INTRODUCTION

This monographic issue focuses on intercultural communication in specialist fields and its realizations in English for specific purposes. The concept of interculturality on which this issue is built is rooted in discourse, in line with recent research on interaction in specialized domains. Indeed, language is approached here as inseparable from a given socio-cultural configuration – not merely consistent with it, but deeply involved in its construction of reality and its representations. From single phrases to generic patterns, linguistic constructs encode a culture-bound world view. The analysis of discourse often shows that texts are not only where cultures are built, but also where at times they are distorted, rejected or ignored.

As has been amply demonstrated (see, among others, Kuper 1999), 'culture' is a notoriously polysemic term. In the context of this issue, the term 'culture' is used mainly to refer to the complex set of traditions and standardized social practices peculiar to a specific professional group and its dependence on norms, whether those of social behaviour or those accepted in language usage. The specific elements taken into consideration here belong to the social context determining the conditions of production within which specialized texts are framed and the actual situations in which such texts are to be employed. The theoretical presupposition adopted is that as discourse is strictly tied to the socio-cultural context in which it is used, its interpretation relies to a large extent on the contextual constraints

of the event in which it is expressed and/or received, cultural factors representing an essential part of these contextual elements as they imbue the discursive organisation and the choice of realisations. As Merry aptly remarks:

> Discourses are aspects of culture, interconnected vocabularies and systems of meaning located in the social world. A discourse is not individual and idiosyncratic but part of a shared cultural world. Discourses are rooted in particular institutions and embody their culture. (Merry 1990: 110)

Domain-specific languages are prone to the pressures of intercultural variation, as not only the socio-cultural factors inherent in a text but also interpretive schemata deeply affect its realization and interpretation within the host professional community (see Gotti 2003).

The spread of English, which frequently furthers exchange and contact between nations, also raises the crucial issue of the non-neutrality of language. For example, in business communication, an area in which English represents a means of contact and interaction among people from different cultures allowing concrete common goals to be negotiated and achieved, the recurrent use of this language – while guaranteeing an international and global dimension – is necessarily culturally marked and consequently requires some kind of adaptation on the part of interactants. Similarly culturally marked is the choice among the variant forms of English, the consideration of their status and the attitude towards their modes of interpretation. All this can have a noticeable effect on intercultural communication, as unawareness of these factors can lead to situations where the apparent understanding between members of different cultures conceals actual differences or confusion related to the identity and discourse practices of the speaker or writer, possibly having a negative impact. In these cases comprehension is merely at surface rather than deep level. These issues are present both in the case of professional and organizational/institutional encounters and in face-to-face communication in general. They can also be found in written texts, which, beyond the apparent surface uniformity tied to the specific field, are influenced at the rhetorical and textual level by the cogni-

tive patterns and discourse conventions of the community of the speakers or writers and their institutional/professional/organizational memberships. These issues concern not only the language used, but also the different way of managing communication and the patterns of interpersonal behaviour in general.

Legal discourse is another significant site where intercultural factors may be investigated. Although legal discourse is often deemed to be less likely than other professional genres to display strong cross-cultural variations as law texts are commonly aimed at practitioners closely tied to national legal contexts, cultural aspects do represent an important conditioning factor on its construction and interpretation. In particular, cultural constraints have proved to be particularly detectable in texts which are the result of a translation or a re-writing process such as those deriving from the process of adjustment and adaptation of a text issued by an international organisation to the legal and socio-cultural traits of the various national target users. These international documents have been shown to possess clear features of 'hybrid' (Trosborg 1997: 146) discourse; indeed, the differentiations between the source and the resulting texts are the result of the conscious and deliberate decisions operated by the drafters of the local documents, and their final form shows that they "are arrived at as an outcome of negotiations between cultures and the norms and conventions involved" (Trosborg 1997: 146). Moreover, legal terminology is so culture-bound that a satisfactory translation of all the legal terms of one text from one context to another is at times impossible.

The theme of this monographic issue has been the object of several studies (see, among others, Wierzbicka 1991, Mauranen 1993, Clyne 1994, Pauwels 1994, Scollon and Wong Scollon 1995, Ulijn and Murray 1995, Ventola and Mauranen 1996, Pan, Wong Scollon and Scollon 2002, Candlin and Gotti 2004). It is also the main focus of several research projects, such as the international one entitled *Generic Integrity in Legislative Discourse in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts* coordinated by the City University of Hong Kong team led by Vijay Bhatia and Christopher Candlin (http://gild.mmc.cityu.edu.hk). The project investigates the generic integ-

rity of legislative discourse by analyzing the linguistic and discoursal properties of a multilingual corpus of international arbitration laws drawn from a number of different countries, cultures, and socio-political backgrounds, written in different languages, and now being used within and across a variety of legal systems. The results of the analysis (see Bhatia, Candlin and Gotti 2003, Bhatia, Candlin, Engberg and Trosborg 2003, Bhatia, Candlin and Engberg forth.) show that, in spite of the growing efforts of the international arbitration community to guarantee greater and greater harmonization in legislation and procedures, local constraints and specific cultural aspects still represent a relevant conditioning factor.

The topic of this monographic issue is also investigated by the national research team working on the programme on *Intercultural Discourse in Domain-specific English* funded by the Italian Ministry of Research and coordinated by the University of Bergamo in collaboration with the Universities of Milan, Naples, Turin, Verona and IUSM Rome (http://www.unibg.it/cerlis/projects.htm). The focus of the project is on intercultural communication as it unfolds in the language of law, business communication, politics, diplomacy, research institutions and EU institutions. In particular, the project analyses how intercultural communication affects the strategies whereby discourse is negotiated in texts for specific purposes. In such texts, social practices are often constrained by the cultural diversity of actors and by a strong need for intercultural communication, and such practices are relevant to the field concerned and to English as a language subject to different (and at times contrasting) pressures.

The Contents of This Issue

The contributions to this monographic issue focus on various aspects of intercultural communication in different domain-specific texts in English. Special attention is given to legal, commercial, political and institutional discourse used in particular workplaces, analyzed from an intercultural perspective (i.e. in the ethnolinguistic/

social sense and/or in the inter-institutional and intra-institutional culture sense). The contributions explore to what extent inter-cultural pressure leads to particular discourse patternings and lexico-grammatical/phonological realisations, and also the extent to which textual re-encoding and recontextualization serve to obscure/empha-size particular locally-relevant aspects of the communication in ques-tion (whether in terms of content, discourses and realizations) and thus alter the pragmatic messages of the texts taken into considera-tion.

The first two contributions concern political discourse. **Laurie Anderson**'s paper aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the pragmatics of political discourse in conflict situations through an in-depth analysis of selected aspects of reference and meta-reference in two transcripts belonging to a larger corpus of political discussion programmes recorded during the British general elections in 1997. The contrastive analysis of patterns of reference to political figures, entities and events in the two interviews examined suggests that spe-cific attention should be dedicated to the deployment of "member-ship categorization devices" (Sacks 1972) and other modes for so-cially grounding talk; in fact, specific modes of reference serve to locate speakers in a given socio-political perspective. The analysis also suggests that discourse anaphora may not show the same level of sensitivity to local sequential structure in discussions taking place in highly conflictual and in less heated settings.

Donna Miller's paper delineates the strategies of addresser-ad-dressee alignment and alienation with specific reference to the post-9/11/01 global crisis context which, it is argued, can be seen to be in evidence in the specific document that is closely examined: US President George W. Bush's speech to the UN on September 12, 2002 – a persuasive plea to the global community to support US policy vis-à-vis Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It is posited that such strat-egies serve to negotiate an inherent fundamental conflict between the US-as-speaker's discursive position and that of the international community. The primary focus of the paper can thus be said to be 'alterity management' (Candlin 2002), in a synchronic and dia-chronic intertextual perspective. In particular, making use of the

Appraisal Systems approach (Martin 2000), the paper reveals how the Engagement resources at work in Bush's text, despite extensive tactical use of consensus-presuming strategies, can ultimately be seen to construe an alterity-*rejecting* position. It is proposed that the findings also illustrate the diachronically-rooted, self-sufficient 'chosen-nation' rhetoric (Longley 2002) which is currently enacting the struggle for US hegemony of meaning-making practices in the extant anti-terrorist world order.

One contribution examines intercultural communication in specialist fields applying the principles and tools of Conversation Analysis to domain-specific discourse. **Hugo Bowles** and **Gabriele Pallotti** illustrate experimental cross-cultural data from a corpus of telephone call openings to English and Italian workplaces in general and English and Italian bookshops in particular in order to test a) the applicability of cross-cultural research methods from the Conversation Analysis framework to studies of intercultural talk and b) the domain-specificity of intercultural talk as obtained from the telephone calls analyzed. Their study shows the usefulness of comparative studies of institutional talk in eliciting both typical and problematic areas of domain-specific communication. The fact that some significant domain-specific differences have been found for bookshops as opposed to workplaces in general suggests that detailed examination of telephone calls to other kinds of particular workplace can elicit specific similarities and differences for those workplaces.

Two contributions focus on intercultural aspects of specialist communication realized through electronic media. The main topic of analysis of **Carmen Argondizzo** and **Anna Franca Plastina**'s paper is TextTalk in English, i.e. that medium of intercultural communication commonly used in the subcultural world of emailing which represents a unique mode (Halliday 1985) of discourse cutting across the traditional modes of speech and writing. The overall aim of this paper is to explore to what extent subcultural constraints of email language and intercultural features of English affect institutional discourse in non-English speaking academic environments. Examining a corpus of academic emails collected at the University of Calabria, the authors explore the feasibility of the institutional

discourse pattern of TextTalk to be recontextualized and generalized in academic settings, and investigate whether academic email relationships spring from a particular subcultural discourse pattern in dyadic communication. Results show that the informants involved in this study, rather than being TextTalk native users (Baron 2000), are still locked in the transitional stage of TextTalk, transferring traditional genres to this new genre of communication.

Sandra Campagna's investigation of the effects of the internationalization process supported by English as a global *lingua franca* focuses on virtual texts produced by nonprofit-making organizations, i.e. social and economic actors naturally keen on interculturality. The purpose of the paper is to verify if and to what extent the international version in English mirrors the culture-specific features of the Italian version or rather reflects a tendency to alter somehow the culture-specific elements by moulding the information according to Anglocentric organizational modes – a hypothesis already advanced, especially with regard to domain-specific English in culturally and linguistically differentiated academic contexts. Cross-comparison of local and international charities' websites is carried out to provide evidence of Anglocentric constraints and instances of cultural specificity in the process of image promotion on line. The analysis highlights specific lexicogrammatical features signalling the informative/descriptive function and the exhortative/persuasive function as constitutive markers of the charity transaction on line.

Two papers focus on interlinguistic communication in the deaf signing community in Italy, exploring direct interpretation from English to Italian Sign Language (LIS) and aspects of teaching/learning a foreign language in the case of deaf students in Italy. These are clearly intercultural activities, as signers communicate with each other in the sign language of their country or area, but resort to their national majority language for reading and writing. **Cynthia Kellett**'s paper outlines preliminary investigation in one such area of intercultural communication which emerged from the survey: conference presentations on sign language itself, delivered by English-speaking experts. A small corpus of video-recorded proceedings and accompanying signed interpretation was selected for multimodal

analysis, to identify the linguistic and intercultural features of this mediation process and investigate any omissions and semantic errors leading to intercultural communicative failure or distortion. The focus on the lecturing and conferencing genres encountered by the signing deaf community in Italy is expected to deepen understanding of the interpreting strategies required to mediate across this particular linguistic combination and design teaching aids and methodologies to improve courses in the training of interpreters. **Elana Ochse**'s paper illustrates a number of conversational strategies found in LIS, such as turn-taking, interruption, attention-seeking, minimal responses and metalanguage. Transcriptions of video-recorded instances of a classroom setting with deaf Italian LIS-users and an English-speaking EFL teacher, assisted by an interpreter, are analyzed from the intercultural and linguistic points of view. Results concern comprehension, language interference and leakage and have been analyzed within the framework of the ethnography of communication.

The last four contributions explore intercultural aspects of institutional and legal language. **Giuditta Caliendo** focuses her attention on the linguistic features and lexical productivity resulting from an intercultural dialogue between Member States and European institutions. The language of European legislation is considered as the instrument of a new European culture, a functional vehicle for supranational communication between Member States, each characterized by a dissimilar culture and legal system. The study highlights the linguistic features of Eurolanguage: neutralized and deprived of any local affiliation, it is constantly enriched by different national influences and can be considered as an LSP for Eurocrats working jointly in numerous fields. Particular consideration is given to the analysis of neologisms derived from Community debates, policy and legislation, with specific reference to those new terms that have permeated the Italian language through the direct influence of domestic politics and the media. The analysis carried out in this paper shows that the intercultural added value of Eurolanguage is intrinsically related to its function of guaranteeing communication and harmonization at an inter-institutional and supernational level and to its increasing

weight in giving a single voice to a multifaceted and ever-larger Union, despite social, cultural and judicial variation in national frameworks.

EU institutional and legal language is also investigated by **Rita Salvi** and **Girolamo Tessuto**. The former explores the way in which written legal rules concerning education in the USA and in the EU reflect cultural and linguistic values. Although the formal aspects of the language used in both the USA and the EU documents are very similar, significant cultural differences have emerged, throwing some light on the different ways in which these legal systems have approached the issue of regulating the right to education. Girolamo Tessuto deals with discourse of human rights as found in the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. The analysis of the level of speciality and stylistic range underlying the discourse examined points up the important intra-institutional role played by the Strasbourg Court in controlling the degree of acceptance and applicability of the meaning of the main terms used in this type of discourse and the mandate for a dynamic jurisprudence to accommodate various instances deriving from cultural diversity in Europe.

Legal discourse is also the topic of analysis of **Christopher Williams**' contribution, which examines the finite verbal constructions used in prescriptive legal texts in English and Italian. The results confirm the preponderance of one specific verbal form in each language, namely the *shall* construction in English, and the present indicative in Italian. The author goes on to frame the issue in terms of tense, aspect and modality, arguing that although the basic function of each of the two verbal forms is essentially the same, there is not complete equivalence of meaning, also because of the other functions – or lack of functions – carried out by each particular verbal construction within the language in question. Williams also identifies the exact meaning of the *shall* construction in prescriptive legal English in its expression of 'authoritativeness', rather than in terms of obligation. He also suggests that the label of 'normative indicative' – usually associated with the present indicative in prescriptive legal discourse in languages such as Italian or French – be

applied equally to English in those cases where the present indicative is used in main clauses.

As can be seen, the contributions to this monographic issue give attention to interesting aspects arising from the use of discourse in different domains, analyzed from an intercultural perspective. Although the analysis reported here focuses on the characteristics of just a few instances of communication in specialized contexts, its results may contribute to a wider understanding of the strong variations in domain-specific texts closely linked to cross-cultural traits.

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