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Linguistic Insights

Studies in Language and Communication

Giuliana Garzone & Maurizio Gotti
(eds)

Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise. Genres and Trends

Peter Lang

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This book brings together a selection of papers originally presented at the fifth conference on Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise (DICOEN V) held in Milan in September 2009, and mainly focuses on the relevance of discourse and communication to the world of business and organizations as seen from a variety of disciplines (linguistics, communication studies, management studies, sociology, marketing). What unites the contributions is the discursive framework they adopt for the analysis of corporate communication, looking at it as a situated activity in a broadly constructionist paradigm. The various sections are organized along an internal-to-external-communication gradient, starting from the analysis of communication within a company's ordinary operational activities and moving gradually towards types of discourse that are specifically aimed at communication to the public at large, including their representation in the media. The picture that emerges is a good approximation to an accurate and updated snapshot of the state of the art in research and expertise in the area of corporate and institutional communication.

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Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise. Genres and Trends

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Edited by Maurizio Gotti,
University of Bergamo

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Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise. An Introduction*

1. Discursive and constructionist perspectives

The main title of this volume, *Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise* is based on the denomination of a global informal research network, comprising scholars working in a variety of disciplines – linguistics, discourse analysis, communication studies, organisation studies, management studies, sociology, economics, marketing, etc. – interested in the relevance of discourse and communication to the world of business and organizations. Researchers who recognise themselves as members of this informal network meet every two years for an update of the results of their investigations, every time discussing the main recent trends, and exchanging views on research methods and analytical tools in light of the latest developments. Thus the picture that emerges from their encounters is a good approximation to an accurate and updated snapshot of the state of the art in research and expertise in the area of corporate and institutional communication.

The main aim of this volume is to offer such a picture, its chapters being based on a selection of presentations given during the fifth encounter of the Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise network (DICOEN V[1] for short) held in Milan on 24-26 September 2009. The choice of the aspects to be dealt with in the various chapters

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1 The previous DICOEN encounters took place in 2001 in Lisbon, Portugal (DICOEN I), in 2003 in Vigo, Spain (DICOEN II), in 2005 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (DICOEN III) and in 2007 in Nottingham, U.K. (DICOEN IV).

was made with a view to covering a range of issues and topics that is as wide and meaningful as possible. Moreover, in the production, reviewing and editing processes every effort was made to ensure that the various contributions should constitute a cohesive whole in terms of both content and approach.

The fact that in the denomination of the research network, and in the title of the book, the word ‘discourse’ takes up the first position and is thus thematised is quite revealing, as it highlights the broad conceptual framework in which the contributions to the book are set. The word ‘discourse’ does not merely refer to a unit of language longer than a single sentence, thus indicating the level of analysis on which the investigator focuses, but also to a conceptualization of language in its social, pragmatic, interpersonal and representational function (Schiffrin 1990: 98). Thus, adopting a discursive framework for the analysis of corporate communication means looking at communication as a situated activity which can be understood and interpreted only taking into account the variables – the cultural ones included – in its context, the relations among the actors involved and the social actions they carry out. It also implies a constructionist paradigm, i.e. the assumption that language is not a medium used to *transmit* information, or an ancillary competence separate from action, but rather a mode apt to *construct* information and, more in general, reality and generate shared interpretations of it and of its meaning (cf. e.g. Berger/Luckmann 1967).

1.1. The enterprise in the contemporary world

All these factors acquire special significance and weight as they are applied to the business enterprise in the contemporary world. With the decline of the fordist economy as a regime of accumulation centred on the production of material goods, and the consequent shift away from manufacturing and industry towards services and the knowledge economy in a context of increasing interconnectedness and globalization, language and discourse have taken on an ever more substantial role in the business enterprise’s life. Among a company's activities, those related to communication are perceived as crucial for its performance and reputation.

As van Riel and Fombrun (2007: 1) point out:

> Communication is the lifeblood of all organizations: it is the medium through which companies large and small access the vital resources they need in order to operate. It is through communication that organizations acquire the *primary* resources they need (such as capital, labor and raw materials) and build up valuable stocks of *secondary* resources (such as 'legitimacy' and 'reputation') that enable them to operate.

Thus communication determines not only a company's performance, but also its ability to influence the context in which it operates and keep a dialogue going with stakeholders and with other social actors.

Within the enterprise, this set of tasks – on account of its complexity – tends to be carried out by a multiplicity of specialized individuals and/or groups working towards the acquisition of physical and symbolic resources that are absolutely valuable for the enterprise's life and prosperity, a state of things which, incidentally, determines the absolute need to integrate the various functions and actors involved. All voices, all forms of information transmission, all interactions – oral and written – taking place within the sphere of an enterprise's activities, and not only those specifically aimed at controlling communication, will contribute to its efficient operation as well as to its overall collective organizational image and reputation (Balmer/Greyser 2006). In this respect, a useful notion is that of 'corporate personality' which is defined by Olins (1978: 212) as "the soul, the persona, the spirit, the culture of the organisation manifested in some way". In particular, a company's internal personality reflects the development of its internal workings and characteristics, i.e. its internal factual identity, and represents its essence (Olutayo Otubanjo/ Melewar 2007: 422).

If then one looks at communication and discourse as they are deployed in an organization's operational life, both in internal interactions and in operational transactions with other organizations, it emerges that corporate personality is strictly connected with the order of discourse (Foucault 1981) overarching such interactions, which has been more specifically conceptualized as ‘institutional order’ (Sarangi/Roberts 1999: 3). This provides the framework in which there are embedded not only corporate activities, but also all forms of professional interactions taking place within the corporate environment, with a complex interplay between professional discourse – a form of habitus in Bourdieu’s sense (1977, 1990), as Sarangi and Roberts (1999: 15) point out – and institutional discourse proper. This is the area of corporate communication that is explored in the second section of this volume.

As regards external corporate communication, moving along a cline from functional interactions aimed at a limited group of addressees (e.g. financial reports) to forms of discourse whose main purpose is communication proper since they are aimed at the public at large (e.g. advertising), the first case worthy of attention is that of various forms of corporate reporting. As regards Annual Company Reports (ACRs), officially they are supposed to have an essentially ‘ideational’, objective focus, but in the last few years research has shown that in actual fact they incorporate a substantial promotional component, as Bhatia points out by including them in the genre colony of ‘promotional texts” (Bhatia 2004: 62; 81-84). This ‘promotional turn’ derives first of all from the presence of an inherent element of author’s involvement, stance and/or argumentation, because it is quite logical that directors presenting the results of their work should make an effort to present them as positively as possible. But, more importantly, it is connected with the virtually unlimited extension of the potential audience of the reports determined by their publication on the Internet, which has contributed to turning them into instruments addressed to the public at large in addition to their original function as messages for ‘inside’ organizational communication and for a selected audience of ‘involved’ outsiders (i.e. investors and financial analysts) (Garzone 2004; de Groot 2008), a development which finds its counterpart in the rise and extension of the notion of ‘stakeholder’.

Another evolution in the structure and composition of corporate reports is the result of profound societal changes which have brought about a radical modification in the status of the business enterprise in society. In particular, the idea has emerged that the business enterprise is a social actor with responsibilities towards society. Although there have been some very critical voices,[2] this notion is now widely accepted, being also adopted and promoted institutionally. For instance, the European Union has explicitly set itself the objective of *Making Europe a Pole of Excellence on Corporate Social Responsibility*, as recites a European Commission's document on corporate social responsibility, which is defined as:

> [a] concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. (Commission 2006: 2)

In terms of communication this has determined the appearance of various (sub-)genres as part of, or connected with, pre-existing forms of corporate reporting, and in particular of Annual Company Reports (ACRs): the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Report, the Environmental Sustainability Report and the Mission Statement, which sometimes are simply sections of the Company Report or, less frequently, separate documents published and/or posted on the company's website. The rise of these new genres provides evidence of the strict relationship between societal/ideological changes and discursive formations.

Hence the extreme importance, for the sake of the business enterprise's reputation, of messages concerning its activities and its reputation that are disseminated by the media, and in particular by the press, radio and television – the 'traditional' media – which are still highly influential and still have pride of place in companies' media relations, although many enterprises have now started to make recourse to the so called 'social media' or web 2.0 applications (blogs,

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2 From the first appearance of this view of the business enterprise' role in society, particularly authoritative among critics has been Milton Friedman who has claimed that "in a free society […] there is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game" (Friedman 1962: 125). According to Friedman the doctrine of 'social responsibility' taken seriously is a "fundamentally subversive doctrine", which "would extend the scope of the political mechanism to every human activity […]. It does not differ in philosophy from the most explicitly collectivist doctrine" (Friedman 1970).

microblogs, social networks). Thus the management of a company's media relations still largely relies on the issuance of press releases, position statements and key announcements to prompt media coverage (Johnston 2008), although the possibility of posting them online has opened up new perspectives, as is testified by the richness of the newsrooms on many corporate websites. From a discourse viewpoint, what is particularly interesting is the way in which corporate messages are reported or re-used in the media, with a complex process in which various layers of discourse contribute to the final textualizations. Of course, for the discourse analyst the challenge is to assess the effectiveness of corporate announcements in light of the use that is made of them in the media, and at the same time identify all forms of slant and ideological distortion, however subtle and concealed in (sub)text it may be.

But the form of external corporate communication that is specifically contrived to promote a company's image and its products is advertising. As a form of persuasive communication used as a marketing tool aimed at the mass public, advertising is probably the most complex means of external corporate communication, as it relies synergically on all types of media and modes of information. This makes it an ideal object of investigation for Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress/van Leeuwen 2001, 2006), but it has also been investigated with a whole range of different tools, such as literary analysis (Cook 2001), and rhetoric and New Rhetoric (Vecchia 2003). The intensive exploitation of verbal and non-verbal resources characterising advertising is a source of great interest and attraction for the linguist and the discourse analyst, although so far in that disciplinary area systematic studies of this element of the market mix have not been as numerous as might be expected.

These are in broad terms the main topics discussed in this volume. For the sake of cohesion, and in order to facilitate a comparison of the perspectives taken by the authors of different chapters, they have been grouped into various sections, each of which highlights specific aspects worthy of investigation concerning the themes of discourse, communication and the enterprise.

2. Contents of the volume

In parallel with the discussion above, the book opens with a section dealing with general methodological issues. The other sections are organized along an internal-to-external-communication gradient, starting from the analysis of those forms of communication that are part of a company's ordinary operational activities and moving gradually towards types of discourse that are specifically aimed at communication to the public at large. Thus the various chapters in the second section look at interactions and language use in corporate life, treating them as instances of professional communication; the third section focuses on various forms of corporate reporting also considering new socially-sensitive sub-genres; the fourth section enlarges the perspective to include media relations, while the last section concentrates on the most promotional and outward-projected set of corporate communicative practices, i.e. advertising.

2.1. General issues in research and practice

The first section of the volume features contributions about general issues relating to current research in the field of discourse studies and interesting discursive practices in professional and institutional domains. MAURIZIO GOTTI's chapter shows how the process of globalisation offers a topical illustration of the interaction between linguistic and cultural factors in the construction of discourse, which is often made more complex by the locutors' need to make their texts as adaptable as possible to contextual features and pragmatic purposes, thus frequently originating great variation in professional genres as well as phenomena of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. In spite of the growing efforts of the international community to guarantee greater harmonisation, local constraints and specific cultural aspects still represent an important conditioning factor. This is clearly visible in discursive activities in the marketing sector, which tend to harmonise two very different corporate concerns: promoting international brands on a global scale and at the same time responding to strictly local cultural constraints. Thus even global professional practices, such as marketing and selling, seem to be seriously influenced by communicative norms and practices governed by local conditioning. The chapter also shows how the globalised use of technology has contributed to the promotion of recent innovations in business discursive practices.

The following chapter, authored by MIRJALIISA CHARLES, discusses the requisites a research paradigm for discourse and communication research should meet in order to maintain and enhance the significance that such research deserves to have for companies. In Charles' view what is essential is that linguistically and discoursally oriented researchers should revise their conceptualization of the relationship between discourse and communication, and companies, recognizing that the latter do not merely provide a 'context' for language, discourse, and communication, but rather are created, shaped, maintained, manipulated, and developed through, and by, its discourse. Thus, discourse and communication can now also be thought of as a distinct mode of explanation of, or way of thinking about, organizational existence, together with economics, management principles, sociology and psychology.

This assertion of this crucial role of discourse and communication research in our understanding of how the business enterprise works concludes the first section of the book, which in its complex contributes to bringing the main problems and methodological issues of this area of research into sharp focus, establishing the theoretical framework in which the chapters that follow are set.

2.2. Corporate communication as professional discourse

The main focus of the second section is on corporate communication as professional discourse, looking initially at internal communication, an area whose importance for an enterprise's performance is much less evident at first sight than that of activities in external corporate communication. This is confirmed by the fact that authors dealing specifically with it take the preliminary step of saying why a company should worry at all about internal communication (cf. e.g. Holz 2004: 5; Smith 2008: 2): simply because it will help them "perform better in the measures that count" (Holz 2004: 5).

The purpose of SYLVAIN DIELTJENS and PRISCILLA HEYNDERICKX's chapter is to examine instructive texts offered to factory workers, ascertaining whether they have been adequately adapted to their reading capabilities. The authors first analyse a corpus of instructive texts from a linguist's point of view, applying readability indices and identify problematic domains such as complex sentence structure, impersonal formulations and phrases, ambiguous references etc. They then conduct a sample survey with members of the target audience presenting them with different variants of instructive sentences and asking them to assess them. The results show that one of the main dysfunctions in internal business communication is the fact that messages are misunderstood because of both coding and decoding errors. Relayed to the communication managers of the companies involved in the research, these findings will contribute to making them aware of the nature and the causes of their communicative problems, thus helping them prevent breaks in the communication process.

MARTIN WARREN's chapter is based on findings from a project which shadowed six professionals, collecting all of the discourses they encountered during a typical working week, and arranged them into their respective discourse flows based on their interconnectedness. The study explores the manifestations of intertextuality and inter-discursivity found in such discourse flows, leading to hybridisation, and describes some the most typical ways in which these phenomena are signalled textually. The findings underscore the complexities of the activities involving professionals attaining discursive competence and, hence, the need to emphasise the importance of the intertextual and interdiscursive nature of discourses in the learning and teaching of professional communication.

In the next chapter attention shifts from discursive phenomena to aspects of language management, an issue which has become topical in today's globalized and multicultural business world. In OLIVER ENGELHARDT's chapter language management is studied in multinational companies of German origin in the Czech Republic. In this country, large multinational companies are mainly foreign-owned, and delegates from the parent company and local employees work together using various languages. In order to respond to the presence of multilingualism in their branches, the companies apply different strategies which may lead to inequalities, as employees in a multilingual workplace may adapt their behavior toward language and develop contact situation norms. This study applies Language Management Theory to the case of a specific language rule introduced in a Czech company to establish the right of the majority to use its language in meetings. Its implications are observed in the data from a meeting showing that, in spite of the rule itself, a multilingual course of talk may arise, with the 'main' language utilized to a lesser degree. However, it appears that some measures of language policy in a multinational company may be effective in raising the employees' awareness of multilingualism.

Still focusing on language use in the corporate environment is FRANCA POPPI's study, which looks at corporate identity as it emerges from the analysis of a corpus of web-mediated texts released by several European companies that have chosen English as the lingua franca (ELF) for their international communication needs. The exploration of the web-mediated texts analysed proves to be quite revealing, as regards both the features of ELF and the corporate identity traits identified. The qualitative analysis of the most common grammatical constructions and lexical choices shows that the ELF used in the companies' websites is subject to manifold influences, including company members' mother tongue and the implications brought about by the use of the digital medium, while a deliberate effort is perceptible to adapt language use to the specific identity that the company is willing to convey to its multiple audiences.

2.3. Ethical issues and corporate social responsibility

The third section of the volume is devoted to the ethical issues of corporate reporting and to the latest developments in the structure of the discourse genres in the area of corporate communication. The section opens with a study by PAUL GILLAERTS and FREEK VAN DE

VELDE focusing on the most widely read part of the ACR, i.e. the CEO's letter (cf. Kohut/Segars 1992). The authors combine the theoretical frameworks of genre and metadiscourse to investigate the CEOs' letters from a Belgian bank. Comparing their results to those in a study by Hyland (1998) on the same genre, they find fewer interactives and more interactionals, fewer hedges but more boosters and self-mentions, more credibility appeals and fewer rational appeals. Diachronically, the metadiscourse in the CEOs' letters of the bank shows a dynamic pattern that reflects the economic context. In the good years, self-mentions and boosters sharply increase; in the bad years, there is a rise in transitions and engagement markers. Apparently, in good times the bank displays its self-assurance and in bad times it tries to be more coherent.

The focus of the chapters that follow shifts to aspects that have gained prominence in corporate reporting only relatively recently, i.e. ethical issues and corporate social responsibility. PAOLA CATENACCIO's chapter takes into consideration social and environmental reports, an emerging genre which has now become established as an important aspect of voluntary corporate disclosure. Being based on a corpus of reports published over the last ten years, the study investigates this genre in a short-term diachronic perspective. In particular, it identifies its characterising features, and maps their evolution in time tracing the development of the key generic features of the CSR report, and investigating the rhetorical strategies most frequently deployed in selected specimens of the genre.

DONATELLA MALAVASI's study is based on two comparable corpora including Nokia's and Ericsson's CSR reports and investigates their corporate culture and responsibility representation. The results of the analysis, which is based on a selection of frequent words and keywords, such as *environmental, energy, employees, development, suppliers, human* and *people*, reveal a substantial similarity between the two companies in their dedication to the protection of the environment, employees' betterment, cooperation with several constituencies, economic development, and social activities. However, Ericsson and Nokia appear to diverge in the priority placed respectively on the protection of the environment and social/human issues, and in the recourse to more conceptual vs. factual lexical categories.

In recent years, interest in the subject of Corporate Social Responsibility has also been growing in mainland China, especially on account of the belief that a socially responsible company may be able to maximise shareholder value while emphasising its commitment to stakeholders in general. As a result, it appears that an increasing number of Chinese companies are striving to be more socially concerned, or at least to look as if they were, leading to the emergence and spread of CSR reports as a corporate genre in the Chinese context. GIORGIO STRAFELLA's chapter starts from a discussion of both the genre of CSR reports in China and the Chinese definition of corporate responsibility, and goes on to identify the main generic structures and rhetorical features that characterise the Chinese version of this corporate genre. The analysis highlights what the Chinese companies investigated deem to be worth doing for the purpose of tackling environmental issues, and how their endeavour in this field is reported to the general public in order to gain legitimacy and respect.

The 'ethical turn' that has affected this area of corporate communication in the last few decades has also determined the rise and spread of other socially sensitive genres. In particular the mission and value statement has seen its importance increase as an original expression of companies' identity and has developed into a highly conventionalized (sub)genre, whose strong appeal for credibility and identification with the addressees inevitably results in highly philosophical and almost religious formulations. This statement is aimed at building a company's relationship with its clients, promoting their trust, and, more broadly, at representing an image of its value dimension. This is of particular importance if the company specialises in intangible products or services such as financial products and services offered by banks. In her chapter, PAOLA COTTA RAMUSINO looks at mission statements of Russian banks posted on their websites with the aim of identifying recurrent discursive strategies in an intercultural perspective. Her survey of 20 Russian banks' websites highlights the linguistic and visual treatment of mission and value statements, and shows the emergence of an interesting mix of both 'globalized' and local culture-specific features.

Based on the analysis of texts in a Russian context is also the next chapter, by LIANA GOLETIANI, which looks at Gazprom's environmental reports, a highly dynamic genre in line with the growing importance of CSR discourse under the influence of the international popularity of environmental discourse and the globalising practices of business communication. However, Goletiani's analysis shows that in the new scenario of Russian capitalism, the genre is still reminiscent of the tradition of the Communist Party's report on social development, rooted in the socialist ideology of the Soviet State, adopting a kind of patronising attitude aimed to promote values and ideals such as credibility and acceptability. The discussion of Gazprom's reports thus develops the issue of the relationship between text genres and culture.

2.4. Corporate communication and the media

The following section of the volume investigates the complex relationship existing between corporate communication and the media. In their chapter ELS TOBBACK and GEERT JACOBS look at the discourse of news management, i.e. the wide range of verbal interactions between businesses and the media, initially providing a concise but exhaustive historical overview of discourse-oriented research on news management. Then they make their own proposal of a newsroom ethnographic approach zooming in on how the media produce their coverage of corporate crises, and the way in which they deal with information subsidies. For illustrative purposes, they apply it to the media coverage of the take-over battle for German car-maker Opel, and the fate of the local manufacturing facility in Antwerp, relying on team fieldwork conducted in the TV newsroom of the RTBF, the French-language public broadcasting corporation in Brussels.

Attention is shifted more specifically to news discourse in the daily press in the next chapter, in which CHIARA DEGANO starts from the observation that, as a consequence of the global economic crisis and of its repercussions on society at large, economic news has spread beyond the dedicated pages of newspapers into their main pages, and poses the question of whether the close interconnectedness between financial and societal issues has triggered any textual or discursive changes in economic news. To test her hypothesis Degano looks at the press coverage of facts that are akin to those discussed by Tobback and Jacobs, i.e. Fiat's bids for Chrysler and for General Motors' unit Opel. In her analysis she shows that both the Italian and the American carmakers are closely associated with the respective countries' national identities, as well as with the stability of the two domestic markets, a fact which may have potentially devastating effects in case of bankruptcy of one of these companies. Indeed, elements of hybridization between financial and society-related news emerge in the related news discourse.

The media texts analysed by MARIA CRISTINA PAGANONI in her paper is more diversified, as her analysis of the media campaign of Milan Expo 2015 is based on a corpus of generically heterogeneous media texts, retrieved in the Italian and international news and on the Expo-related websites. Through an analysis of linguistic choices, communicative strategies and rhetorical devices deployed in the documents, the author highlights the multiple and hybrid intertextual features of the many discourses, genres and text types that are used to promote the Milan Expo, and shows that – by addressing multiple stakeholders that include institutional bodies as well as private enterprises, local actors and global citizenry – the planning and branding of the entire event combines educational intents and consumer-empowering forms of marketing.

2.5. Advertising and promotion

The last section of the volume, focusing on the issues of advertising and promotion, opens with a chapter by GIULIANA GARZONE, who investigates genre variation in tobacco advertising. If advertising is typically subject to the influence of society's predominant values, tensions and preoccupations, mirroring contemporary life in its best and worst aspects, this is particularly true when the product promoted is tobacco-based. While until a few decades ago tobacco advertising was not dissimilar from that of any other consumer product, in more recent times the debate over tobacco's detrimental effects proven in scientific research and the numerous lawsuits brought against tobacco companies have had a substantial impact on the techniques and discursive practices it deploys. The diachronic analysis of the advertising campaigns of Philip Morris for the Marlboro brand from the 1920's to the turn of the millennium is meant to represent a case study to analyse the evolution of advertising genres under the pressure of changes in society and of new values that have emerged because of advances in scientific research and their reception by institutions and by the public at large.

The promotional materials investigated in FRANCESCA SANTULLI's chapter regard a much more immaterial product, i.e. tourist services. It focuses on tourism brochures as a key instrument to influence the decision-making process of potential tourists. Although the macrostructure of tourism brochures as a genre is relatively stable, including description of places, resorts and services, as well as practical information, in their actual realization very different approaches are adopted as a function of the selection of potential addressees. To investigate the process of 'construction' of the ideal customer, the case of the Italian tour operator Valtur is illustrated discussing the strategies deployed by the company to change its corporate image mainly through its brochures. In particular, the analysis is focussed on brochure covers and CEO's letters, and reveals how verbal texts and images have contributed to the creation of a new philosophy, conveying new meanings thanks to the deployment of effective rhetorical and linguistic strategies.

While the two chapters just discussed investigate promotional communication taking account not only of the linguistic component, but also of its relationship with other semiotic resources tapped in order to achieve the persuasive effect inherent in advertising genres, BARBARA BERTI's study takes a more specifically discursive approach, focusing on language use as such and on its pragmatic aspects, as it analyses print advertising texts within the framework of Speech Act theory. The author's main assumption is that advertising language can be viewed, and therefore investigated, as essentially performing a perlocutionary act whose aim is to persuade the addressee. Persuasion does not necessarily have to end in action (purchasing the product); more subtly, it aims at triggering a change in the addressee's belief system and generate an inclination to purchase. The analysis shows that the perlocutionary effect is not obtained through the use of explicit performatives, rather through a series of specific illocutionary acts that are also realized implicitly, namely giving advice and promising. An element of presupposition is also identified and discussed in relation to the choice of lexical verbs that recur in the ads.

In the next chapter the focus in on brand management. CHRISTOPHER SCHMIDT proposes recourse to the cognitive theory of image schemata as a tool to meet the needs of this function in corporate communication. Using the Hitachi brand as an example, he argues that cognitive linguistics can be used in combination with other frameworks in modern discourse traditions, showing that the interdisciplinary scope of these fields can act in synergy in order to meet today's demands on communication management. According to Schmidt these same tools help exploit to the full the function of websites as pivots of corporate culture which is to be transmitted into national cultures, a process that can be explained by making reliance on a cognitive dimension of the relationship between language and culture.

In the last chapter, attention turns to publishers specializing in English language teaching (ELT) who have now developed into high earning multinational companies, selling 'one-size-fits-all' materials. Having been accused of ignoring local needs and upholding the 'myth' of the native speaker teacher as the 'model' teacher, only recently have they started to market themselves as more sensitive to teachers from non-BANA countries, i.e. from countries other than Britain, Australia and North America. ANDREA NAVA and LUCIANA PEDRAZZINI's contribution assesses how the leading global ELT publishers address 'local' needs through their promotional materials. The focus of the study is on country-specific versions of ELT websites, which are compared to the international versions and, where available, to printed materials. The analysis singles out the strategies that are implemented by marketing departments, which involve the selection and organization of multimodal contents and the choice of the languages in which the material is presented and described. The chapter shows that the choice of strategies used to localize ELT materials for different countries is influenced by the type of 'identity' of the 'local' EFL teacher that is constructed by the Inner Circle publishers.

3. Concluding remarks

In spite of the diversity in the themes and arguments presented in the various chapters of this book, there are a few common motives that can be identified as uniting them.

First and foremost, there is the ever increasing attention that is given today to the relationship between the business enterprise and society at large. This is reflected in greater consideration for the ethical dimension, but also for other aspects of corporate communication which in turn reflect – and at the same time contribute to constructing – some of the crucial societal issues of today's world.

In terms of methodologies applied in discourse analysis, this is paralleled by an ever more acute consideration for contextual and cultural variables which has contributed to the generation of analyses, sometimes supported by ethnographic research, that are much more firmly grounded in contemporary reality than was the case in the past.

Another important thread emerging in the book is the ever greater attention for interdiscursivity (e.g. Candlin-Maley 1997; Candlin-Plum 1999; Bhatia 2004), a characteristic of communication which was largely neglected until a not too distant past, but is now widely investigated also because in the modern world interdiscursivity as an inherent property of texts and genres is favoured by the intensity in communication flows and the ubiquity of the media.

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General Issues in Research and Practice

MAURIZIO GOTTI

Discursive Changes in Corporate and Institutional Communication*

1. Globalisation in corporate and institutional contexts

The last few decades have witnessed great developments in co-operation and collaboration at an international level in all fields, but particularly in the business and communication sectors, as part of a continuous process of economic globalisation. This process of globalisation offers a topical illustration of the interaction between linguistic and cultural factors in the construction of discourse, both within specialised domains and in wider contexts. This issue has become so relevant for intercultural communication that it has been the object of several studies in recent years (cf., among others, Scollon/Wong Scollon 1995; Ulijn/Murray 1995; Pan/Wong Scollon/Scollon 2002; Candlin/Gotti 2004, 2007).

This process of globalisation has certainly favoured English, and in the last century English undoubtedly became the language of international communication in most international contexts. In several countries English has become the second language of many people who use it regularly, especially for work. This is the case in many European countries, where big companies implement strong English-language policies. The same situation is found in Asia, where international trading among Far Eastern countries relies on local varieties of English rather than on Asian languages (Bargiela-Chiappini/Gotti 2005). In these contexts the use of English is not only seen as favouring international communication within and outside the company,

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but also has a significant role to play in the creation of corporate culture (Nickerson 2000) or in the enhancement of in-group togetherness in business meetings (Poncini 2007). In both cases communication is seen as a tool in the strategic management of international operations, and language skills are deemed essential for performing daily activities.

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 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 interactants' part (Trosborg/Flyvholm Jørgensen 2005; Palmer-Silveira *et al.* 2006). Culturally marked in a similar way 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 interlocutors' discourse practices, thus having a negative impact on the outcome of the interaction (Cortese/Duszak 2005). In these cases comprehension is merely at a surface rather than a deep level.

In businesses and other organizations this scenario is complicated by the presence of cultural models and communicative repertoires associated with the corporate culture predominant in different economic systems and different countries, an aspect which has been widely explored in the literature (Hofstede 1984, Trompenaars/Hampden-Turner 1997). In business communication research, much attention has also been paid to business negotiations (Firth 1994, Hendon *et al.* 1996, Ghauri/Usunier 1996), also with studies from a linguistic point of view (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini/Harris 1997) aimed at explaining intercultural variables in the behaviour of individuals belonging to different national or corporate communities. Indeed, the use of English as an international language for communication is more widespread in economics and business than in other specialised fields, particularly as regards *lingua franca* functions. This is a counterpart of the ongoing process of economic globalisation, of which it is both an expression and an instrument.

2. Harmonising trends and local conditioning

The consequence is an inevitable move towards global communicative models. However, local components are not eliminated and lead to forms of resistance, partly traceable to divergences in ways of categorisation resulting from the acquisition of the native language (Gumperz/Levinson 1996) and partly due to the desire to contrast linguistic and cultural homogenisation with the homologation potentially imposed by globalisation. In this reaction to globalisation, the spontaneous emergence, in written and oral exchanges, of elements connected to the cultural identity of the actors involved has been identified; it is indeed almost inevitable that communicative acts are characterised by linguistically and culturally marked elements, identifiable above all at a discursive level.

This is clearly visible in discursive activities in the marketing sector, which tend to harmonise two very different corporate concerns: promote international brands on a global scale and at the same time respond to strictly local cultural constraints. On the one hand, the expansion of trade and commerce across geographical, socio-political and cultural boundaries has emphasised the need of adopting global trends in the construction of discourse; on the other, even global professional practices such as marketing and selling have to rely on communicative norms and practices governed by local conditioning. Even when the product is a universal brand name meant for global markets, its promotion can still be constrained by the local context, highlighting a unique tension between global concerns and local sensitivities.

An example of this process of localisation can be seen in advertisements, one of the most traditional forms of discourse meant to promote the sale of goods or services to a specific group of people. This genre has proved to be particularly dynamic and versatile, as it makes use of the most varied and innovative uses of discoursal forms and rhetorical strategies. One of the most recent evolutions of this genre consists in what Kathpalia (1992) calls 'image building' or 'picture caption' type, which rather than highlighting specific features of a product, focuses the addressees' attention on its brand name, which is usually well-established on the market. As the brand name is well known, the advertisers feel there is no need to describe the product itself, but rather they appeal to a select group of customers from specific sectors of society in order to stimulate the purchase of these goods. In such advertisements, the typical rhetorical moves of 'hard sell' advertisements are ignored and the main focus is placed on attracting the attention of the prospective buyers. In these advertisements a large space is devoted to visual elements, with photos of both the product and some local celebrity, which are meant to establish a subtle link between the brand name – well known all over the world – and the local cultural reality. For example, the advertisement for Omega watches in the western world relies on the photo of a famous Hollywood celebrity such as George Clooney. The equivalent advertisement for the Indian market, instead, shows a local celebrity, that is, the popular Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, thus linking the product more strictly with the local context.

In TV advertisements, it is even easier to carry out this localisation process, as this medium allows copywriters to produce longer texts and reach a wider audience. These features enable advertisers to focus more on the qualities of the product, even in the case of a well established brand name and to link it more strictly with the local context by inventing complex storylines, able to include those cultural conventions which are typical of the specific market, such as local characters, popular costumes and even local dialects. This is the case, for example, of the Coca-Cola commercial on Indian television which cleverly mixes different cultural elements to convey a message which is not only attractive for its intended audiences but credible because of its association with specific authentic traits of the local culture. In this specific case, the commercial "makes use of typical Bollywood *masala* culture as the context to attract and entertain massive populations of people and to introduce them to an established international brand name" (Bhatia/Bhatia 2007: 274).

Another interesting case of cultural adjustment can be seen in the same texts appearing in two different languages. Indeed, although it is often assumed that the discourse and the rhetoric of bilingual texts are similar, the analysis of promotional texts has shown that they are frequently characterised by differing features, since they are meant to serve readers of varying social and educational backgrounds. Lee (2005), for example, has compared Internet texts promoting the sale of credit cards and property in Hong Kong, written both in Chinese and English. She has shown that Hong Kong Chinese and English writers adopt different approaches when presenting information of similar content. Their texts differ in the positioning of theme and in the degree of explicitness or implicitness. Writers in English tend to place the theme in paragraph-initial position, since English readers expect the most important piece of information at an early stage in the text. Instead, writers of texts for Chinese readers tend to delay the most important piece of information, in order to avoid putting pressure on readers. Compare example (1a) with (1b):

(1a) 可以從容不迫地穿梭無間，才是優越生活的真理。<u>寶翠園</u>與全港各地緊密連接，頃刻即至。

(You) can go everywhere in a relaxing way. This is what a prestigious life should be. <u>The Belcher's</u> connects closely with every part of Hong Kong and (you) can arrive everywhere in a short time.

(1b) <u>The Belcher's</u> is located right in the heart of Hong Kong. Whether you travel by car, bus, MTR or on foot, every corner is within your reach in minutes. (Lee 2005: 84)

The name of the property, i.e. the topic of the paragraph, is introduced in paragraph-initial position in the English version, but not in the Chinese version, where conventionally the topic is deferred, to avoid giving readers the impression of a hard-sell approach. Moreover, the foci of information presented often differ across languages. For instance, in the sale of credit cards, texts focus on different promotional points: the Chinese versions adopt a specific approach by showing concrete benefits, such as shopping discounts and gifts, whereas their English counterparts are relatively less elaborate and more abstract, focusing more on prestigious services. These differences in foci between Chinese and English samples can be attributed to different expectations of the target readers. This contrast can also be seen when presenting the surrounding environment of the property to be sold, where different language versions emphasise different aspects. Compare example (2a) with (2b):

(2a) 園林面積逾12萬平方呎，遍植各式植物及四時花卉，<u>與四周自然氣圓融為一</u>。

With an area over 1.2 million square feet, the garden is full of plants and flowers. (You can) feel that the nature and you are as one.

(2b) Enjoy all <u>relaxation</u> and <u>tranquility</u> in a green world. Step outside and enjoy the lush plantation of the landscape podium garden with an area over 120,000 sq. ft. (Lee 2005: 87)

Obeying the Chinese cultural convention of striking a balance between humans and nature, (2a) stresses harmony with the environment. On the other hand, the English version focuses on relaxation. The texts analysed also show the adoption of different levels of formality. The Chinese samples are relatively more formal than the English ones. Texts written in English seek to shorten the distance between the company and the clients by adopting a less formal register. On the other hand, writers for Chinese readers feel that the hierarchy existing between the company and the clients is rigid and should be preserved in order to show respect towards the clients. Therefore English texts frequently use first-person (*we/our/us*) address forms, while Chinese texts mention *the/our company* or the name of the credit card/ property. Moreover, *you* is more frequent in the English texts, while the Chinese versions avoid addressing the readers directly as this could be considered impolite; instead, they employ a wider range of address forms, such as *cardholder*, *residents*. Compare (3a) with (3b):

(3a) <u>住客</u>可享用專車來回火車站

<u>Residents</u> can enjoy shuttle bus service for going to the train station.

(3b) Shuttle bus commutes every few minutes between KCR station and your doorstep. (Lee 2005: 91-92)

These examples clearly show that when writing for different Hong Kong readers, writers are not literally translating a text from one language into another, but they take into consideration the different cultural implications and thus adopt the linguistic solutions which are most appropriate for their target readership.

3. Generic variation in business communication

Corporate and institutional communication is prone to the pressures of intercultural variation, as it is not only the sociocultural factors inherent in a text but also the interpretive schemata which deeply affect its realisation and decoding within the host professional community (cf. Gotti 2008). Moreover, intercultural communication is often made more complex by the locutors' need to make their texts as adaptable as possible to contextual features and pragmatic purposes, thus frequently originating great variation in professional genres as well as phenomena of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Bakhtin 1986; Fairclough 1992; Fairclough *et al.* 2007). In this perspective, for the examination of written texts, genre analysis (Swales 1990, 2004; Bhatia 1993, 2004; Bhatia/Gotti 2006; Gillaerts/Gotti 2008) has proved to be particularly suited to identifying the discrepancies between global textual conventions and concrete realizations and has introduced new concepts such as *genre mixing*, *repurposing* or *hybridisation* to account for generic dynamism and the complex interaction of genres.

This evolution is reflected in the research concerning the business letter. Organizational, marketing and managerial issues, but also considerations of globalisation and the growth of the business world itself, interfere with the generic specificities of business communication. Since no situation is quite the same, the genre expectations are always under pressure and have to give way to a considerable amount of variation. There are situations for which the boundaries and expectations of the genre may be overruled by inventiveness and creativity and by the specificity of the cultural context.

Business letters are perhaps one of the richest generic forms of all professional genres in terms of intertextuality and interdiscursivity.

Indeed, business communication often makes use of prior texts (or parts of them) in the formulation of new textual realisations, commonly forming chains of business communication of the following kind (see Figure 1):

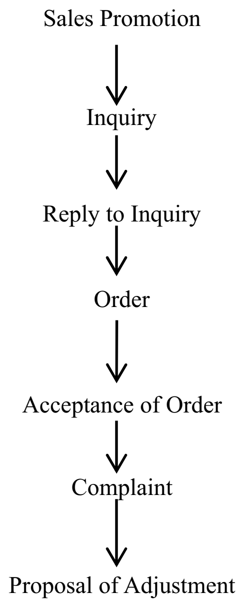

Figure 1. Chain of business communication.

Each step in the chain is linked to the previous one by the use of similar linguistic elements, thus creating a sort of interactive dependency which is both intertextual as well as interdiscursive. Figure 2 shows some instances of this process of interactive dependency (the linguistic elements that are similar are shown in italics):

GENERIC MOVE IN TEXT 1	LINGUISTIC REALISATION	→	GENERIC MOVE IN TEXT 2	LINGUISTIC REALISATION
Statement of one's own requirements	*We are especially interested in boxes of mixed plain and milk chocolates and also jellies with liquid centres*, which we have seen advertised in …	→	Assurance that the goods can be supplied	We have received your letter of 31st August and were pleased to learn that *you are interested in our plain and milk chocolates and jellies with liquid centres*.
Request for an offer, a sample, a price-list, a brochure, etc	We should be pleased if you could let us have *some samples of the above, together with your price-list*.	→	Mention of the offer sent together with a sample, a price-list, a brochure, etc	We have sent you, therefore, *some sample boxes of some of our most popular lines together with the price-list* you requested.
Order for the goods required	Your offer dated 4th September has reached us, and since *we find both your products and sales conditions satisfactory,* we are pleased *to pass you an order* as per the order-form herewith enclosed.	→	Reference to the order received	We are pleased that *you have found both our products and sales conditions satisfactory*, and thank you for *the order you have passed.*
Reference to the order for which a complaint is being made	We regret to inform you that on opening the boxes you sent us on 10th September *we found that the goods were not those requested*	→	Reference to a complaint made	With reference to your letter of 20th September, we are very sorry that *the goods you received were not those you had requested.*

Figure 2. Instances of interactive dependency.

As Bhatia (2008: 41) aptly remarks, "the copying of lexico-grammatical expressions transforms these letters into dialogues that are constructed interactively and hence must be understood, analysed and interpreted interactively and not in isolation. Although intertextuality is crucial in all forms of discourse, in the case of such business letters, it is an essential prerequisite to any form of interpretation and analysis."

Further processes of generic and discursive variation have recently involved the business letter genre. Since the introduction of the Internet, the interest in the genre has increased once again, because of the digital format of the letter. E-mail has partially taken over the multiple functions of the traditional business letter and bypassed, again partially, the fax. As a consequence, email messages are now very common in corporate communication. These, however, have become very complex in nature as a result of the pressing needs of business companies to enhance ease of reference and guarantee a high degree of accountability. Therefore, business emails now tend to include in them the whole chain of messages generated in response to the original message thus giving rise to a series of 'embedded emails' (Gimenez 2008) which exploit the dialogic nature of this means of communication and its adoption of the features of spoken as well as written genres. Embedded emails are made up of an initial message which starts the communication event, a series of internal, subordinated messages which depend on the first message to make complete sense, and a final message which brings the communication event to an end. This complex generic structure shows features deriving from the users' highly proficient exploitation of the various capabilities offered by the medium, and emphasises the dialogic relationship established by the chain of messages exchanged by the interlocutors. The dialogic features of embedded messages are further highlighted by the fact that they allow participants to see all parts of the communicative event as in a written dialogue. Indeed, the use of the carbon copy (CC) facility allows other people to be involved in the communication event acting as witnesses.

A further feature of the dialogisation of embedded emails is the tendency to drop greetings and names as the message progresses. As can be seen in the following example (Figure 3), the same seems to hold for closures. Such omissions may be attributed to the higher degree of informality which parallels the strengthening of the personal relationship which takes place as the communicative process goes on.

MS1: *Chain initiator*

Alice,
I spoke to AG about interception matters. In CS's absence, I spoke to SW, who is the officer handling the [*name of company*] ICP (Interception Capability Plan).

[…]

We (PM and I) have also received a draft of the opinion from L in regard to the export of intercept related information under the UK laws. We will review and come back to you on this.

All the best,
James

MS2

James,

Thanks for this follow up. S did not leave any hint about what to expect? Agree to work towards the deadline; end of that week 9th of May should be fine. We should have a draft ready by 2nd of May. Does 5th or 6th arrange you for a conference call?
Look forward to the legal opinion

Alice

MS3

Alice,

A conference call on 6th May would be fine. Shall we say 11am your time? I will speak to S again tomorrow about the amended plan and the letter.

James

MS4

Could you do 2nd of May?

MS5

Yes, 2nd May is probably better as it gives us a bit more time to finalise the amended plan. What is a good time for you? I can do from 9.30 am through to midday (your time).

James

MS6

9.30 is fine.

Figure 3. Chain of email messages (from Gimenez 2008: 252-254).

The shorter length of each subsequent text and its more frequent use of phenomena of ellipsis and abbreviation depend on the fact that email messages can rely on the information reported in the previous one(s). The great difference with business letters is that here there is no need to reproduce some of the linguistic elements used in previous texts (as instead was the case in Figure 2) as these elements are shown below/above the message being written. Moreover, the email that initiates the chain is much longer than the following messages; the reason for this greater length relies on the fact that the purpose of the initiator is to set the scene for the discursive event and thus has to provide all the necessary details that are required for successful communication to take place.

4. Technological innovations and changes in business discursive practices

The globalised use of technology too has contributed to the promotion of recent innovations in business discursive practices. For example, today many texts published on the Internet show clear features of a multimodal approach which exploits the options offered by the new media to accommodate the taste of an audience increasingly accustomed to visual communication and take full advantage of the visual/multimodal options offered by the computer mediated environment.

4.1. Annual reports on company websites

An example of discoursal changes deriving from technological innovations could be provided by the case of annual reports on company websites, which no longer concern one genre, but the interaction between genres within the genre system of a company's website. Indeed, the financial and economic information given on the website aims at keeping or acquiring the confidence of current and potential stockholders of the company, thus repurposing information into persuasion. At the same time disclaimers are added to renounce any responsibility for the information given – a clear case of genre bending and of the intertwining of the letter genre with law and business. Also the letter to the stockholders in an annual report contains both persuasive and personal elements that categorise it as an example of an evaluative text type.

In the last few years the annual company report has evolved into new forms, which have changed its discursive makeup as a consequence of the widening of its communicative purposes. These changes have been facilitated by the vast diffusion of electronic communication and the spread of multimodality. Indeed, the publication of company reports on the Internet has caused great modifications in their status, as they are no longer merely seen as informative texts addressed to financial analysts and the company's shareholders, but also as a means of more general communication and an instrument for image building and for the promotion of effective public relations. The presence of these 'external' participants has not certainly eliminated the original informative and evaluative purposes of this genre, but has introduced a new promotional dimension. This dimension is strengthened by the semiotic configuration of the website itself, which embeds this document in a frame of promotional pages. Indeed, the company reports themselves show clear features of a multimodal approach, as they no longer make use of mere linguistic forms for the presentation of data and information, but resort to complex images and even to animation and sound. As Garzone (2007: 318) aptly remarks, "the function of the visual or multimodal component is not only illustrative, entertaining or didactic, but interacts with textual material, contributing substantially to the generation of the message. The integration between image and text is governed by complex, and often, indirect, mechanisms aimed at perlocution, similar to those relied upon in advertising."

4.2. Virtual business communication

Another example of discoursal change deriving from technological innovation can be found in virtual business communication, a phenomenon which has become particularly frequent in recent years. Here too the interplay between the visual and the verbal resources typical of online communication is an instance of the process of *remediation* (Bolter/Grusin 1999) which is involved in the transfer of discourse from traditional media to the new ways of electronic communication. Particularly in the field of promotional discourse, traditional correspondence has often been replaced by highly interactive texts embedded in the hypertextual approach of the computer world. In this way hyper-links capture the attention of potential customers and direct them towards deeper layers of hypertexual information which is meant to persuade them to buy a product, take advantage of a service or make an investment. In order to do this effectively, the computer screen presents various text-types with different functions: advertisement, questionnaires, surveys, lists, etc. In these texts language often loses its privileged meaning-making role in favour of image and sound; the creation of sophisticated websites is meant to make communication an easy and enjoyable experience. The level of immediacy of the interaction is made higher by the use of pull-down menus, clickable icons and draggable scroll bars. This visual and animated environment is designed to attract the reader's attention; its synchronous and dynamic interactional mode aims to stimulate and direct the customer through the various layers of the company's website. The dominant register is dialogic, and replaces the customer's traditional way of contacting the company by telephone or by post. Similarly, the traditional letter promoting the sale of a product/service has been transformed into a new semiotic object that makes extensive use of dynamic graphics and attractive colours to draw the reader's attention to the offer, with a limited use of linguistic elements, thus making the text easier to process. Also the page layout differs from that of printed promotional literature as it enables the prospective customer to navigate it in a non-linear fashion.

4.3. Online Dispute Resolution

Another example of a recent innovation in the discourse used in corporate and institutional communication is represented by Online Dispute Resolution (ODR). This procedure has proved to respond positively to the needs of medium-small disputes, such as those in B2B (business to business) and B2C (business to consumer) transactions over the Internet. As e-commerce transactions are spreading quickly, with each of them potentially triggering a dispute (Hart 1999), its growth greatly depends on the possibility to provide consumers with easy access to justice also taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the online environment.

In the present-day globalisation of trade and commerce, ODR has been increasingly seen as an efficient, economical and effective alternative to litigation for settling commercial and other disputes (Davis 2006). The complexity of the judicial system is particularly harmful in small-medium patrimonial controversies, where single consumers are involved; the average time needed for a case to be tried and the costs of a lawyer often do not compensate for the benefits deriving from a favourable verdict. Small/medium firms and single consumers therefore often prefer to renounce their own rights.

The latest versions of online mediation enable the mediator and all other mediation parties to use a computer, audio and visual communication means and a broadband Internet connection to request and participate seamlessly in live, synchronous audio/visual online mediation proceedings. Said proceedings occur before professional mediators who are 'on duty' during normal business hours. Integrated video and audio connections enable all participants to view synchronously any evidentiary materials, documents and audio video presentations online. Indeed, all participants can see and hear each other synchronously and take part in simultaneous audio communication. This method thus uses a main virtual 'conference room', as well as multi-