

RECENSIONI

POLO, Chiara, *Word order between morphology and syntax*, Unipress, Padova 2004 [Monograph series], pp. 314, ISBN 88-8098-213-3, € 30,00.

Il presente lavoro è la versione rivista della tesi di dottorato di Chiara Polo, condotta sotto la guida di Giuseppe Longobardi, nella quale l'autrice si è occupata, in prospettiva generativista, e più precisamente secondo gli orientamenti dell'approccio minimalista, dei riflessi dell'interfaccia tra morfologia e sintassi nell'ordine delle parole, mettendo a confronto tre lingue geneticamente imparentate: da una parte, latino e sloveno come rappresentanti di lingue con ricca morfologia flessiva, dall'altra, l'italiano, certo meno ricco delle altre due nella flessione.

Sul problema dell'ordine delle parole, ovvero dei costituenti, si sono avuti negli ultimi anni numerosi contributi, anche se non sempre il tono del dibattito si è mantenuto ad alto livello, soprattutto a proposito del latino: in particolare, del latino era stata enfatizzata una libertà sintattica più apparente che reale, dovuta anche al fatto che chi aveva analizzato i dati spesso aveva conoscenze di seconda mano del problema (quando non del latino).

Il volume di Chiara Polo è suddiviso in quattro capitoli in cui la materia è trattata e discussa con equilibrio e con perizia: il primo capitolo è introduttivo e vengono esposti lo scopo dell'intero lavoro e gli assunti teorici che ne sono alla base. Il secondo capitolo passa in rassegna le precedenti discussioni e proposte per spiegare l'ordine delle parole in latino. Il terzo capitolo, il vero centro del lavoro, è costituito dall'analisi serrata del materiale latino, basato essenzialmente sulla petroniana *Cena Trimalchionis* secondo i criteri scelti. Il quarto e conclusivo capitolo è dedicato all'analisi del fenomeno, assai spinoso per ogni teoria, della discontinuità sintattica in latino. Un'utile appendice di questo volume è il CD-rom allegato nel quale il lettore può trovare tutto il *corpus* utilizzato per l'indagine disposto secondo i criteri di indagine.

Il volume di Chiara Polo si rivela un più che utile contributo all'indagine sull'ordine delle parole in latino, e non solo, mettendo in evidenza come l'ordine delle parole rifletta un'interrelazione costante tra morfologia e sintassi. Certo, qualche problema resta aperto: non è detto insomma che l'approccio formalista rigorosamente

samente adottato sia l'unico capace di dare soluzioni, al contrario dell'approccio funzionalista, un approccio che l'autrice non perde occasione di criticare, non sempre con piena ragione.

Nel complesso, dunque, un lavoro che dovrà essere tenuto ben presente da chiunque intenda occuparsi di ordine delle parole, soprattutto ma non solo, in latino.

[Pierluigi Cuzzolin]

GAROFALO, Giovanni, *La Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de Extranjería*, Uni-press, Padova 2003, pp. III-306, ISBN 88-8098-177-3, € 22,00.

Giovanni Garofalo, da anni traduttore-interprete presso l'Ufficio Immigrazione di Gorizia, unisce in questo saggio un tema di grande attualità – i movimenti migratori verso i Paesi più ricchi dell'Europa – e alcune interessanti riflessioni sul linguaggio giuridico spagnolo. Lo studio si articola in tre sezioni, che contengono rispettivamente la *Ley Orgánica 4/2000* con la traduzione a fronte in italiano, un'analisi pragmalinguistica del testo e un utile “Glossario amministrativo-giuridico spagnolo-italiano riferibile all'immigrazione”, con una serie di esempi lessicali e morfologici che illustrano il contesto d'uso di lemmi e strutture con accezioni diverse dalla lingua standard. La traduzione, sicuramente pregevole, è arricchita da un esteso apparato di note, collocate alla fine della prima parte, ricche di considerazioni e delucidazioni di ordine traduttorologico. La prospettiva, sempre contrastiva, non si limita al punto di vista linguistico, ma spazia sempre in ambito legislativo, spesso con riferimenti puntuali al *Decreto Legislativo 286/1998*, equivalente italiano della *Ley de Extranjería*. Sulla base dei testi di riferimento di Austin e Searle, Garofalo sviluppa, già a partire dalle note, ma molto più estesamente e analiticamente nella seconda parte dell'opera, gli aspetti illocutivi e perlocutivi di un macroatto normativo spagnolo in prospettiva contrastiva con l'italiano; la messa a fuoco del ruolo del traduttore giuridico in rapporto all'equivalenza dell'effetto illocutorio è particolarmente interessante e significativa nel contesto di sistemi giuridici di derivazione romana e in quello delle lingue affini. Segnalo al riguardo, per la loro perspicuità, le pagine dedicate alla dimensione dell'ipotesi e dell'atemporalità, le peculiarità stilistiche e l'anisomorfismo linguistico di spagnolo e italiano.

Un lavoro che si basa su testi autentici è necessariamente destinato a misurarsi con la caducità dei materiali, quindi con le inevitabili variazioni normative che hanno portato in campo legislativo a modificazioni e a nuovi interventi. Per questo l'autore, perfettamente consapevole di quello che chiama l'inarrestabile mutare della normativa, sottolinea che, se variano i provvedimenti e le misure sanzionatorie,

non vengono invece mai stravolti i codici linguistici usati nella redazione delle leggi, ai quali sono dedicati i due terzi del lavoro. L'opera si propone come strumento utile per gli aspiranti traduttori-interpreti e per chi già esercita la professione, ma ha un valore molto maggiore, per le considerazioni teoriche che sono alla sua base e che esplicitano riflessioni in ambito giuridico e linguistico ancora poco frequenti nell'ambito spagnolo-italiano.

[Luisa Chierichetti]

MÖLLERING, Martina, *The Acquisition of German Modal Particles. A Corpus-Based Approach*, Peter Lang, Bern 2004 [Linguistic Insights, 10], pp. 290, ISBN 3-03910-043-2, € 47,60.

La ricerca sulle *Modalpartikeln* (MP) è stata caratterizzata fin dagli anni '60 dall'obiettivo di fornire un'analisi semantico-funzionale di ognuna di esse. Solo negli ultimi anni si è delineato un maggiore interesse per la prospettiva contrastiva e quindi per le problematiche legate alla traduzione e all'insegnamento di questi importanti elementi pragmatici della lingua tedesca. Tuttavia, nonostante i numerosi studi, restano ancora molti punti irrisolti legati alla complessità delle MP sia sul piano semantico-pragmatico sia sul piano sintattico e manca a tutt'oggi anche una strategia vincente per il loro insegnamento nella didattica del tedesco-L2. Il lavoro di Martina Möllering si colloca proprio in quest'ultimo ambito di ricerca proponendo un approccio all'insegnamento delle MP basato sul metodo della linguistica dei *corpora*. Tre dei *corpora* utilizzati appartengono alla banca dati dell'Institut für deutsche Sprache di Mannheim e contengono soprattutto interviste radiofoniche o televisive (*Freiburger Korpus* e *Dialogenstrukturenkorpus*) o interviste private (*Pfeffer-Korpus*), il quarto *corpus* è una raccolta di conversazioni telefoniche trascritte (Brons-Albert 1984).

Möllering struttura il proprio lavoro in quattro parti. Nella prima presenta le caratteristiche delle MP concentrando in particolare sulla loro funzione illocutiva. Infatti, è soprattutto il valore pragmatico-illocutivo delle *Modalpartikeln* a rendere la loro acquisizione problematica per i non madre-lingua: i parlanti di tedesco-L2 dispongono di un inventario di strategie pragmatico-illocutive diverso da quelle dei parlanti di tedesco-L1. Un secondo fattore riguarda la multifunzionalità delle MP che si manifesta su due livelli: da una parte le MP possono esercitare diverse funzioni a seconda del contesto in cui compaiono, dall'altra esse hanno omonimi appartenenti ad altre categorie grammaticali. L'apprendente di tedesco L2 si trova quindi a dover distinguere in un dato contesto se si trova di fronte ad una MP o ad un suo omonimo e in un secondo momento a dover comprendere il significato pragmatico della MP.

Nella seconda parte del volume Möllering porta un valido sostegno al suo lavoro argomentando sulla base di studi propri e di altri linguisti nell'ambito dell'acquisizione delle MP in contesto guidato e non, a favore di un insegnamento esplicito delle MP nella didattica del tedesco L2.

La terza parte consiste nell'analisi della frequenza nei quattro *corpora* di ventuno particelle che possono comparire in funzione di *Modalpartikeln*. Le nove particelle con la più alta frequenza (*ja, auch, aber, mal, doch, schon, denn, nur, eben*) sono oggetto di un'analisi qualitativa condotta sul *corpus* di Brons-Albert. Möllering distingue e spiega le funzioni che ognuno dei nove lessemi può assumere sulla base di frasi del *corpus* e mette in luce le collocazioni lessicali e grammaticali tipiche del loro uso. Alla fine dell'analisi funzionale di ogni lessema segue una tabella che riassume le sue possibili posizioni sintattiche, le eventuali collocazioni grammaticali e lessicali, la categoria grammaticale di appartenenza e la corrispondente traduzione in inglese.

La quarta e ultima parte del libro presenta il materiale didattico elaborato da Möllering sulla base dell'analisi qualitativa. Esso consiste in nove fogli di lavoro (uno per ogni lessema) che possono essere definiti dei veri e propri percorsi aventi l'obiettivo di guidare lo studente, attraverso l'osservazione di frasi del *corpus*, ad acquisire una consapevolezza metalinguistica sulle MP.

Particolarmente riuscita risulta l'analisi delle collocazioni grammaticali e lessicali che aiuta lo studente a riconoscere la funzione di una particella sulla base dell'“ambiente” sintattico o semantico in cui essa compare. Per esempio, con il foglio di lavoro su *ja* lo studente scopre che *ja* in funzione di MP compare spesso in collocazione contigua con il verbo *essere* in terza persona ed in espressioni che esprimono stupore (“*das ist ja irre!*”).

L'utilizzo dei *corpora* costituisce il gran punto di forza di questo lavoro. Möllering, basandosi sulla lingua “viva” del *corpus* (anziché sugli esempi costruiti spesso *ad hoc* e limitati a singole frasi come se ne trovano di frequente nei libri di testo), propone un approccio didattico innovativo che si rivela particolarmente indicato per rinforzare le competenze pragmatiche dei discenti.

Riferimenti bibliografici

Brons-Albert, Ruth, 1984, *Gesprochenes Standarddeutsch: Telefondialoge*, Tübingen, Narr.

[Manuela Moroni]

HART, David (ed.), *English Modality in Context. Diachronic Perspectives*, Peter Lang, Bern etc. 2003, pp. 261, ISBN 3-039-10-046-7, sFr 70.

This volume (like its companions Hart/Lima 2000 and Gotti *et al.* 2002)¹ is the product of a research project on “variation in linguistic modality in lME and eME” and consists of four contributions from the research team and three outside contributions. The opening overview by Olga Fischer (reprinted from Hart/Lima 2000) questions Lightfoot’s idea of a radical syntactic reanalysis of English modal verbs in the sixteenth century by stressing the cyclical and gradual nature of change in modal elements (through bleaching and compensating reinforcement by new elements) as well as the importance of the pragmatic and semantic context for the study of the evolution of meaning. As for the timing of change, modals were already exceptional in OE and continued to lose full-verb features in ME, this happening at different speeds with different modals.

All of the studies explore details of this uneven loss of full-verb features and of changes in use, with attention to pragmatic contexts. Debra Ziegler looks at the semi-modal ‘be supposed to’ in OED citations from 1400 onwards. Semantic evolution (from ‘belief’ to ‘obligation’ meanings) probably occurred via re-analysis in ambiguous contexts (indeed, she talks of “unequivocal ambiguity”) where the verb is used with human subjects and dynamic verbal complements. Here (*pace* Traugott 1989) epistemic meanings come before deontic meanings.

Rafał Molencki (in a study that complements Lima in Gotti *et al.* 2002) examines the evolution of epistemic MUST, using material from the OED, MED, Visser and the Helsinki Corpus. Deontic *must needs* (the second element added for disambiguation) becomes common from the fourteenth century onwards, and from the end of the century epistemic uses were inferred from the adverb (especially with static *be* as the verbal complement); then about 1600 epistemic *must* starts to appear by itself.

Arja Nurmi uses the Corpus of Early English Correspondence to throw light on the sociolinguistic variation in the use of WILL/WOULD and SHALL/SHOULD in the sixteenth century. The overall trend is that observed by Gotti (in Gotti *et al.* 2002) of a decline in the frequency of SHALL and rise in WILL (with the latter becoming more frequent around the 1560s and 70s). The change seems to have taken place from below, with women writers and family letters forerunners of an increased use of WILL (data for 1/2/3 person subjects taken together). In the first person, *I shall* is originally dominant but is overtaken by *I will* as the most frequent form c.1580.

¹ HART, David / LIMA, Maria (eds.), 2002, *Modality in late Middle English: Semantic Shifts and Pragmatic Interpretations*, Napoli, CUEN; GOTTI, Maurizio et al., 2002, *Variation in Central Modals. A Repertoire of Forms and Types of Usage in Middle English and Early Modern English*, Bern etc., Peter Lang.

Maurizio Gotti makes a complementary study of frequencies and uses of SHALL and WILL in the 17th century (using the Helsinki Corpus) and compares the results with the uses recorded in contemporary grammars. He finds that *I shall* is more common in private letters, *I will* in official letters (*pace* Kytö 1991). For the other persons, *you will* and *he will* are the dominant forms at both levels of formality. Full comparison of this contribution with the preceding one is not possible because of the different analyses made: perhaps Nurmi could be persuaded to re-elaborate her data in a future study to make them comparable with Gotti's, in particular if she could relate her social parameters with uses for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person subjects.

Gabriella Mazzon examines deontic and epistemic 'marginal modals' and lexical modality in official texts (c.1380-1480). Following Traugott, she emphasizes semantic evolution through re-analysis of ambiguous uses, though she too, like Ziegler, finds examples of deontic meanings derived from epistemic ones. She proposes as a methodological approach the identification and study of all the expressions associated with single linguistic acts and exemplifies this with an inventory and discussion of the various expressions of 'Ordering' in her corpus.

Marina Dossena looks at SHOULD and WOULD in IME and eModE and in roughly contemporaneous OSc in Helsinki corpora. Northern spellings are overtaken by the standard southern forms in Scottish texts about 1560-70 with tradition-oriented historical texts and trial records retaining Scots forms a little longer. The author notes a typical 'would been' (etc.) past form and notes its frequency (increasing over time perhaps as a flag of identity) especially in the negative 'wouldna been', which makes one wonder if the form *could have* originated from a possible 'wouldna a' been' (an idea mentioned in the conclusions, p. 216). In the second section the author goes on to look at the uses of the two modals, fitting them into a model of early modern discourse characterized by greater 'politeness' and the use of distancing forms to soften deontic speech acts and to add epistemic relativity to expressions of opinion.

The volume ends with an analysis by Vanda Polese of frequencies and typical uses of SHALL, SHOULD and MUST in the first English translation of More's *Utopia* (1551). She reviews the various uses for the three modals found in the text, which are typically evolving and pragmatically and contextually defined. In this last respect the author emphasizes the importance of many sentence elements as carriers of modality, with adverbs as especially important.

The various studies make an interesting contribution to the history of modality in English. They all emphasize a gradual and context-driven process of continual evolution (therefore no sixteenth-century 'big bang' à la Lightfoot); and make useful contributions to this history (questioning the inevitable precedence of deontic over epistemic meanings in evolution, for instance), with much attention to details – though whether God or the devil is to be found there I leave it for others to decide.

[Richard Dury]

DEL LUNGO CAMICIOOTTI, Gabriella / TOGNINI BONELLI, Elena (eds.), *Academic Discourse – New Insights into Evaluation*, Peter Lang, Bern 2004 [Linguistic Insights, 15], pp. 234, ISBN 3-03910-353-9, € 42,80.

The papers in this new volume from Peter Lang are among those presented at an international conference held at Pontignano (Siena) from 14-16 June 2003. They bring together recent research from linguists based in England, Finland, Spain, Sweden, the US and Italy, with each contribution representing a slightly different perspective on the phenomenon. As explained in the Introduction, their plurality is encouraging because “though divergent opinions remain regarding the terminology and ways of analysing evaluation, a general consensus has emerged among scholars as to the centrality of this topic” (p. 12). The volume’s eleven contributions can be roughly divided into three parts, dealing respectively with written/spoken and diachronic corpora; case studies of smaller corpora; and the round table discussion that rounded off the conference.

Ken Hyland’s paper “Engagement and disciplinarity: the other side of evaluation” makes a fundamental distinction between the attitudinal dimension of *stance* and the reader-oriented concept of *engagement*, drawing on linguistic evidence from a corpus of 240 articles in eight disciplines. This is followed by John Swales’s “Evaluation in academic speech: first forays”, which describes some of the insights gained in recent years from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) and calls for ‘a fresh open-minded stance’ capable of accounting for such dissimilar devices as metaphor, hyperbole, idiom, evaluative adjectives and intensifiers. Ellen Valle offers a diachronic view in “A nice and accurate philosopher: interactivity and evaluation in a historical context”, which illustrates the evaluative practices found in 17th-19th century natural history writings.

Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli begins the second group of contributions with “Audience-oriented relevance markers in business studies lectures”, an investigation of distinctive lexico-grammatical features and audience-related relevance markers based on the transcripts of 12 lectures held in Italy and the US. University lectures (from MICASE) are also dealt with in Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez’s “Verbal stance in spoken academic discourse”, which describes evaluation in terms of lexical/grammatical and epistemic/attitudinal stance, affective/evaluative first-person verbs and modal auxiliaries. Philip Shaw draws attention to the importance of co-textual and extratextual evidence in “How do we recognise implicit evaluation in academic book reviews?”, a study of *Economic Journal* reviews published in 1913 and 1993. The discourse of historiography is targeted by Marc Silver and Marina Bondi in “Weaving voices: a study of article openings in historical discourse”, which draws on a corpus of 320 RAs from six American journals; this is followed by Paul Tucker’s paper on explicit affective markers, “Evaluation and interpretation in art-historical discourse”. The section

ends “Negation in linguistics papers”, Pauline Webber’s study of evaluative negative constructions in 8 articles from *Applied Linguistics* and *Text*.

An evaluation of the whole conference is offered by Anna Mauranen in “Where next? A summary of the round table discussion”, which is particularly useful for making the right connections between the different strands of research, while accepting that the picture is still far from complete. Some of the aspects awaiting further investigation are whether evaluation is inescapable or an option; the role of situational, cultural and disciplinary contexts; and how far speech diverges from writing. It is also unclear what kind of language units (e.g. morphemes, words, utterances, propositions, exchanges) are relevant in the analysis of evaluation. Readers are forewarned that “since we are linguists, we ought to take our task seriously and primarily describe that which is there in the language. It is important to continue linguistic description as far as we can before calling outside forces (such as vague notions of ‘situation’ or ‘world knowledge’) to help” (p. 214). Paul Drew offers his view of the debate in “Integrating qualitative analysis of evaluative discourse with the quantitative approach of corpus linguistics”, which recommends a combination of interactional analysis and corpus data in response to some of the difficulties and inconsistencies identified during the conference.

The overall impression of this excellent volume is that the editors have succeeded in offering a very readable, well-balanced selection of papers spanning texts from several genres and international disciplinary settings. Albeit limited to contributions dealing with English, and largely with Anglo-American discourse, its insights may be usefully extended to other languages for a cross-cultural understanding of how modern scholars communicate and negotiate academically-relevant value judgements within their respective communities.

[Davide Simone Giannoni]

ANDERSON, Laurie / BAMFORD, Julia (eds.), *Evaluation in Oral and Written Academic Discourse*, Officina Edizioni, Rome 2004 [Varietà di testi - Varietà di lingue, 2], pp. 162, ISBN 88-87570-76-0, € 15,00.

There is a growing body of research dealing with evaluation and its linguistic realisations in specialised texts, as illustrated by the review of Del Lungo Camicotti and Tognini Bonelli’s book in the previous issue of *Linguistica e Filologia*. The editors of this new volume explain that “nowhere is evaluation more prevalent than in academic discourse, where it forms the very backbone of the argumentative structure of many of its texts” (p. 7). Its contents offer various perspectives on academic evaluation, originating from a research project on “Small Corpora and the Analysis of Academic Discourse: Metadiscursive and Evaluative Features” conducted by the Universities of Florence, Modena and Reggio Emilia,

Rome, and Siena. They are divided into two sections, dealing respectively with spoken and written English texts.

Julia Bamford's opening contribution, "Evaluating retrospectively and prospectively in academic lectures", discusses evaluative/interactional uses of the noun *problem* in a corpus of economics lectures by both native and non-native speakers. This is followed by "A complex interplay of voices: first and second person pronouns in university lectures", where Polly Walsh investigates the role of personal pronouns (e.g. repetitions, false starts, exclusive/inclusive, impersonal, metadiscursive) in videorecorded lectures by one Spanish and two British economists. Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli's "Metaphors as evaluation in business studies lectures" analyses the disciplinary and pedagogic functions of root metaphor categories (organic, mechanical, warfare, liquid, sports) in twelve business studies lectures. In "Evaluating task assignment contributions: a description of participant practices", Laura Gavioli and Nick Maxwell describe the use of 'candidate solutions' and 'report formatted contributions' within evaluative sequences produced by EFL learners during spoken interaction. Laurie Anderson's paper "The collaborative construction of an appraisal in a graduate seminar: an analysis from different research perspectives" highlights instead the linguistic resources and sequences found in evaluative acts by non-native English speakers attending a doctoral seminar-discussion at the European University Institute in Florence.

Turning to written discourse, Marina Bondi and Marc Silver ("Textual voices: a cross-disciplinary study of attribution in academic discourse") examine 'textual voices', that is the interplay between evaluation and reporting, in history and economics article introductions. Franca Poppi's "Boosters and hedges: two sides of the same coin? A case study of a small corpus of economics textbooks" looks instead at the use of interpersonal metadiscourse markers for expressing epistemic stance in economics textbooks. Finally, in "Taking a stance: evaluative adjectives in a corpus of written economics lectures", Christina Samson describes how written discourse exploits evaluative adjectives for pedagogic, academic and self-promotional purposes.

The different insights reflected by this very welcome volume are not only complementary but also point to new avenues of research. One area that clearly deserves further attention is variation across languages and disciplines; another, more neglected aspect is the degree of interpersonal (and intrapersonal) variation, as indicated by Polly Walsh's conclusion that "each lecturer meets the challenge of relating to the audience in his/her own way" (p. 49). Throughout the academic genre system there is a clear tension between standardising disciplinary and language-specific norms, on the one side, and the individual crafting of discourse on the other side - a picture further complicated by the need to reconcile global and local concerns, especially wherever English has become the lingua franca of international research communities.

[Davide Simone Giannoni]

NOTIZIE

Vagueness in Normative Texts

This note is to announce the publication of a new volume (Bhatia, Vijay K. / Engberg, Jan / Gotti, Maurizio / Heller, Dorothee (eds), 2005, *Vagueness in Normative Texts*, Peter Lang, Bern) which brings together eighteen papers with findings from an investigation of linguistic and cross-cultural features in legal texts, conducted as part of a national research project on *Intercultural Discourse in Domain-Specific English*. The University of Bergamo is represented by contributions from members of CERLIS, the centre for research on specialised languages (www.unibg.it/cerlis). As explained in the Introduction, the background to this volume originates in an international project entitled *Generic Integrity in Legal Discourse*, which covered texts and contexts from such diverse legal cultures as Continental European, Anglo-Saxon, Islamic, Chinese and Japanese (<http://gild.mmc.cityu.edu.hk>). This was followed in 2003 by a Colloquium held at the 14th European Symposium on Language for Special Purposes (University of Surrey, UK) on the role of vagueness and indeterminacy in Italian, Danish, German, French and English legislative writing.

The analytical approach taken here stems from the realisation that normative texts seek to reconcile two mutually-exclusive requirements: on the one hand they need to be extremely determinate/precise, so that each word-meaning is as clear as possible; on the other hand, textual provisions have to cover any relevant situation, i.e. to be all-inclusive. Determinacy and precision are generally achieved through explicitness and avoidance of vagueness, which limit the number of allowable interpretations but also exclude aspects that should have been covered. This means that vagueness in legal writing arises from an inevitable compromise between determinacy and all-inclusiveness.

Linguistic studies in this field reflect four complementary perspectives. First of all, an ongoing debate on the intentional use of vagueness and its impact on statutory interpretation. Then an interest in such microlinguistic features as multinomials, indefinite adjectives, verbal modality negotiation of meaning. Thirdly, the use of vagueness in such specific contexts (e.g. international arbitration, marine insurance, human rights conventions). Finally, the insights gained from contrastive analyses targeting normative texts in languages other than English (Chinese, Czech, German and Italian, among others).

The complex relationship between text and statute is an object of much debate also among practitioners. For some scholars (adhering to the tenets of New Textualism) courts should accept texts almost at face value - without searching for intended meanings - on the assumption that words have a limited semantic range and that no other interpretation is acceptable: semantic indeterminacy is solved merely by looking carefully for the original meaning embedded within the text. A very different viewpoint is taken by other scholars, who claim that any word may change its meaning, if used inappropriately: all textual elements are inherently vague and there is no such thing as an “original meaning”.

The results of this project all point to the crucial significance of semantic vagueness as a category for interpreting legal discourse and practice. Thanks to the range of approaches and research questions considered by different researches, it has uncovered some of the complex links that exist between different linguistic and cultural contexts. It is hoped that its findings will be of interest not only to the applied linguist but also to lawyers, legal drafters and other practitioners in the field.

[Davide Simone Giannoni]

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