EU institutional discourse: English and Italian brochures in a cross-cultural perspective

In the last few years, studies on the informative publications made available to a wide audience by the European Union have shown that the EU institutions and bodies notably draw upon a variety of different discursive practices and genres to appeal to their citizens (Caliendo 2009; Caliendo and Piga 2014; Magistro 2007a). Although critical research focusing specifically on EU informative documents is still at an early stage, the above-mentioned trends have been widely documented from many perspectives, highlighting instances at a micro-textual level, as well as larger-scale discursive and visual elements. This paper intends to broaden investigation of the communicative strategies adopted by the EU to gain consensus and promote its institutional project, but it aims to do so from a cross-cultural perspective. Attention is called to the discursive devices and structures employed in EU brochures of a comparable nature in different cultural backgrounds and using as a means of expression two different languages: Italian and English. It is assumed that, despite the relative uniformity of EU brochures established by the requirements of the genre, there might be a significant contextual and intercultural variation in the rhetorical strategies adopted by the European Commission. The aim is to analyse to what extent the two different national contexts and languages influence the strategic features of EU informative material. In particular, focus will be placed on the Representation of Social Actors (van Leeuwen 1996) and on the concepts of ‘personalization and humanization’ of EU institutions in the Italian and English versions of EU brochures, along with the social impact of such communicative strategies discussed within the framework of CDA.