corpus/campione.[2] Bercelli conferma: "Riferire le frequenze relative dei fenomeni rilevati in un corpus è scelta insolita nei lavori di analisi della conversazione, anzi ritenuta leggermente disdicevole." Lavorando con *corpora* di varie dimensioni, gli autori di questo volume hanno dimostrato come le statistiche, in particolar modo quelle comparative, servono per rafforzare e rendere ancora più convincente un lavoro analitico attento e preciso.

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[Louann Haarman]

PONCINI, Gina, *Discursive Strategies in Multicultural Business Meetings*, Peter Lang, Bern 2004 [Linguistic Insights 13], pp. 338, ISBN 3-03910-222-2, € 56,10.

This volume analyses the discursive practices and strategies employed in multicultural and multiparty business meetings where English is used as a common language, and is based on data from meetings held by an Italian company for its international distributors from several countries in Europe, Asia and North America.

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[2] La questione della generalizzabilità nella CA è da tempo oggetto di discussione e discordia.Vedi Pallotti (2001) per una discussione critica a riguardo e Heritage (1999: 73) che si augura che la CA si apra a "applied analysis", che dovrebbe portare ad un "enlargement of this field, and to an enrichment of its practice."

Unlike much research in the same field, the present study abandons altogether the traditional view on multicultural communication, centered on the analysis of the speech of two subjects – each seen as representative of a specific national culture – and mainly aimed at identifying instances of miscommunication in relation to cultural differences. In fact, the relevance and novelty of this analysis is two-folded. On the one hand, it broadens the concept of intercultural business meeting from the dyadic idea of business communication between some native and some non-native English speakers to a more articulated one, leaving space for the inclusion of participants from a variety of cultures and none of whom is necessarily a native English speaker. On the other hand, it does not adopt a merely problematic approach to the study of multiculturality – starting from an overgeneric and simplistic principle of causality between cultural differences and miscommunication – but analyzes the discursive features and processes that make interactions at business meetings successful.

The volume is organised in nine chapters. Chapters I and II present a review of the literature and serve the purpose of introducing the actual analysis, to which the central chapters (Chapters III to VIII) are devoted. Chapters IX closes the volume synthesizing the data collected and the outcome of the analysis, thus providing the conclusion to the whole study, and is followed by two sections respectively presenting the bibliography and a set of appendices gathering graphs and data referring to the meetings observed and discussed by the author.

The first two chapters show how the focus on problematic situations in intercultural business meetings is limiting and questionable, as miscommunication cannot always be attributed to cultural differences *tout court*. As the author demonstrates by comparing data and observations from previous studies on the subject, breakdowns in conversation at meetings might be due to these, but also to intra-cultural, social, situational and organizational factors (ranging from the participants' societal and institutional roles to strictly inter-individual factors, or even to failures of goodwill), to differing discourse strategies, or to the influence of extra-situational factors on conversational structure. The author also underlines how the concept of miscommunication itself is too vague and broad – encompassing the idea of communicative breakdown, interrupting the communicative flow, as well as the idea of communicative 'trouble spot', simply confusing the linear transmission of a message – and too negatively connoted, especially when causally related to cultural factors. As a matter of fact, research shows that communicative problems and difficulties due to cultural differences and to lack of competence in using English can easily be repaired and overcome, thus re-establishing the basis for a successful communicative exchange. Such observations are reasons enough for the author to claim that it is valid and relevant to concentrate on what facilitates interaction at meetings rather than on eventual communicative problems, and the first step in this direction is by the claim that it is valid to consider multicultural business meetings as a single culture (or, more properly, as a single level of culture

even if not a homogeneous entity), thus focussing on the nature of the multicultural group of participants and especially on how this sense of group is brought about and maintained at meetings.

The third chapter provides the methodology and the rationale behind this approach, by assessing the criteria of the analysis of the contextual factors and of the linguistic features contributing to successful communication and to the creation of group belonging at meetings. The general categories investigated by this study involve aspects such as 'facilitating participation in the meeting', 'claiming common ground and creating shared knowledge', 'expressing indications of cooperative or reciprocal aspects of the business relationship' or 'expressing indications of independence or options on the part of the distributor'. These categories are connected to and easily analyzable in terms of discrete categories of selected linguistic features, such as the use of certain personal pronouns, of specialized lexical items, of evaluative lexis, and of frames and participation frameworks.

The discussion of such linguistic features is addressed in the following chapters. Chapter IV examines the use of personal pronouns (especially *we, you*) and how they are linked to the negotiation of individual and group identity. Chapter V deals with the use of specialized lexical items as a way of claiming or creating in-group membership and shared knowledge. Chapters VI and VII discuss evaluation as strategic means to achieve a variety of purposes, like managing participation and construing roles, enhancing business international activities, and building consensus or preventing possible erosion in consensus and company image. Chapter VIII draws together the analytical approaches presented in the previous chapters, connecting them to a discussion of frames at meetings, illustrating how interactional strategies combine to position participants in different roles at meetings, and how features of language and discourse at meetings reflect or construe roles and relationships as well as the character of the group and the business activity.

By analyzing how interactants from different cultures successfully establish, maintain or enhance their business relationship despite differences in their national cultures and competence in using English, this study provides a solid ground and criteria easily applicable for a less stereotypical and more effective and productive analysis of the relationship between multiculturality and discourse, which is relevant especially in today's business arena, with business becoming increasingly global and causing people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to come into contact more frequently and in a greater variety of settings.

[Michele Sala]