in press), the paper then takes as a case-study of knowledge dissemination materials scientist Mark Miodownik's work as writer and broadcaster on science and engineering. Particularly, a variety of strategies he employs in his book *Stuff Matters*, in some of his BBC TV programmes and newspaper columns and in his blog are highlighted with a view to exploring the effect on discourse of the type of audience (the general lay-public and children) and the various media (popular books, TV broadcast, blog and newspaper columns). The features highlighted through the chosen case study are thought to help move towards a more general understanding of the nature of knowledge dissemination discourse. As a by-product of the analysis, the integration of rhetorical and linguistic analyses is suggested to be a fruitful heuristic.

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Sharing knowledge and expertise on social networking websites: arbitration and mediation on Web 2.0

This paper focuses on the negotiation and sharing of knowledge and expertise in arbitration and mediation discussion groups on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Top international arbitration and mediation practitioners provide an example of a rather dispersed professional community operating within the framework of arbitration institutions which, despite their physical location in a specific country, operate internationally across borders. While in the past arbitration professionals found opportunities for exchange of views and opinions nearly exclusively on institutional or social occasions and in international conferences, today social media offer them a convenient and constantly available opportunity to keep in touch and debate topical issues and problems that emerge in their practice.

This paper considers discussion groups on two major Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on which arbitration and mediation practitioners discuss professional issues and share their expertise. It examines the different shapes taken by communicative practices on the SNSs considered, and asks some crucial questions: how do professionals use these social media in terms of contents and discursive exchanges? To what extent are such exchanges affected by the underlying concept and architecture of each of these sites? Do professional groups on SNSs qualify as virtual communities?

A small corpus of materials extracted from Facebook and LinkedIn will be analysed to shed light on professionals' interaction on web 2.0 and identify the textual and discursive constraints and advantages inherent in each of the social media examined.

The study is set in a discourse-analytical framework, and will also draw on the by now ample linguistic literature on arbitration and mediation, as well as on works on multimodal and web-mediated communication.

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Synchronous vs asynchronous forms of corporate communication: the case of instant messaging

In organizational theory, the so-called knowledge society starts from the argument that in current and future economies the key resource is knowledge (Eisenhardt, Martin 2000). The development of information technology (IT) in organizational environments has dramatically facilitated handling, storing and transferring of knowledge (both explicit and tacit). New communication technologies such as instant messaging (IM) not only provide firms with access to information dispersed in society, but they also enhance inter- and intra-connectivity and receptivity in the business system. By connecting working professionals in multiple social networks, IM has the potential to contribute to knowledge transfer and generation in the workplace, subsequently enhancing team performance. It has also significant implications for identity construal within these social spaces.
Instant Messaging (IM) systems designed for the enterprise rely on computer-based technologies that allow one-to-one, or one-to-many, quasi-synchronous, written-based communication between individuals separated by any physical distance. While email continues to dominate much of the formal workplace computer-mediated interactions, the use of IM is constantly growing especially in young multinational organizations. The increased usage of IM for business or professional purposes, has brought to the surface a range of linguistic issues inherent to the changes that these new forms of real time communication have brought about in discourse and language as compared to asynchronous forms of communication which provide written records, for example e-mails.
The present study draws on a methodological framework including analytical tools from Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Linguistics. Data consist of instances of IM communication and usage in multinational corporate environments, interviews with users and communication managers. A twofold communication-driven analysis of IM is proposed. On one hand, it sheds light on the meaning and negotiation of identity, which is held within the user/company discourse space with a special focus on the linguistic features of the so-called "federated identities". On the other hand, it delves into the relationship between identities thus constructed, and time and space locations.
This paper will investigate how knowledge communication modes such as IM affect the concept of corporate identit(ies) through communication affordances based on 'transient' spatio-temporal dynamics compared to e-mailing. The present study will contribute to a more complete understanding of how choices of discursive modes shape language and meaning as well as interpersonal relations, and consequently how this impacts on the effectiveness of organizational and professional communication.

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A synchronic and diachronic perspective of Knowledge Dissemination in UK politics

This is a project that started about three years ago with my undergraduate students at the Department of Political Studies, with the course SPRISE, i.e. Political Studies, International Relations and European Studies. It is part of a larger-scale research that investigates the 'cherry-picking' attitude of Britain towards the EU, the 'à-la-carte' attitude which sees the UK opting in, opting out, in many ways half in, half out, for the sake of what Britons call "the national interest".
The present research, in particular, is a synchronic and diachronic investigation of the sentiment of British leaders towards European integration. It analyses the strategies used by politicians for the management of knowledge: what knowledge is being presupposed, what knowledge is being 'reminded' or actualized and what knowledge is expressed and newly constructed (Calsamiglia, van Dijk 2004). Even if it was conceived with scientific discourse in mind, Calsamiglia and van Dijk's model adapts very well to political discourse too, and is thus here followed (Milizia 2014).
At the time of writing the spoken political corpus totals 6 million words and it includes all the speeches of the British Prime Ministers from 1997 to the present day: it comprises the speeches delivered by the current Prime Minister after the victory of the Conservative party in May 2015, the speeches by David Cameron and Nick Clegg for the coalition government from 2010 to 2015, and all the speeches given by the Labour government, including ten years of Tony Blair and three years of Gordon Brown. The corpus includes also some speeches delivered by Nigel Farage, the previous leader of UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) and by Ed Miliband, former Labour leader.
The aim of the paper is to analyse and compare the several governments that have been succeeding over the years and unveil how old and new administrations mediate specialized knowledge, European political knowledge in the case in point, into 'everyday' or 'lay' knowledge, and find out how what seems 'exclusive expertise', suitable only to very few specialists, is formulated in terms of everyday discourse to make it accessible to the lay public (Gotti 2013; Williams 2013). The purpose is thus to see how often and to what extent politicians presume their audience to have a familiarity with European notions, concepts and phrases, and how often and to what extent they decide to leave them 'unexplained', as it were.
The written data was all retrieved from the institutional website, www.number10.gov.uk, and all the videos used in class from YouTube.
The software used to access and process the data is WordSmith Tools 6.0 (Scott 2012).

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Filling gaps in medical knowledge. Comparative mechanisms in evidence-based medicine

This contribution is about the semantic organization and the lexico-grammatical description of the domain of comparison in a corpus of electronic papers dealing with research trials and observational studies. Regardless of the method chosen, each study design hinges on a complex of relations of similarity, difference or identity encoded in various ways in the resources of the lexico-grammar, either at clause or clause-complex level. As well as acting as cohesive devices for marking textual status, comparative relations are meaning-making resources through which texts of this kind achieve their scientific standing, in that they help construe reliable and newsworthy knowledge. Comparative items occur frequently at all the stages of a medical research study: from the selection of the population to be investigated to the description of the results obtained. Here I shall examine a spectrum of comparative mechanisms, such as explicit and implicit comparison, comparisons achieved by referring to features of quality and quantity, degrees of similarity between entities. Given its pervasive use, comparison emerges as a fundamental semiotic resource which aims at filling gaps in medical knowledge and building up valuable and relevant research evidence capable of informing clinical practice.

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Hacking the 'code'. A linguistic and socio-semiotic analysis of the _Jargon File _(or the _New Hacker's Dictionary_)

Hackers are a new-found elite with their own language / and ethics, their own legends and humor (Alan Kay)

The so-called *Jargon File* – or *The New Hacker's Dictionary* – is a comprehensive compendium of hacker slang published on the website of the Tech Model Railroad Club, one of the celebrated cradles of hacker culture (Isaacson 2014: 202). The Jargon File can be considered both an anthropological treatise and a technical dictionary, since it describes "the language hackers use among themselves for fun, social communication, and technical debate", with the aim of "illuminating many aspects of hackish tradition, folklore, and humor" (Raymond 1993).

The idea to collect hackers' special vocabulary dates back to 1959 when Peter Samson compiled the first edition of the Dictionary (Samson 2005). Indeed, language has always been fundamental in such a community, not only because hackers love to inventively play with words, but because their slang is a "code for shared states of consciousness" (Raymond 1993). An attitude that - according to Raymond - can be paralleled to the one that characterizes "jazz musicians and artists", but that is "hard to detect in most technical or scientific cultures".

As regards the connection between language and episteme in the digital era, the present paper aims at exploring hacker linguistic code in order to semantically map some of the main ideational components of this sub-culture (Kövecses 2006) as part of a broader research on the 'geekization' of discourse. More in detail, the corpus of the Jargon File will be analyzed using the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Hart 2008; Charteris-Black 2014), with a special focus on covert metaphorical keyness (Philip 2010).

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Debating the smart city on the web: a linguistic investigation

As 'smart urbanism' has gained momentum in policy debates among experts, promoting public knowledge of the 'smart city' concept has equally obtained visibility in contemporary global media, which act as main knowledge brokers among lay people. Nonetheless, the smart city remains a divisive and controversial notion as well as a byword for urban utopias and dystopias (Vanolo 2014), especially whenever discourse seems to fall back on technocratic reductionism (Söderström 2014). The perceivable tension between a prescriptive manner to guide the development and implementation of the smart city and the need for a shared understanding of its potentialities (Wolfram 2012) among urban stakeholders has prompted the appearance of digital platforms that devote space to this issue, one of the most notable being the Guardian Cities website. Since 'no one likes a city that's too smart' (Sennett 2012) and social capital should be regarded as the true lymph of cities, it can be argued that what Guardian Cities and the like do is to provide an avenue for epistemic communities to capture public attention. At the same time, they try to decouple the notion of city smartness from ICT surveillance by means of more inclusive and flexible knowledge frameworks that find their articulation in discourse.
Starting from the above assumption, a selection of thematically relevant media texts will be investigated by means of a privileged discourse-analytic perspective in the attempt to illustrate the role of language in 'the acquisition, diffusion and justification of knowledge' (van Dijk 2014) about the smart city. Text mining will aim to highlight the thematic threads, rhetorical patterns and possible discursive pitfalls of a far-reaching concept that extends over an ambitious axiological map – technology hype, sustainability, social inclusion and active citizenship being among its boldest promises.

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Reorienting translation choices: English as a lingua franca, knowledge dissemination and a revision of the source/target distinction

One of the fundamental tenets of Translation Studies is that translations can and should be seen, descriptively, as "facts of a 'target' culture" (Toury 1995/2012) This view rests on the assumption that translation is the act of transferring a text from one source pole to a target pole and that some sort of barrier (linguistic, cultural, social) separates the two poles. In modern societies, however, it is increasingly often the case that different language communities co-exist within the same local context; in other, equally frequent, cases communities of interest or practice emerge even while members are still located in different local contexts, a trend immensely facilitated by online communication. In both scenarios, the language of choice for communication across language barriers is often English, used as a lingua franca by and for speakers of different languages. In terms of translation flows, this has significantly increased the likelihood of English being chosen a target language, although for an international audience.
Translation into English for an international audience, and the attendant blurring of a clearly identifiable socio-cultural context at the target pole, make for a reassessment of some fundamental notions (e.g. "purpose", "loyalty" and "equivalence") that in Translation Studies have in recent years been discussed almost exclusively in terms of the target pole of translation. As Mossop (1990) was already stressing immediately before the heyday of descriptive approaches, there are translation situations and approaches in which the source context can play as important a role as the target context. In particular, translation into English would seem to contradict the emphasis on the target pole placed by functionalist models of translation such as Nord's (1997), where a distinction is customarily made between "instrumental" and "documentary" translation, the former focusing on the communicative purpose of a text within the target culture and the latter aiming at preserving formal correspondence with the source text. When English is both target and lingua franca, the distinction between an instrumental and a documentary approach may become blurred: (documentary) literalist choices may have exactly the (instrumental) function of orienting target-language readers in the source environment(s). The paper will discuss some implications of this reconceptualization in terms of knowledge dissemination, especially with reference to web-mediated communication.

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Research blogs: local or global reach?

Thanks to the fast-expanding digital publishing facilities blogs have become a powerful tool for knowledge and information dissemination. In their first versions they were a sort of personal diary, but they have since then evolved into a trendy way for publishing information on specific subjects. Blogs have existed in the cyberspace community since 1998 (Wu 2005: 426) even though 1999 was the turning point for the development of this phenomenon on a large scale (Hsu et al. 2007). In 2008 Technorati.com, one of the most famous blog tracking services listed over 110 million blogs and this number is in constant increase.

Blogs can take many shapes, one of their the main features being their subjectivity. According to Myers (2010: 2-7) blogs "are not like personal home pages, because they are regularly updated, and they are not like diaries, because they are built around links, and they are not like wikis, which involve many authors collaborating on one text".
Blogs are increasingly used by various kinds of people who turn into "knowledge producers". For example, research blogs have now become a popular mechanism for the quick discussion of scholarly information and fast online communication and public engagement. Science is thus communicated online to very heterogeneous audiences (Mauranen 2013). At the same time professional experts can divulge on a regular basis the results of their activities. In this way blogs can also be considered storage sites and memory devices. (Matheson 2004).
Since blogs can reach unlimited numbers of readers, English is often used as a lingua franca in such online contexts, both by native and non-native speakers, to ensure the widest possible diffusion
The present contribution sets out to ascertain whether or not the language of the blogs published by researchers in the field of economics is actually global, in other words, shaped in such a way that it can prove understandable to the majority of people reading them. To investigate this issue, two corpora of economic blogs published respectively by Bibek Debroy and Tyler Cowen have been analysed.
The preliminary findings which emerge from the analysis of the word-lists and on selected excerpts from the two corpora seem to indicate that even though blogs can offer access to a virtually unlimited number of readers, the extent of their reach is not always global.

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Vulgariser la terminologie de la crise économique et financière: les dictionnaires Internet comme véhicule de déterminologisation

L'économie et la finance ont toujours réveillé un certain intérêt chez les profanes à cause, d'une part, des rapports nécessaires et incontournables avec les banques et les impôts et, de l'autre, des reportages qui leur sont fréquemment consacrés par la presse de tout type. C'est pourtant la crise économique et financière de 2008 qui donne l'impulsion à une diffusion capillaire de ses termes spécialisés, grâce surtout aux ressources offertes par la Toile. La profondeur et la durée de cette crise économique ont influencé le quotidien des citoyens qui doivent y faire face, qui en subissent les conséquences parfois désastreuses, et suivent alors avec attention les discours de la presse. Ce qui a conduit, depuis 2008, à la rédaction d'un grand nombre d'articles de presse (et de mini-dictionnaires d'accompagnement) ayant le but déclaré d'expliquer les mots de la crise au grand public, entraînant un « pic de reformulation de la terminologie » (Janot 2014 : 13). C'est donc aux « glossaires » et « lexiques » de la crise économique et financière repérables gratuitement en ligne que nous allons consacrer notre intérêt, puisqu'il s'avèrent être un support à la transmission du savoir aussi bien qu'à la « déterminologisation » (Meyer, Mackintosh 2000) progressive des termes mis en jeu. Ainsi, nous analyserons les caractéristiques structurelles et l'aspect qu'une dizaine de dictionnaires Internet retenus montrent à l'usager, ainsi que les marques linguistiques les rapprochant des discours plus traditionnellement considérés comme vulgarisateurs.

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Comparative mechanisms and relations in the dissemination of institution-centred financial knowledge

The written dissemination of institution-centred financial performance offers a field of great interest for the study of discourse production in the European context.
We all know that the dynamics of public finance are affected by ideologies and policies that are relevant features shaping the formulation and delivery of texts within the EU.
As a matter of fact, the European communicative institutional space embeds different national and supranational relations, as well as multifaceted cultural backgrounds (Hofstede 2001). Consequently, written communication of 'replicated' online genres can maintain or modify the boundaries on which the single institutions and identities are based (Heller 2011).
In fact, the dishomogeneous national dimensions of identity can be textually shaped either as emerging over the supranational organization or intentionally backgrounding a national sense of self-empowerment against the ECB, thus resulting in different expressions of 'Europeanisation' (Papathanassopoulos, Negrine 2011), especially when reporting financial data and drawing comparisons about best national economic performances based on institutional trust.
This contribution examines the discursive shaping of some Member States' annual financial reports, comparing them with those issued by the European Central Bank, from 2010 to the present day.

The investigation of the different relationships between transfer of knowledge, written discursive formulation and reformulation procedures may lead to divergent realizations of financial performance and of credible institutional identities in the European intercultural space.

In particular, the study analyzes relevant linguistic strategies such as narrative, evaluation and legitimization techniques, used in the genre of financial reporting to diachronically/synchronically compare banking performance, likely achievements or failures and therefore legitimate institutional identity (van Dijk 1998; Verschueren 2011) and escape blame avoidance.

In sum, the analytical focus of comparison and contrast ranges over several parameters: the degree of variation and variability of reporting at a national state level; the degree of convergence and divergence between these and those of the ECB; the diachronic perspective, isolating and tracking trends and developments in this discourse field as a whole.

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Titles in medicine and science popularization

Given the spread of Internet-based channels of communication over the last two decades, communicating scientific contents and medical issues to lay audiences has become an increasingly significant phenomenon, which concerns research domains as different as specialized discourse, media communication and persuasive/promotional language. As a matter of fact, if in specialized discourse given standardized, crystallized or even gate-keeping structures are, not only appropriate, but the most transparent in order to transfer meanings and instantiate specific interpretive frameworks, and if, on the other hand, in media communication certain discourse strategies are accepted as prototypical ways to shape up news, confer newsworthiness to events and convey ideology-saturated value judgement over given behaviours, the popularization of science holds an intermediate position on a discoursal continuum between these two realizations since it combines the need for informativeness and accuracy of specialized communication and the need for cognitive immediacy, effectiveness and the avoidance of gate-keeping effects which is dominant in media and persuasive communication. Since popularization affects not only the micro-linguistic and rhetorical level (Garzone 2006) but also, and quite markedly, pre- and early-textual aspects of the text (i.e. captions, layout, images, etc., cf. Miller 1998; Gotti 2013), this analysis will focus on one of such elements, namely, the titles used in medicine and science news articles, with the purpose of tracing the strategies typically used in online magazines of science popularization to effectively synthesize contents in terms of both clarity and impact. As a matter of fact, given their metatextual prominence, titles perform an important popularizing function in that they have to be informatively dense, yet transparent (rather than allusive), they have to include key elements with respect to the associated articles in order to function as an efficient retrieval device (i.e. containing semantic handles useful when browsing text archives), and to establish expectations and the interpretive paradigm for the ensuing text. Based on a corpus of articles published over a two-month period (July-August 2015) in the medicine section of the online magazine Science Daily and Scientific American, this presentation will examine titling strategies at the lexical, sentence and structure level so as to identify the most typical devices used to conflate complex contents into a (relatively) short sentence, facilitate comprehension without altering or banalizing meanings, and appeal to the lay reader.

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