

# PREFACE



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The articles collected in this volume draw inspiration from the papers presented at the 28th biannual Conference of the Italian Association of English Studies, which promoted a lively debate on complexity, conventionality and creativity in English language, literature and culture.

The role of the opposing forces exerted by conventionality and creativity in shaping all levels of the linguistic system has represented a crucial topic for discussion in the history of linguistics (see Jones 2005 for an overview). Norms and conventions are constantly exploited and manipulated through the creative behaviour of language users. This may lead to unpredictable synchronic effects and variation and, ultimately, to diachronic innovation.

Complexity is a way of looking at the world that places emphasis on the observation that apparently simple phenomena often emerge out of profound intricacies, and that small changes may result in unexpectedly large effects. Complexity theories are a rich research paradigm attempting to describe and explain the dynamics which emerge in the many forms of situational adaptation of natural systems. Such approaches to the study of the world, as developed by the empirical sciences, highlight that understanding phenomena and processes never rests on single-factor accounts and may instead call for creative processes, in which a great number of variables mutually influence each other following non-linear paths of interaction.

Complexity models have been successfully applied to explain linguistic phenomena (Ellis and Larsen Freeman 2006; Holland 2006; Bertuccelli and Lenci 2007; Bertuccelli *et al.* 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Beckner *et al.* 2009; Cappelli 2010; Massip-Bonet and Bastardas-Boada 2012, Baicchi 2015; Ellis 2016, 2019). The language system may be described as a complex system adapting dynamically to the ever-changing context and made up of sub-systems (e.g. the phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic systems). Each sub-system is in turn characterised by a complex interplay of variables and components which interact with the context. From such interaction, meanings and forms emerge in more or less predictable ways. In this view, conventions (in the broadest possible sense

of the term) ensure the system's temporary stability, while creativity operates in ways which make meanings, forms and new conventions emerge dynamically, sometimes in unexpected fashions.

The concept of complexity, thus, provides an articulated framework through which language dynamicity and language adaptivity in their various manifestations (i.e., lexical, grammatical, cultural, historical and cognitive) may be looked at from a new angle, and by means of which new phenomena may be brought to the fore to be more finely or newly analysed in the light of the constraints imposed by conventionality and the temporary entropy resulting from creative operations.

Conventionality and creativity may be ideally placed at the two extremes of a continuum along which various degrees of complexity can be identified.

The effects of conventionality can be investigated in the default ways with which we express meanings (including formulaic expressions), in highly codified text types and genres, conversational routines, grammar rules and social norms, to name but a few domains. Creativity, on the other hand, involves bending rules and eroding the boundaries of norms in language, deliberately manipulating its forms and enhancing its meaning-making potential. Conventionality and creativity are not mutually exclusive. They are rather inextricably intertwined, since for phenomena to be interpreted as an expression of creativity, they need to be matched against conventional, internalised, known and stereotypic patterns. Creative figures of speech, unusual collocations, violations of word formation rules, unpredictable compounds, the bending of syntactic rules emerging from language contact or from the use of English as a lingua franca exemplify the reorganisation of the system under the pressure of speakers' creativity. In time, emergent form-meaning associations may become crystallised through repetitive use and produce common patterns, thus providing quick access to meaning and reducing inferential and memory load. The reorganisation of the system over time becomes increasingly more evident when investigated in a diachronic perspective.

For its global nature, the diversity of its speakers and of the contexts in which it is used, the English language is a privileged domain of observation for understanding the complexities of verbal communication between conventionality and creativity. The articles in the volume explore these issues from multiple theoretical and applied perspectives.

The contributions from Section 1 by Marina Bondi, Belinda Crawford, Giuliana Garzone, Maurizio Gotti, and Rita Salvi stem from a research project financed by the Italian Ministry for the University (PRIN 2015 no.2015TJ8ZAS). Their papers aim to investigate the strategies

of dissemination to various audiences in a range of different settings and how they reflect the complexities of verbal communication and the tension between conventionality and creativity. Special attention is paid to how specific genres have been tailored to the addressees' needs. The focus is on different communicative environments, ranging from the press to the world wide web, with its growing level of participation and interaction, as well as the wide repertoire of meaning-making resources. The contributions are based on comparable corpora and electronic collections of texts, which will show how domain-specific knowledge is mediated in specialised and popularising discourse to address different stakeholders.

Section 2 encompasses a series of studies dealing with knowledge dissemination in bioethics and medicine. More specifically, Emanuele Brambilla investigates a corpus of online news reports published by Greenpeace between 2012 and 2017 in order to analyse the dissemination strategies whereby the NGO has expounded a complex, scientific topic as that of pesticides being the main cause of bees' decimation to the benefit of non-experts. In her paper, Roxanne B. Doerr carries out a combined quantitative corpus linguistics and qualitative critical discourse analysis of the Defense Health Board's 2015 *Ethical Guidelines and Practices for US Military Medical Professionals*. The study aims to shed some light on the military community's knowledge dissemination in relation to the activity of its medical professionals and proposals on how to deal with their conflicting roles. Kim Grego's qualitative analysis focuses on some texts collected from companies selling cryopreservation services with the purpose of investigating the language used to report and to disseminate the (pseudo)scientific knowledge and technology behind this practice (cryonics). Dermot Heaney's paper presents a case study of online mainstream print media accounts of the issue of doping within sport by comparing the transcripts of the Parliamentary Select Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee on Combating Doping in Sport (House of Parliament 2006-2018) with the news print media coverage of the committee's proceedings. The aim is to identify the discursive strategies employed to re-contextualise institutional face-to-face interactions in the form of mainstream online print news about doping. Finally, Maria Cristina Paganoni highlights a few perspectives from which the global news media have been reporting on the topic of big data in connection with novel ethical issues, by stressing the importance of the Cambridge Analytica data scandal at the end of March 2018.

Section 3 focuses on discourse analysis in different media and genres. The first part of the present Section is quite varied. Jacqueline Aiello's

paper describes the ways in which participants (re)position and (re)negotiate self-conceptions of proficiency, attitudes towards language and accents, and their selves during interviews. Sara Gesuato examines the content, structure and formulation of 193 online BBC news alerts. Silvia Masi explores the interplay between verbal and non-verbal strategies (i.e., gestures) in meaning-making in a sample of TED Talks ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)). The multimodal analysis aims to identify possible indices of complexity in the mapping of words with gestures for a better understanding of the role of different semiotic resources in the talks and, ultimately, contributing to the development of multimodal literacy. In the paper co-authored by Walter Giordano and Martina Perrone a series of 1960s car advertisements are analysed multimodally in order to identify gender issues and stereotypes. The second part of Section 3 is devoted to film language and audiovisual translation (AVT), starting with Pierfranca Forchini's study, which within the frame of Biber's Multi-Dimensional Analysis offers an empirical description of film conversation by comparing superheroes movies with other movie genres in order to ascertain whether the spoken traits that have emerged in previous investigations also characterise movies containing larger-than-life characters. Francesca Raffi highlights the function of on-screen texts in the film *Love & Friendship*, focusing in particular on the introductory intertitles, and applying the evaluative approach of Appraisal Theory. Annalisa Sandrelli's paper deals with the screen adaptation of one of Jane Austen's most famous novels, namely *Pride and Prejudice*. Two screen versions are analysed, both in the original English and in dubbed Italian, focusing on the transposition of a number of selected conversational routines. The last contribution in this Section is by Paola Clara Leotta, who addresses the issue of the cross-cultural transferability of English varieties into Italian by analysing some selected scenes from three British and American films and their dubbed Italian version.

Section 4 includes a series of contribution on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in various domains, ranging from health and medicine, to finance, tourism and politics. Tatiana Canziani's contribution focuses on English for Medical Purposes (EMP) and proposes an EMP teaching model for lexical verbs extracted from the *Medical Academic wordlist for clinical cases* (MAWLcc). Such verbs are relevant for the development of medical students' academic linguistic competence in their professional con-text. Rosita Maglie explores the impact of virtual encounters on the evolution of English by analysing a corpus of health posts composed of messages posted by adolescents and the answers they received from a team of Columbia University healthcare providers. The purpose is to identify patterns of communication and to

provide a linguistic profile of contemporary post usage. In her interdisciplinary work, Olga Denti investigates a corpus of financial analyst reports issued by Goldman Sachs Research between November 2009 and November 2011 in order to determine how analysts employ linguistic strategies to mitigate or enhance certain events and to affect investors' behaviour. Maria Teresa Giampaolo's paper examines a corpus of on-line English texts used to promote tourist facilities and local products in Salento. Maria Grazia Guido, Pietro Luigi Iaia and Lucia Errico's contribution reports on an experiential-linguistic and multimodal model applied to a comparative ethno-poetic analysis of non-western migrants' traumatic accounts of tragic sea-voyages across the sea, reported in their variations of English as a 'lingua franca' (ELF), and epic narratives of Mediterranean dramatic odysseys towards 'Utopian places' translated from Ancient Greek and Latin into modern ELF variations, in the context of an Experiential Place-Marketing plan in Responsible Tourism. In her paper, Cristina Arizzi analyses multimodally the impact of two complex metaphors that characterised the 2016 US National Parties Conventions. Finally, Denise Milizia investigates the metaphor 'pull up the drawbridge', which is often employed in relation to immigration and Brexit. Her study relies on a large corpus of politicians' speeches from Tony Blair's to Theresa May's government in order to identify whether conventional or creative linguistic patterns are used.

The studies in Section 5 deal with legal and EU discourse from translation and discursive perspectives. In her corpus-based study, Jekaterina Nikitina investigates the complex relationship between conventional and creative legal phraseological units in authentic written pleadings before the European Court of Human Rights. Her results provide confirmatory evidence about the combination of creative and conventional phrasemes in translated Russian-to-English and Italian-to-English pleadings. From the same perspective, Francesca Seracini's paper investigates the strategies adopted in the translation of EU legislation in the light of the various types of constraints influencing the translators' choices. In particular, she focuses on the translation of the passive voice in a bilingual parallel corpus of EU legislation in English and in Italian. Her investigation shows that translated laws tend to be clearer and more readable compared to the original laws in English, thus providing evidence in support of the simplification hypothesis in translation. Mariarosaria Provenzano adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to examine European legal texts, whose accessibility can be viewed as a gradual tension between conventionality and creativity, because of the complex levels of knowledge required for intercultural mediators to be understood by a global audience. The analysis shows that creativity

occurs both in text production and in text reformulation. Giulia Adriana Pennisi instead adopts a diachronic perspective to explore the legislative techniques used by drafters of English-speaking countries, who are asked to write legal sentences aiming at gender-symmetric representation of men and women. In general, the lexico-grammatical study addresses the issue of whether more creative techniques used to implement gender-neutral drafting can actually improve the original product.

Section 6 includes studies on language learning and language teaching. In particular, in their papers, Letizia Cinganotto and Cristina Guccione investigate the role of the English language in a CLIL environment, from both learner's and teacher's perspectives. Maicol Formentelli focuses on the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in university courses, specifically on direct questions, more frequently used in Italian ELF lectures than in comparable lectures by English native speakers. Results from his corpus confirm the prominence of direct questions in foregrounding the complex dynamics of power and social distance, and uncover linguistic patterns that diverge from native speakers' norms of usage. Lucilla Lopriore and Enrico Grazi's paper discusses the challenges and preliminary findings of a research project which aims at devising an ELF-aware pedagogical model for ELT education. Luciana Pedrazzini and Andrea Nava instead explore interlanguage complexity in language-related episodes during a collaborative output task (dictogloss). Their data analysis highlights the key role of the 'restructuring' stage of the task, with its open dynamic structure which encourages learners to adapt and develop their linguistic resources in response to the affordances that emerge in the communicative context provided. Nicoletta Simi finally reports on the results of a comprehension task assessing the interpretation of intra-sentential anaphora and cataphora in English by a group of typically developed Italian L1 speakers and a group of Italian L1 speakers with dyslexia, both learning English as a second language. From her results significant differences emerge between the groups, especially in the processing of cataphoric sentences, and these are confirmed by reaction time measurements.

Section 7 is devoted to studies in the realm of English varieties and accents. Annalisa Bonomo specifically reconsiders language variation in the light of complexity, thus allowing cross-disciplinary overviews concerning global and local changes within World English(es). Giuliana Regnoli instead considers the complex interplay of sociolinguistic variables and developing dialectal features in a transient community of Indian university students located in Heidelberg. Her results demonstrate that the transient aspect of the community is a valuable sociolinguistic factor in the fostering of in-group affiliations and distances.

Massimo Sturiale explores in his paper a corpus of newspaper articles to show how, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the keywords related to the standard language debate (i.e. ‘vulgar pronunciation/accent’, ‘provincial pronunciation/accent’) acquired new connotative meanings, and words ending in *-ism*, such as *provincialism*, *vulgarism* and *accentism*, were coined as analogy-based examples of language creativity.

Section 8 is devoted to creative phenomena of the lexicon and word formation. In the lexical area, Paola Attolino investigates the interplay of conventionality and creativity in Black Semantics, showing how Black formulaic language has evolved and taken roots over time and space, especially thanks to the global spread of Hip Hop Music, and highlighting to what extent it permeates any register, from daily language to specialised discourse. In a similar vein, Cristiano Furiassi offers a historical overview of the term *Super Tuscan*, with the aim of reconstructing the origin of this false Anglicism by considering the word formation processes involved in its coinage. His corpus-based results suggest the possibility that the worldwide success of Super Tuscan wines might have turned *Super Tuscan* from a specialised term employed by (wealthy) wine enthusiasts or professionals into a word also known and used by non-connoisseurs. Anna Mongibello investigates lexical creativity around the word *Nunavut* in Canadian news discourse through a qualitative and quantitative analysis conducted on a subcorpus of the *News On the Web Corpus* (CaNOW). Her analysis shows that news discourse is a fertile ground for new vocabulary, since productive word formation processes are used to popularise new items. Silvia Cacchiani’s paper focuses on proper names and appellative nouns as prototypical categories with fuzzy boundaries and the way they acquire commemorative, classifying and epithet functions in complex English Name-Noun constructs. Elisa Mattiello’s paper rather focuses on the use of splinters in the creation of new words in English and uses a corpus-based approach to explore some case studies, with the aim to demonstrate the evolution from creative local mechanisms of surface analogy to more extended phenomena of analogy via schema. Finally, Jodi Sandford adopts a cognitive linguistic approach and corpus analysis to verify both the synchronic and the diachronic conceptualisation of the lexeme *sense*. Collocations and constructions that occur with *sense* suggest that the metaphorical extension of the word departs from the original meaning of ‘sense’ to a complex metaphor that includes ‘perception is reception’ and ‘understanding is perceiving’.

The contributions in Section 9 create a bridge between linguistics and literature, by examining creativity and stylistics in literary works.

Steve Buckledee, in particular, analyses the creative use of linguistic deviation in Alan Bissett's novel *The Incredible Adam Spark*, in which the narrator speaks an idiolect that deviates from linguistic norms and introduces innovative coinages allowing him to communicate with his fellow humans. Antonella Luporini presents a corpus-assisted analysis of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Her quantitative and qualitative analysis focuses on the appraisal patterns involving the adjective *white* in Rhys' novel and examines their role in symbolically articulating part of the text's deepest meaning. Daniela Francesca Viridis lastly analyses the dialogic structure of Wordsworth's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) and the complex system of interactive and creative strategies employed by the writer to construct his own individuality and identity as an innovator, as well as to directly address his reader.

The contributions collected in this volume provide a frame for complexity-inspired research and jointly demonstrate how complexity and the chaotic dynamics of creativity, on the one hand, and conventionality, regularity and predictability, on the other, constitute a prolific ground for linguistic enquiry and investigation.

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