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**“LITTLE THINGS MAKE BIG THINGS”.
A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF IMMIGRANTS’ LIFE STORIES
OF CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN ITALY**

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Abstract. Within the last decades, the global economical revolution which has invested the labor market has prompted calls for a redefinition of traditional human resource management

practices. The rapid growth of ethnic diversity in the workplace has turned managers' attention to the management of difference. Yet, cross cultural management has become a priority for most organizations interested in improving competitiveness and in enhancing their human (multicultural) capital. In view of the above, the present study aimed at investigating the process of cultural integration experienced by a group of 12 immigrants workers employed in different Italian organizations. Moving from an applied psycholinguistics perspective, the study collected narrative interviews as to understand the impact that the new cultural experience may have had on the sense-making procedures used to integrate and reshape their personal and professional identity. The discursive data were processed through Diatextual Analysis as to catch the psychological and linguistic features binding identities to texts and to contexts of experience.

Keywords: *acculturation, immigrants, cultural psychology, discourse, diatextual analysis.*

Загарія Альтомаре Енза, Мануті Амелія, Мінінні Джузеппе. «У дрібницях криються великі речі». Психолінгвістичний аналіз життєвих історій іммігрантів про культурну інтеграцію в Італії.

Анотація. Упродовж останніх десятиліть глобальна економічна революція, що сприяла розвитку ринку праці, дала поштовх до потреби зміни розуміння традиційних практик управління кадрами. Проблема етнічного розмаїття на робочих місцях потребує пошуку адекватних способів управління ним. Водночас крос-культурний менеджмент став провідним аспектом для багатьох компаній, зацікавлених у поліпшенні конкурентоздатності й збагаченні свого (мультикультурного) людського ресурсу. У цьому контексті дослідження мало за мету вивчити процес культурної інтеграції 12 працівників-іммігрантів із різних установ Італії. Застосований у роботі прикладний психолінгвістичний підхід дав змогу проаналізувати наративні інтерв'ю з іммігрантами, аби виявити, який вплив новий культурний досвід міг здійснити на процес прийняття рішень іммігрантами задля їхнього інтегрування й реорганізації особистісної й професійної ідентичності. Їхні наративи були піддані процедурі діатекстуального аналізу для визначення психологічних і лінгвальних особливостей зв'язку між ідентичністю й текстом, а також контекстами досвіду.

Ключові слова: *аккультурація, іммігранти, культурна психологія, дискурс, діатекстуальний аналіз.*

Загарія Альтомаре Энза, Манути Амелия, Мининни Джузеппе. «В мелочах кроются большие вещи». Психолингвистический анализ жизненных историй иммигрантов о культурной интеграции в Италии.

Аннотация. На протяжении последних десятилетий глобальная экономическая революция, способствовавшая развитию рынка труда, дала толчок к необходимости изменения понимания традиционных практик управления кадрами. Проблема этнического разнообразия на рабочих местах требует поиска адекватных способов управления им. В то же время кросс-культурный менеджмент стал ведущим аспектом для многих компаний, заинтересованных в улучшении конкурентоспособности и обогащении своего (мультикультурного) человеческого ресурса. В этом контексте исследование имело целью изучить процесс культурной интеграции 12 работников-иммигрантов из разных учреждений Италии. Примененный в работе прикладной психолингвистический подход позволил проанализировать нарративные интервью с иммигрантами, чтобы определить, какое влияние новый культурный опыт мог осуществить на процесс принятия решений иммигрантами для их интегрирования и реорганизации личностной и профессиональной идентичности. Их нарративы подверглись процедуре диатекстуального анализа для определения психологических и лингвальных особенностей связи между идентичностью и текстом, а также контекстами опыта.

Ключевые слова: *аккультурация, иммигранты, культурная психология, дискурс, диатекстуальный анализ.*

Introduction

In recent years, Italy was involved into in a process of social and cultural integration as a consequence of increasing immigration from other countries. This situation may result in a cultural clash as long as individuals belonging to the hosting country may be not ready to accept and integrate immigrants as well as the latter may feel alien and sometimes even refused and discriminated. Yet, there are many matters of obvious interest to applied psycholinguists. The most evident is a practical one: what happens to individuals, who have grown up in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context? The answer provided by cross-cultural psychology is very clearly supportive of the last of these three alternatives.

The concept of acculturation is employed to refer to «those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the *original culture patterns* of either or both groups» (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits 1936: 149). Indeed, these changes may imply the surface level of culture which is represented by language, clothing, food, art, rituals and traditions, as well as its core level, represented by cultural values that determine individual behavior (Hofstede 2001). Therefore, the concept of acculturation may refer to the cultural changes resulting from these group encounters, while the concepts of psychological acculturation and adaptation are employed to refer to the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation from a psychological, socio-cultural, and economic perspective (Berry 1974; 1992; 1997; 2001).

Accordingly, in plural society like the one we are currently living in, cultural groups and their individual members, in both the dominant and non-dominant relationships, must deal with the issue of how to acculturate (Lakey 2003). Strategies with respect to two major issues are usually worked out by groups and individuals in their daily encounters with each other. These issues are: cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance strived for) and contact and participation (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves).

From the point of view of non-dominant groups, people may comply with several strategies (assimilation, separation, marginalization), but when there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups, *integration* is the option. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network (Rudmin 2003). Of course, work experience plays a crucial role in this process of acculturation. To work means to have an identity as an active member of the cultural community, to gain social acknowledgement and status, to develop meaningful relationships outside the family network and thus to open up to the new culture (Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones 2006).

Unfortunately, despite a huge interest to cross-cultural issues that followed studies on the culture patterns (Hofstede 1984; Schwartz 1992), only a *very few*

studies on acculturation have been conducted in the field of human resource management and organizational behavior, neither focusing on the meaning attached to work by immigrants, nor investigating the implications of the need to change one's «work ethic» as a function of a different work-related culture and a better fit with the new organizational context (Taras, Rowney & Steel 2013). Typically, management scholars studied acculturation in relation to expatriation. However, in this case acculturation has been considered not as a change in cultural values or as a result of exposure to a foreign environment, but as acclimatization and adjustment to new cultures (Caligiuri 2000; Templer, Tay & Chandrasekar 2006). Also, several studies have been conducted on organizational acculturation following mergers and acquisitions (Larsson & Lubatkin 2001). In addition, very few studies have adopted a qualitative perspective to investigate discourses *of* rather than *about* immigrants and their acculturation experience (Verkuyten 2005).

The present study aimed to give a contribution to fill this gap, thus investigating immigrants' discursive accounts of their acculturation experience, both in the working as well as in the wider societal Italian context.

Methods

Participants to the study were 12 immigrants workers, 5 men and 7 women aged between 25 and 51 years, they all spoke Italian pretty good and used Italian to work. They came from different countries: Albanian, Romania, Scotland, France and Turkey. At the time of the study, they were all living in the province of Bari, in the south of Italy. Their permanence in Italy ranged between 3 years and 22 years. Their work occupations varied as well: two were employed in a cleaning company; one was a clerk in the bank; one a nurse for the elderly; one was running a tailor shop; one was employed in travel agency; one was employed in billboard company; one was a commercial agent; one a waitress; and two were English teachers in a private school.

Their educational level was quite good: six people got the bachelor, and six people got the master degree.

The *main aim* of the study was to investigate how immigrants workers employed in the Italian organizational context experienced the process of acculturation both in the workplace and in the wider social context, focusing on the discursive construction of the sense-making practices that guided their life experience. Therefore, in-depth narrative interviews were collected. The thematic areas investigated during the interview were referred to personal information (gender, age, country of origin, level of education, profession and since how many time were they staying in Italy), to information about their decision to visit Italy and to stay here to look for a work (about their expectations about the hosting country, about their difficulties in integrating and socializing in the workplace as well as in their daily routine, about their eventual plan to come back home one day), to information about their past and present occupational experience in Italy (if the current was the first occupational experience in Italy, their current feeling about the present occupational experience, their relationship with the manager and/or with

colleagues, about the culture of their organization if and to what extent did it facilitate their cultural integration). Interviews took place individually. They were audio-taped and transcribed after participants had having agreed upon it.

Discursive data were processed through Diatextual Analysis, a special address within Discourse Analysis, that is interested in catching the dynamic relationship between texts, contexts and interlocutors (Mininni 2005). Indeed, in a psycholinguistics perspective, the diatext could be conceived as the dialogue between the text enunciators and their context as it is perceived by them (Slama-Cazacu 1961). Yet, sense does not reside permanently within texts; rather it goes through them as a result of the conjoint action of the enunciators, who negotiate the frame of the situation (*stake*) which they are actively involved in. Pragmatically speaking, Diatextual Analysis suggests that sense can be caught by answering to three basic questions: *Who is saying what? Why does he/she is saying what? How does he/se is saying what?* Indeed, the diatextual scholar focuses attention on all the specific discursive markers that leave traces of *Subjectivity*, *Argumentation*, and *Modality* within texts, thus defining the so-called «SAM Model» (Mininni, Manuti, Scardigno & Rubino 2014).

The study and discussion

The first question aims at clarifying the way in which texts talk about their interlocutors. Then, the diatextual scholar traces back each discursive markers pointing out the dialogue between the enunciative positions that (through the text) let the identity profile of the ideal author and of the ideal addressee come out. The second question points out an axis of semiotic pertinence which allows discourse to articulate claims, that is to organize “meanings why”, and to give voice to reasons and aims which justify why one says something. The third question focuses on the articulation of the “*dictum*” and of the “*modus*” of discourse according to which meaning is shaped, that is how it acquires a *Gestalt* quality which can be evaluated as “good” or “bad”, “nice” or “naughty”, “effective” or “insipid”, etc.

Therefore, being aimed at reconciling «the way people are» with «the way people talk» (Manuti, Traversa & Mininni 2012; Manuti & Mininni 2013), Diatextual Analysis could be actually considered as a precious psycholinguistic tool to investigate how immigrants account for their personal experience of acculturation in the Italian context.

Making sense of cultural integration through discourse. Diatextual Analysis has allowed to investigate immigrants' life stories, by pointing out the interpretative repertoires they adopt to make sense of their identity and of the new hosting cultural context. Attention has been drawn on the discursive markers of subjectivity, argumentation and modality as suggested by the SAM model.

Agency construction was the first relevant discursive cue. The accounts about their coming to Italy were mostly featured in passive terms, as a decision made by their parents as to give a chance for the future to their children. Nonetheless, as signaled by the adverb «rightly» used as a meta-discursive cue in the following extract immigrants generally believed this decision was made for their own sake.

- 1) *«Well (...) my parents rightly decided to go to Italy after the 1990 revolution (...) we moved to Italy because my father, my father and my mother had also been several times in Italy on vacation and they liked it then because of the revolution our country needed to renovate itself (...) then because of this kind of difficulties, to avoid the management of change in Albania, my parents rightly decided to go abroad, to give us a better future».*

With reference to the accounts of their adult life story participants showed mostly an active involvement in the acculturation experience as highlighted by the use of *embrayage* strategies, personal pronouns («I», «me», «my», «mine» etc.) and active verbal forms. The discursive attempt to define one's self was dialogically mirrored by the recall to the others' identity (as e.g. through the discursive opposition «we versus you»). In this case, the process of acculturation was mainly described as a an effort toward cultural maintenance, that is as a separation, the acknowledgement of actual differences rather than as integration.

- 2) *«You need to find your way and to keep your own dignity in this country, I am what I am, a foreigner, I do my job and you cannot push me aside, looking to me with indifference, I am sorry to say these things but also you Italians you are not all the same».*

The discursive construction of acculturation sense-making mostly relied upon modality markers aimed at describing the cultural relationships between Italians and immigrants as the opposition between different cultural patterns: this option was discursively conveyed through the use of adversatives such as «but» as for instance in the next extract. Nonetheless, the opposition was often tinged with irony: participants often joked with some of the most largely diffused cultural stereotypes that actually influence encounters between indigenous and immigrants.

- 3) *«Rumanians do not go to the coffee shop if they do not have a job even if a coffee is very cheap «why should I spend this money if I can make coffee at home?». Italians think different, and it is not a polemic, everyone has his own way of thinking, little things make big things».*

Even if with comic tones - the immigrant in the following extract labeled it a joke - the issue of the difficulty in pronouncing and remembering a name that was different from the Italian culture and that did not have a correspondence in Italian language was very important. Italian people involved in the episode preferred to call the immigrant with Italian names (Giovanni first and Lino then). This argumentative move was not simply a practical choice it had to do with the perception of the cultural identity of the Tunisian immigrant, who needed an Italian name in order to be «recognized». This is a bizarre kind of cultural assimilation.

- 4) *«The joke is that when I went to work in the countryside they said to me “what's your name?”, I said “Lofti” and they “What, Lofti?”, “Noo, I will*

call you Giovanni”, “my name is Lotfi”, “No, no, oh shut up and let's begin working”, then I laughed (...) after some time I changed teamwork even in the countryside “what's your name?”, “Lotfi”, “ok Lotfi come here” but after having forgotten my name so many times they said to me «stop it I cannot remember your name now you are Lino» then wherever I went they changed my name since in Italian my name does not exist»

The argumentative line followed by participants to account for their perception of cultural difference was developed around the acknowledgement that «we are actually diverse».

- 5) *«I don't know how can I say we are actually diverse, we have a different culture for instance I have spent my Christmas holidays 7 times in Italy but I have found nothing how could I say no traditions»*

Even if the perception of cultural difference was the main trait of the narratives collected, most immigrants acknowledged that their life experience in Italy has been mostly successful, since it contributed to give them a new identity.

- 6) *«Since I rent my flat I have completed my plan I had everything also a job. I was satisfied, everything was well organized and I was feeling good» (laughing)*

These positive accounts were mostly accompanied by the acknowledgement that actual cultural integration could only be the result of a conjoint effort of immigrants, indigenous people and Italian organizations as to construct a shared meaning of cultural difference thus developing a common multicultural worldview (e.g. the use of the modal verb «you should»).

- 7) *«Companies should understand that in other countries people work differently from Italians therefore for a foreigner worker it could be very difficult to change routines and habits at work therefore Italians colleagues should be very very patient even if they do not speak English and/or German it could be useful to learn a little bit of our language just to help their foreigner colleagues».*

Conclusions

Results coming from the study presented above showed that culture may influence social behavior in two ways: through language and behaviors people may take with them one's own personal and group culture within the social and organizational networks where they and work live and in turn organizational culture meant as the whole of artifacts, values and basic assumptions that concretely shape «the way we do things around here» (Schein 1992) may have effect on people's expectations, beliefs and courses of action.

Yet, because of the great impact of cultural diverse workforce within current organizational contexts, to manage human resources in a cross cultural perspective becomes an even more urgent issue (Richard, Barnett, Dweyer, & Chadwick 2004).

Nonetheless, as showed by the discursive data taken into account in the study, from the point of view of immigrants acculturation is not a simple process. Theoretically speaking the analysis of the corpus of life stories collected showed a constant oscillation between separation and integration showing that acculturation is a reciprocal process involving not only immigrants adapting to the new culture but also indigenous people who had to accept difference.

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PSYCHOLINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF INDIVIDUAL TRAUMATIC MEMORY IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AMBIGUITY

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Abstract. The paper focuses on a psycholinguistic study of individual traumatic memory. Among psycholinguistic tools of the research are psychographological analysis, propositional analysis, and frame analysis. The results of psychographological analysis revealed differences between psycholinguistic representations of traumatic events as compared to psycholinguistic representation of neutral events in norm for written speech. Higher psychographological indices in representation of traumatic events show the emotional lability (high sentence length), low awareness and meaningfulness of the event (high quotient of logical coherence), and low motivation (small number of words in the narratives). Frame analysis allowed revealing distribution of traumatic events in the context of political and social ambiguity. Propositional analysis showed distribution of propositional elements in the narration of traumatic events, which express the meaning of traumatic events in a person's life (attitude); significance of external circumstances in the awareness of the traumatic event (external object); the main participants of the traumatic event (external argument); the narrator and his/her role in the traumatic event (internal argument); low importance of localization and chronological order of the traumatic event (context); the secondary (passive) role of narrator in the traumatic event and emphasizing the importance of the external circumstances (internal objects). The results of T-test show the differences in psycholinguistic representation of traumatic memory between two samples: respondents without PTSD (95 people) and respondents with PTSD and tendencies to PTDS (111 people). The narrators of the second sample (with PTSD) have higher indices of norm deviations in psychographological analysis, a higher percent of the attitude and internal argument in the predicate in propositional analysis, lower variety of frame clusters of traumatic events than narrators of the first sample (without PTSD).