

The Discursive Construal of Trust in the Dynamics of Knowledge Diffusion

The Discursive Construal of Trust in the Dynamics of Knowledge Diffusion

Edited by

Rita Salvi and Judith Turnbull

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PREFACE

It is a great pleasure to write a preface to this volume. First of all, it brings together two aspects of discourse that I find particularly stimulating objects of study: the notion of discursive construal of trust and that of the diffusion of knowledge. Both aspects are becoming increasingly central to professional and organizational communication, especially in its involvement with communities, but they can be seen to play a major role in more personal relationships too. Whether we are talking of political communication, corporate communication, financial reporting, promoting cultural heritage or more personal relations such as coaching events, assessment reports and – “the most critical domain” – medical communication, trust is an essential element of knowledge sharing. The volume manages to cover this wide range of communicative situations centring on how the construal of trust goes hand in hand with re-contextualizing information for the purpose. The collection of papers represents an attempt to develop both notions, but particularly to see how trust building, maintaining and repairing (Fuoli and Paradis 2014) can be seen as instrumental to the diffusion of knowledge in the various fields.

Building a relation of trust and constructing one’s own image in terms of caring and expertise often become essential elements in professional communication in a knowledge-based society. If trust is clearly a dynamic interpersonal construct, typically negotiated through discourse, the speaker’s image is also constructed discursively and in different ways according to the situation. Both trust and image are easily undermined and can be repaired by modifying one’s behaviour: they are negotiated and can be renegotiated through discourse. Constructing and communicating a trustworthy discourse identity often goes together with constructing and conveying an authoritative and a caring identity.

The main purpose of this volume is to improve our understanding of the discursive and pragmatic dynamics of how these identities and relations are built in discourse, keeping in mind a wide enough range of contexts that can illuminate the overarching principles. Improving our understanding means first of all keeping in mind the need to pin down how language choice can be related to the needs of re-contextualizing knowledge or to the needs of constructing, repairing and maintaining trust and image.

Methodologically speaking, the chapters are quite diverse: the readers will not find a unitary approach to the study of trust and knowledge dissemination, but what they will find is a clear representation of the existing range of interests and fields of application. And beyond that, the chapters share a common interest in the study of language in use, in the focus on specific communicative situations and in combining qualitative and quantitative research in the study of discursive constructs.

Another reason that makes me happy to write this preface is that the volume witnesses collaboration between different universities, involving scholars at different stages in their academic career. This may sound slightly unorthodox in a preface, but I think it should not pass unnoticed: personal development and innovative ideas originate from contamination, dialogue across institutions and across generations and I am proud to say that this dialogue is exactly what originated the seminar, organized by Rita Salvi at the University of Rome “Sapienza”, that then developed into the volume.

With this dialogue in mind, I dare say that the volume also witnesses the growth of the CLAVIER (Corpus and Language Variation in English Research) centre into a wider, more inclusive group of researchers with a focus on corpus linguistics and language variation in a discourse perspective. CLAVIER is an interuniversity research centre currently involving the Universities of Bari, Bergamo, Florence, Milan, Modena and Reggio Emilia, “Sapienza” Rome, Siena and Trieste. Originating from collaboration between scholars in English research, CLAVIER has now extended its scope to other languages, including members working on Chinese, French, Italian, German, Spanish and Russian, in the belief that cross-linguistic contrast illuminates peculiarities and commonalities.

It is also our belief that cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary work is increasingly needed to understand the complexity of contemporary communication. We think professional communication is an important aspect of many fields of human activity and in this area of study it is essential to be able to collaborate with all those who share an interest. CLAVIER is open to collaboration and looks forward to new challenges and new studies.

Modena, September 2016

Marina Bondi

Director of the CLAVIER Centre

Reference

Fuoli, Matteo, and Carita Paradis. 2014. A model of trust-repair discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 74:52-69



CLAVIER WORKSHOP 2015

The discursive construal of trust in the dynamics of knowledge diffusion

discussant: Giuseppina Cortese
Rome, 10th June, 2015 – h. 12.00-18.00



FINANZIAMENTO DI: MINISTERO E MOENELLI
DE L'ECONOMIA E TURISMO E LA FAMOZA
FAMOTTA



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



PROGRAM

12.00 – 12.20 Welcome address and opening remarks: Alessandra DeRose, Head of Merlot
Department; Giuseppina Cortese, Marina Bondi and Rita Salvi

12.20 – 13.30

Chair: Girolamo Tessuto

Giuliana Garzone Exploring specialised discourse across media and modes: work in progress
Isola Catenaccio Epistemic and extractive adverbs in CSR reports: a preliminary investigation
Belinda Crawford and Daniele Franceschi The Pisa Audio-Visual Corpus Project: first forays

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 15.45

Chair: Chiara Prosperi Porta

Francesca Poppi Conveying national culture in our globalised era
Giuliana Diani Travel blogs on Italy: Perceiving tourist destination image through American eyes
Bonatella Mallarasi Multimodal strategies of knowledge communication and identity construction in
CSR Reports and Websites: A comparative analysis

15.45 – 16.15 Coffee break

16.15 – 17.10

Chair: Sara Gessato

Lara Moschini From 'webification' to 'geekization': Future developments in the study of social-media
discursive construal of trust
Janet Bowker Presentation of the volume 'The Dissemination of Contemporary Knowledge in English'
Rita Salvi and Janet Bowker (eds), Bern, Peter Lang

17.15 – 18.00 Conclusions

Chair: Marina Bondi Discussant: Giuseppina Cortese

Scientific Committee

Marina Bondi
Nicholas Brownlee
Belinda Crawford
Marina Cossena
Giuliana Garzone
Giuseppe Palumbo
Rita Salvi
Berna Tognini Bonelli

Organizing Committee

Janet Bowker
Isola Catenaccio
Chiara Prosperi-Porta
Judith Turnbull

Workshop Venue

Aula Fanfani – V piano, Facoltà di Economia, Via Castro Laurenziano 9, Roma

INTRODUCTION

rita salvi and judith turnbull

I love the freedom of creativity when our ideas come together to create new ones and then spread. [...] The knowledge of one becomes the knowledge of millions. But also it is important to listen to understand each other, when we do both we feel part of something much larger than ourselves, and that is cool. My name is Tim Berners-Lee – I invented the World Wide Web.
(TV advert for an Italian telecommunications company)

Theoretical framework

This volume stems from a workshop held at the Sapienza University of Rome on June 10, 2015 and organised by the CLAVIER centre (Corpus Linguistics and Language Variation in English Research, Director Prof. Marina Bondi). Over the last few years CLAVIER has been working on a research project called *Language in Knowledge Dissemination* (LINKD) which has been investigating the theoretical, descriptive and applied perspectives of Knowledge Dissemination. In 2015 the Rome unit of the research centre published the volume “The Dissemination of Contemporary Knowledge in English”, edited by Rita Salvi and Janet Bowker, which collected a series of studies on the nature of knowledge dissemination, its principles, conceptualizations and constructs. It explored the use of language in the complex processes involved in the transformation of information into knowledge in a variety of fields and for a variety of audiences. The starting point of the investigation was the linguistic devices which allow information to reach the cognitive level of knowledge, with its forms of creation, use and exchange. This process is very much based on the paradigms of continuity and advancement, connecting past and present. Therefore, the linguistic analysis took into consideration intertextual relationships as well as the channels of interdiscursivity, as delineated by Fairclough:

The concept of interdiscursivity is modelled upon and closely related to intertextuality, and like intertextuality it highlights a historical view of texts as transforming the past – existing conventions, or prior texts – into

the present. The analysis of the discursive event as social practice may refer to different levels of social organization – the context of situation, the institutional context, and the wider societal context or ‘context of culture’ [...]. (Fairclough 1995: 134)

The present volume takes the research one step further by introducing the crucial, but intangible factor in everyday interrelations between human beings, namely trust, which is the second point at issue in the studies collected here. According to the Oxford Dictionary’s definition, trust is the firm belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone or something. Assuming that the achievement of credibility and legitimacy is fundamental to successful communication in a globalized and virtual world, the essential complementary aspect to knowledge dissemination is the analysis of the language that builds trust in interpersonal interactions, in different contexts and settings. As Candlin and Crichton stated in the Introduction of their book *Discourses of Trust* (2013):

Issues surrounding trust are fundamental to people’s lives in contemporary societies, a fact not merely and sharply highlighted by the recent history of inter-relational practices associated with financial markets, international security, marketing and public relations, but even more persuasively and ever-presently in the formation and maintenance of relations among partners in the delivery, for example, of health and welfare services and in the public and private arenas of political and religious institutions. (Candlin and Crichton 2013, 1)

Trust is a buzzword, which is also problematic, as it includes the potentially disadvantageous concepts of ‘risk’ and ‘vulnerability’ with implications for control and power. In the chapters the twofold nature of trust is linguistically described and the two-sided relationship between trustors and trustees is highlighted in their linguistic interactions.

To bridge the gap between knowledge and trust, here we use the term ‘knowledge’ in the simple sense of “the state of knowing about or being familiar with something” (Cambridge English Dictionary). Knowledge is a fundamental aspect of empowerment; it will allow people to make informed decisions in every aspect of their lives and in every role they play, as workers, citizens, voters, patients, tourists, managers and investors. Easy and ready access to an ever increasing amount of information and knowledge have also heightened our awareness of society and the world, giving us greater understanding of the scope and intricacies of modern day life. On the reverse side, however, it also gives us insight into the not-so-transparent and not-so-clean borders of activities and transactions, kindling wariness, scepticism, even mistrust at times.

In particular, in specialized and scientific domains, which are the focus of our attention, the connection between knowledge dissemination and trust building is essential and critical at the same time. Different contexts and genres can produce similar or opposite results in language behaviour and style, showing a variety of networks of practices.

The enormous influence of the media nowadays, which favours the spreading of mechanisms such as “suggestion”, “persuasion” and “manipulation” derived from both cultural background and ideology, is the third field of investigation in the present book. The dialectical exchange established between sender and receiver on the net has altered the use of language, developing forms of re-writing and re-contextualization which deserve critical attention from linguists, but also from scholars of social sciences, professionals and educational institutions.

Content of the book

The “language of trust” is the backbone of the four sections of the book. Through the chapters, the various principles, conceptualizations, constructs and pragmatic dynamics of knowledge dissemination are shown in a range of discourse genres. The studies, which have been double peer reviewed, reveal the multi-levels of knowledge, its varied typology and its ongoing co-construction, maintenance and updating among heterogeneous audiences, which may vary from expert to lay. Alongside this, the issue of trust has been reported constantly to be significant in the nurturing of collaborative processes which we believe are essential in any human relationship.

Part I: Building trust

In the first section, the papers deal with the building of trust through different strategies in political, academic, tourist and educational contexts. The description of similarities and differences of language in four specific domains is an opportunity to compare strategies and forms of communicative behaviour.

In the first chapter, *The discursive construction of trust in European political communication*, **Rita Salvi** analyses the linguistic and rhetorical features of political discourse in a corpus of texts dealing with the problem of migration taken from Angela Merkel’s official website. These texts represent a mixed genre, as they include narration of events and quotations from the Chancellor’s speeches. The language perfectly reflects the meaningful interaction in an asymmetrical situation such as the relationship

between politicians (those who are trusted) and citizens (those who trust). Confidence and persuasion are realized by either the emphasis on apolitical qualities and personal demeanour or by the adoption of vague language to minimize cognitive dissonance in citizens.

A new genre in the academic domain is described by **Sara Gesuato** in *The PhD thesis report: Building trust in an emerging genre*. PhD thesis reports represent the fundamental document in which scholars evaluate and comment on post-graduate students' written work. The scholars explicitly manifest their presence in their reports, establishing their authority through suggestions and recommendations. But credibility is hard to achieve, especially when multiple tasks are involved: the report writer has to be honest and reliable as an assessor, helpful and supportive as a distant co-supervisor and mentor, fair and balanced as an examiner. The relevant discursive features and strategies analysed show how the report writers build a relationship of trust with their readership.

Giuliana Diani presents a case study of web-mediated communication investigating a corpus of travel blogs on Italian destinations written by American travelers, *The appeal of travel blogs: The image of Italy through American eyes*. Adopting corpus-assisted methods, the study aims at exploring which aspects of the travel experience bloggers describe and in what terms, what cultural meanings are constructed for the image of Italy and how such meanings are represented and consequently transmitted. The data shows how evaluative expressions are repeatedly exploited by 'tourist-writers' not only to highlight what is memorable about a journey, but also to signal what is advisable, whilst their narrations appear to establish and demonstrate their credibility for future travellers who will use information from what they consider credible blog posts.

In his contribution *Repositioning Museums on Children's Agenda*, **Federico Sabatini** states that trust and self-confidence is what children gain from the experience of the museum, if successfully processed in its socio-cognitive and interactive components. The logogenic capacity of Museum Discourse is no longer predominantly exercised as expert discourse, but increasingly configured as educational discourse leading to the construction of knowledge through "hands-on" experience. Equally relevant, the semiosis, or meaning-making capacity, inherent in the new "museum script" is guided by an ethical imperative to serve society equitably. The chapter examines electronic materials from different sources and with different addressee(s), from blogs to scholarly reflection and museum project presentations.

Part II: A Corporate Culture of Trust

Corporate culture is expressed in a variety of texts, genres and channels; yet, as “Corporate Social Responsibility” is an inherent value in this domain, CSR reports can be considered a fundamental means of communication and reference. It is generally agreed that the concept of CSR reporting is flexible, as each company can choose how to communicate its CSR progress, in whatever way it finds suitable. This lack of uniformity and the high level of flexibility are well shown in the first three chapters in this section.

In *Markers of trust: Epistemic adverbs of certainty and restrictive adverbs in CSR reports* **Paola Catenaccio** shows how some markers of discourse, namely epistemic adverbs of certainty and restrictive adverbs, contribute to both the delivery of information and the assertion of credibility. The underlying assumption is that through the investigation of interpersonal resources such as epistemic and restrictive adverbs it is possible to retrieve crucial information about the ideological underpinnings of CSR discourse, thus leading to a better understanding of this recently emerged discursive formation. Understanding the mechanisms of this communication will also give insights into how trust is built and maintained in business, at a time when large corporations are often subject to scrutiny and criticism, and intangible factors such as reputation become more and more important in determining business outcomes.

Considering the difficult position of companies in a globalized market, torn between the need to address a variety of multicultural audiences and the wish to emphasize some traits of their national culture and identity to distinguish themselves from their competitors, **Franca Poppi** focuses on the English version of CSR reports published on the websites of two airlines with very different cultural backgrounds: Delta (USA) and JAL (Japan). This multi-cultural context requires new strategies for building and maintaining trust. The analysis carried out in *Conveying trust in a globalized era* aims at finding out whether or not, in our present globalized era, the two selected airlines still refer to the typical values of their respective countries to influence their stakeholders’ attitudes and build trust.

Within the highly competitive scenario of the global economy, **Donatella Malavasi** investigates how the construction of identity and trust in some verbal resources is deployed by a sample of European leading companies in two different types of disclosures, CSR reports and websites. In particular, the author assumes that CSR reports are more technical and specialized documents, while webpages are rather ‘popularised’ disclosures targeted at a wider audience. Her analysis in *Building trust through*

corporate identity: An analysis of CRS reports and webpages sets out to examine the variation in enterprises' self-promotion as 'impeccable' and reliable corporate citizens in relation to the process of popularisation.

The fourth and last chapter in this section looks at corporate discourse from a different perspective, namely within the business organization. In *Organizational trust creation in peer coaching events: Multimodal means and representations*, **Janet Bowker** investigates the processes of trustwork in organizational discourse through a multimodal approach. She analyses the data derived from the in-house peer coaching and employee development events within a large multinational consulting group based in North America. The data consists of a selection from ten hours of audioconferenced internal employee coaching, and the pragma-linguistic analysis is carried out primarily on the multimodal visual data which accompanied the trainers' oral presentations, thus comparing the oral and written (PowerPoint) communication.

Part III: Maintaining and repairing trust

The third section is concerned with the maintenance and repairing of trust when it needs to be reinforced or comes under threat. As the chapters deal with sensitive topics such as politics, finance, tourism and business respectively, it comes as no surprise that apologies like "I'm sorry" or "I didn't mean to hurt you" are no longer sufficient. Some physical emotional reactions (even tears) are becoming more frequent in public and so perhaps considered acceptable to repair trust. But new layers of trust still have to be argued and negotiated through language.

In the first chapter, *A digital 'meeting place'? A socio-semiotic and multimodal analysis of the WhiteHouse.gov social hub*, **Ilaria Moschini** deals with the 'webridization' of US institutional language. The study is a micro-level analysis of the "social hub" page of the White House's website which shows how trust and participation are discursively constructed at both a linguistic/semiotic and digital level. The case study has been selected after mapping the evolution of the White House's website since 2008 and it seems to be emblematic in highlighting President Obama's institutional rhetoric on the relationship between socio-political participation and digital networks. In particular, the object of the analysis is the framework of the "social hub" page (that is the infrastructure which sets the interpretative frame) and not the various contents which are changed and updated on a regular basis.

Moving across to the other side of the Atlantic, *Knowledge transfer, ideologies and trust in public financial reporting* by **Chiara Proserpi**

Porta examines European institutional documents, namely the central banks' Annual Reports, comparing the findings obtained from the websites of the Bank of England, the Bank of Greece and the European Central Bank. Through the analysis of specific lexicon and phraseology, she describes the relationship between discursive practices, ideology and trust in this specialized but not homogeneous genre. The thread joining institution-centred knowledge transfer and people's trust in the European context affects both the process by which discourse comes to be formed and the way in which some institutions, such as central banks, promote an accountable identity, so as to deliver a credible performance in the community of practice.

Past in present: Disseminating credible heritage knowledge online, **Christina Samson's** contribution, covers the field of maintaining and disseminating trust in a cultural environment such as the guidebooks of Florence. Given the particular nature of cultural heritage, the author states that it cannot be thought of as a commodity in the conventional sense, as it has to be credible when presenting visitors with something they will consider 'authentic'. Thus, when heritage is represented and promoted in online guidebooks, they not only provide cultural and historical representations of a destination, but they also disseminate knowledge to build trust. The results do indeed show that online guidebooks disseminate credible knowledge based on accurate information which, in turn, reinforces and bolsters a trustworthy relation with their recipients.

In the last chapter of this section, *Repairing trust: A case study of the Volkswagen gas emissions scandal*, **Judith Turnbull** describes the language strategies adopted by the company in order to establish a new trustworthy relationship with consumers after the scandal. The analysis highlights Volkswagen's initial reaction to the scandal, before trying to draw people onto its side by giving some information about what was happening. The company finally publishes a detailed explanation three months after the scandal broke. The three phases produce different results in terms of language and communication techniques. The analysis has underlined that the main strategy adopted by VW is emphasising the positive, especially the technical ability of the company.

Part IV: Trust in medical communication

The fourth section presents the building/repairing trust processes in a very delicate area, the medical sector, in which specialists (researchers, doctors, journalists and even lawyers) have to establish a trustworthy relationship with the audience, very often patients.

Assuming that the communication of scientific findings is neither impartial nor neutral, **Renzo Mocini**, in *The construal of trust through relevance: Patterns of evaluative language in medical writing*, explores the interpersonal dimension of medical writing by highlighting how writers exploit linguistic resources and discourse devices to take a stance and express judgements. Based on a corpus of medical-journal articles, the study examines how they position themselves within their scientific community as scholars capable of evaluating data as ‘relevant’ while asserting their trustworthiness and credibility. The first part of the analysis deals with patterns of evaluation directly inscribed in discourse by means of the explicitly evaluative word *significant*, while the second investigates more covert ways of conveying relevance, that is, by means of focusing adjuncts.

In *Medical knowledge dissemination and doctor-patient trust: A multi-modal analysis*, **Daniele Franceschi** introduces spoken medical English examining doctor-patient conflict in an English L1 context and how it may be resolved through the adoption of certain strategies by the doctor himself/herself. Some strategies facilitate the comprehension of medical information, whilst others manage to create empathy and rapport between the parties. The three doctor-patient dialogues examined were chosen from a pre-collected database available on-line. The approach followed is multi-semiotic, since not only language but also facial expressions, hand gestures and body movements are observed and considered as contributing to meaning and trust construal.

The recontextualization of information, from scientific medical journals to press releases and online newspaper articles, is the topic discussed by **Ersilia Incelli** in *Spin in health news: Levels of trust in knowledge diffusion*. This process involves the notions of newsworthiness and proximity, which tell us about how writers see their readers and how lexical choices are orchestrated to manipulate the information they want to give. The chapter describes the distinct rhetorical phenomenon referred to as ‘spin’, that is a distortion of discourse which leads to the misrepresentation of medical results. While the aim is to build readers’ trust, journalists may paradoxically employ, whether consciously or unconsciously, somewhat deceptive rhetorical strategies, which actually go against trust.

In *Informational, promotional and trust building strategies in the web genre of clinical negligence case studies*, **Girolamo Tessuto** exploits online case studies that connect medical issues with legal matters. Websites provide a range of information, knowledge and data regarding individuals who have become the victims of some form of negligence at

the hands of medical or other healthcare professionals alongside the legal procedure for making a claim. Clinical negligence case studies emerge as a new genre within law firm websites, where they create an avenue for information sharing and promotion/marketing organised around trust building strategies. Combining genre analysis with the study of language in specialized domains, the research situates trust building in the dynamic processes of hybridization and interdiscursivity, touching upon and tying in most of the aspects discussed in the previous chapters.

Final remarks

In conclusion, when describing a variety of possible language features and rhetorical strategies adopted to build, maintain and repair trust, the chapters reflect different contexts of communication, interdisciplinary approaches, interest in promoting knowledge and achieving mutual understanding. Both the theoretical issues and their applications developed in each chapter are characterized by integrated methodological supports. Especially in professional domains, it is widely acknowledged that “trust building is problematic and that management of trust implies both the ability to cope in situations where trust is lacking and the ability to build trust in situations where this is possible” (Vagen and Huxham 2003, 5). We do hope that English (with its role of *lingua franca*) will help to facilitate trustworthiness by transmitting knowledge, understanding and ethical values, so that *we feel part of something much larger than ourselves*.

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PART I

BUILDING TRUST

CHAPTER ONE

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF TRUST IN EUROPEAN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

RITA SALVI

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1. Introduction

Although institutional discourse in general, and political discourse in particular, adopts specific features immediately recognizable to the audience, it also shows a degree of flexibility in relation to the contingent situations it deals with, and to the medium used to transmit the message. This contribution aims to identify the features and explore the potential strength of English in the construal of trust in political discourse with reference to the topic of migration, a crucial matter of our age.

The chapter has three objectives: first, to describe institutional and political discourse in terms of construction of identity and its relevant linguistic strategies (Salvi 2014) with a view to building trust; second, to confirm the validity of an integrated methodology in text analysis (Biber *et al.* 1998); third, to use quantitative analysis to observe the aspects of ‘keyness’ and ‘aboutness’ (Bondi and Scott eds. 2010), so connecting form and content, in a case in which language has to conform to topics strongly influenced by economic issues, as well as by social and political instances. The research also shows how particular pragmatic features of the language reveal ideology and social relationships activated to sustain trustworthiness.

The study starts from the assumption that political language has widely expanded into several forms of communication, producing the hybridization of genres and new communicative styles. Although usually based on facts and figures, political language expresses the politician’s stance in her/his institutional role: identity, image and reputation are integral parts of any information delivered to the audience in order to gain legitimacy and build trust. As the first objective is persuasion, realized by either the emphasis on apolitical qualities and personal demeanour or by the adoption of vague

language to minimize cognitive dissonance in citizens, the shaping of public opinion is the immediate consequence. In political discourse language has been progressively manipulated by adopting a rhetorical style which hinges on boosting devices to promote ideas and ideologies. In an asymmetrical situation such as the relationship between politicians (those who are trusted) and citizens (those who trust) a meaningful interaction must be established mainly through language “to infer from what is said to what is meant” (Candlin and Crichton 2013, 2).

The content selected for the inquiry is related to migration, a phenomenon which has been before our eyes with tragic effects in recent times. One of the political leaders primarily involved has been Angela Merkel as the German Chancellor and the most influential politician in the EU, so a representative authority in both a local and a global perspective. Needless to say, our interest lies within the limits of the communicative strategies adopted – a sort of snapshot of the language used, a picture of interactions – whatever the political judgement may be.

The material collected comes from Angela Merkel’s official website. The section selected is labelled as “articles”: in actual fact, the texts do not belong to the ordinary press, rather they are written specifically for the website (probably by someone on the Chancellor’s staff). They seem to perform an informative function, but they are evidently Merkel-centred: for example, no mention is made of the Chancellor’s sentence “Politics is sometimes hard” pronounced after a Palestinian teenager burst into tears over deportation fears during a televised debate. The articles, anyway, represent a very interesting object for linguistic analysis, because they are a new mixed genre which I would define as a “personal journal” or “a self-story webpage” (see Appendix); they include narration of events (although they cannot be considered as press releases or reports) and a lot of quotations from the Chancellor’s speeches. In this sense, the material analysed is new and, to the best of my knowledge, has never been collected in a corpus; moreover, some interesting hints come from the relationship between content and genre to investigate the construction of messages at multiple levels of textual organization, thus reflecting the dynamic relationship between trustors and trustees.

2. Corpus and methodology

For this analysis a corpus has been built with a number of reports published on the German Chancellor’s website. The observation of the data allows us to identify words and phraseology used in the specific topic, but it also supports a critical discourse analysis of the texts.

The corpus has been constructed as follows: connecting to the German Chancellor's website (www.bundestkanzlerin.de, accessed in September 2015) and selecting the English version, it is possible to retrieve the news section in which a large number of "articles" are reported (more than 600). To define the "aboutness" of the research, I restricted the selection to articles containing the item "refugee(s)". The choice produced 72 results in the time span from December 15, 2006 and September 3, 2015 (due to the sensitivity of the topic, the number of articles has exponentially increased in more recent times). The period examined starts from the first mandate of Angela Merkel as Chancellor of Germany (November 22, 2005) and covers ten years. It is worthwhile noting that 35 articles were produced between January and August 2015 (sometimes even two articles a day), 14 articles in 2014, 7 articles in 2013, the remaining spread over the years 2006-2012. All in all, the corpus consists of almost 80,000 words (tokens) and 6,000 unique words (types). The quantitative analysis was carried out using the ConcApp concordance software (Greaves 2005) to draw up frequency lists and WMatrix (Rayson 2007) to detect specific features of the language (e.g. verbs and phraseology in concordance lines).

The contribution of corpus linguistics to the present research refers to the wide current literature: Sinclair (1991, 1996, 2003, 2004), Biber *et al.* (1998), Tognini Bonelli (2001), Hunston (2002, 2008), Baker (2006), Cheng *et al.* (2006, 2009), Bondi and Scott (2010) for their views and insights into corpora interpretation.

As a matter of fact, as Stubbs (2010) points out, semantic and social analysis are inseparable for work on key-words and phraseology which do not necessarily occur frequently in a text at a statistical significance, but contribute to the construal of discourse. Therefore, the research is very much based on discourse analysis, adopting a multi-level and multi-layered, context-dependent methodology. Indeed, the corpus could be read in a number of different ways. It would have been possible, for example, to focus on strategies of re-writing, or on the features of language related to intertextuality and interdiscursivity, as in previous studies (Salvi 2015). Instead, the research here is carried out to elicit the features of language which contribute to the construction of trust through the building of identity in political discourse (Sarangi 2004; Benwell and Stokoe 2010; Salvi 2014). Thus the focus is on expressions of boosting and hedging, phrases which express subjectivity and deliver evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000; Martin and White 2005), "linguaging" meant as "a process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain 2006, 98) and also phraseology that produces social effects by forms of affective communication (Salvi 2016). In the

specific discourse of migration, which implies a high level of emotions and ethical commitment (Jensen 2014), languaging is a predominant linguistic process as “a domain of consensual coordinations of consensually coordinated interactions” (Kravchenko 2012, digital edition).

In this perspective the analysis offers a presentation of speech, writing and thought in political discourse. According to Fairclough, political discourse is “mediated by institutions which, in turn, position readers and writers, speakers and listeners in different positions of power and knowledge” (1989, 36). As communication is a crucial matter in political discourse, it can be asserted that textual rhetorical features should be analyzed in-depth in order to detect different levels of information and persuasion within an ideological framework (Wilson 2003).

Moreover, following Bhatia’s studies on genre evolution and hybridization (2008), the research points to a relationship between genre change and societal change. Discursive hybridity is also dealt with by Fairclough (2011, 11) who states that “... changes in discourse [are] *operationalized* (‘put into operation’, ‘put into practice’) in social practices, relations, identities and changes in the physical world”. Therefore, he argues, “genres, discourses and styles are socially significant entities as well as linguistically significant entities” (2011, 25). Pursuing a holistic approach to texts and observing language as both a social and an individual expression, the study examines the persuasive strategies of the texts and their ideological components as fundamental aspects of political discourse to earn credibility and build trust.

3. Corpus analysis

A corpus-based approach to text analysis leads us to detect first of all the most frequent content/topic words in the list; in our case, they are *Chancellor*, *Merkel* and *Germany* (430, 420 and 402 occurrences respectively). This confirms my introductory assumption: the texts collected in the Chancellor’s official website inevitably thrust the politician and her country into the limelight. Also Europe has a predominant position in the articles, as expected: *EU* (145), *Europe* (203) *European* (254) are extensively used and they all determine the geopolitical setting. The topic is well defined by the content-words *refugee* (91), *refugees* (194), *migrants* (7), and *migration* (43) which mark the distinction between people who deserve asylum from those considered “economic migrants” and do not have the right to be hosted. Some short phrases can help to indicate the context in which these words are used: “registration centres for *refugees*”; “Angela Merkel advocates binding quotas for *refugees*”;

“The German Basic Law, or constitution, lays down ‘clear principles’ for dealing with *refugees*, said Merkel at the summer press conference in Berlin”; “*Migrants* who are not granted the right to stay should be returned to their home countries, said Angela Merkel”; “Chancellor Angela Merkel called for the *migration* situation to be tackled ‘in line with the European spirit’ ”. These examples define the domain, and also the type of text we are dealing with. As previously mentioned, the texts include a lot of the Chancellor’s opinions (*Angela Merkel advocates; said Angela Merkel*) in either the form of narration or in quotations. The data confirms this text structure, indicating *said* as the most frequent verb (358 occurrences, e.g. “In spite of everything, *she said*, Germany is a good country and is in a good state of health”) together with other reporting verbs, such as *stressed* (69), *declared* (68), *pointed to/out* (45), *underscored* (20), *emphasised* (12), *described* and *noted* (9), *underlined* (8). Angela Merkel’s opinion and position is expressed by phrases, such as:

(1) The Chancellor *made* the issue of refugees *the focus* of her press conference.

(2) The Chancellor *took a clear stance* on every form of xenophobia.

but also

(3) *I am furious and stunned* by the fact that many people suffocate because criminal traffickers exploit the desperation of these people to make money.

(4) “*I am absolutely convinced* that we are facing one of the greatest challenges the European Union has seen”, declared Angela Merkel, referring to the refugee problem.

The personal and the institutional identities overlap in these sentences, which can be categorized in a specific field of action, that is shaping public opinion by earning confidence and winning trust.

Scanning the frequency list, however, it is useful to observe how lexis connects the topic discussed and the construction of the relevant discourse, as “lexical choice is a significant way through which speakers evoke and orient to the institutional context of their talk” (Drew and Heritage 1992, 29). The insistent use of the word *security* (142 occurrences) perfectly proves the institutional context as it appears in the name of agencies, organizations and events, such as *UN Security Council*, *the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*, *Security Conference*. They are all Western/European-oriented, mentioned to remind the intensive

security work carried out at an international level to gain the trust of Europeans and, possibly, Americans. Other collocations, however, account for the discursive realisation of trust entwining peoples and places: *stability, security and prosperity*; *a comprehensive security concept*; *freedom, security and human dignity* seem to transmit a message of larger inclusion, implying the “changes in the physical world” that Fairclough (2011, 11) connects to discursivity, as mentioned in paragraph 2. Yet, the word *security* mostly appears in collocations which show patterns of language closely related to the context, with reference to the expectations of the European audience: with *terrorism* (54 occurrences) as the main concern of our times, *lack of security* (see the negative connotation in n. 13 below) is naturally one of the topics often dealt with in the articles, with reference to *the area of border security*, *security across the country*, *our common security* and *protection and security* (almost a fixed collocation in the texts), with the purpose of agreeing on a *security and defence policy*. Some collocations of the word *security* are shown below:

3 principles which state that security and cooperation can ultimately
6 we see European Union security and defence policy as being closely
10 too, in our efforts. Security and development must go hand-in-hand
13 that wars, a lack of security and economic hardship play a role
17 between upholding security and safety of our people and our country
20 prosperity, social security and stability: an educated population
27 opportunities and prospects. Peace and security, but also education
59 we consider training security forces to be very important.
67 conviction that development and security have to go hand in hand
70 very important for us to be able to defend our security.
72 risk posed by international terrorism to security in Europe, said
74 strengthening the instruments of cooperative security in Europe
77 people on the way to seek protection and security, instead of which
80 risk that our security interests will be compromised also increases
83 instead reconstruction and security must be guaranteed. To achieve
84 fight against terrorism and in the area of border security
90 depends on our ability to sustain both the security of our societies
96 alliance is the foundation of global security. Our trade and our
97 how we can guarantee basic security. People need security to thrive
98 dimensions of European security policy are rationally dovetailed
103 the extent to which foreign and security policy impacts matters
105 that the EU will produce a new foreign and security policy strategy
112 means building peace and security, second, achieving prosperity and
114 is the ability of their respective security services to function.
116 convincing answers to the radical changes in the security situation
119 ensure the long-term security, stability and well-being of their
123 The EU's current security strategy dates back to 2003
138 People need security to thrive. States need security to foster

From the lines above, we can observe how temporal deictics contribute to the construal of discourse: for example, n. 105 delineates future perspectives, whilst in n. 123 the date recalls the recent history of the EU

in a narrative mode, representing a change of direction which needs adjustments to life in the new circumstances.

Although at a lower grade in the frequency list, the word *asylum* (122 occurrences) gains the position of a topic word in this context because of its collocations which depict a new political and social scenario, as the following strings show:

1 common European asylum and refugee policy: France and Germany aim to
 8 share responsibility for refugees seeking asylum. Angela Merkel spoke
 9 supporting them in processing asylum applications and registering
 10 Asylum applications must also be processed more rapidly
 21 number of requests for asylum between federal and state levels
 23 protests of radical right-wingers in front of an asylum centre
 25 the member state responsible for examining an asylum claim in Europe
 29 applying for asylum have practically no chance of being granted
 30 who is fleeing civil war is entitled to request asylum in Germany
 33 though in fact many EU states already have common asylum law
 40 prospects of being granted asylum or protected status in Germany
 42 the EU needs a common asylum policy according to Angela Merkel
 46 ensure that all EU states comply with the agreed asylum policy
 terms, said Angela Merkel
 50 the need for a common asylum policy within the EU
 55 asylum procedures are to be accelerated
 57 rapid asylum procedures are especially important, Angela Merkel
 58 integration of refugees and the implementation of asylum procedures
 67 particular urgency is the need to speed up asylum procedures
 75 EU states should implement asylum provisions
 79 are needed to cope with rising numbers of asylum seekers
 82 protesters are said to have threatened asylum-seekers and attacked
 84 attacks on asylum seekers and refugee shelters are unworthy of our
 85 number of asylum seekers and refugees poses a formidable challenge
 86 the increasing burden that rising numbers of asylum seekers and
 94 rising numbers of asylum seekers must be discussed seriously
 109 economic hardship is not a reason for granting asylum, she
 113 implement and apply the common European asylum system. We need
 118 we cannot grant asylum to everyone who believes they would have a
 120 that more than 400,000 requests for asylum will be received
 121 those whose application for asylum will very probably be approved

The use of the word *asylum* should imply a connotation of openness towards refugees in order to gain their trust. Yet, in these collocations we can note how *asylum* introduces different layers of discourse: first of all *asylum policy*, which is considered the main concern in the EU; then *asylum applications/procedures/provisions*, all collocations related to European and national political choices (the political scenario) and addressed to *asylum seekers* (the social scenario). These collocations fit well into Hoey's theory of "priming" (2005), because these associations make the construction of mental concordances possible, that is to say that certain words prime each other in three types of association: logical associations (*asylum seekers*), negative evaluation (*we cannot grant asylum to everyone who*, 118) and seriousness/unexpectedness of