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Sommario

ABSTRACT INSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS   To date institutional discourse has been little explored by analysts, who have rather focused on academic, corporate and professional settings in their discourse and genre analytical studies. This research analyzes the institutional discourse turned out in written form by three international organizations – the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization – in the form of periodical – mostly annual – reports detailing problematic areas, providing up-dates and illustrating programmes implemented by the International Community with a view to dealing with the great evils afflicting mankind, from extreme poverty and malnutrition, to ill health and commercial isolation. A corpus has been collected on the basis of typological and chronological criteria, running into approximately 2 million four hundred thousand tokens. It consists of three subcorpora, which coincide with the discursive production of each organization, starting in the late 1990s or early 2000s. Corpus collection has been stopped at the end of 2011. The research questions underlying the research are an exploration of the discursive strategies adopted in the texts under analysis, with a focus on their generic integrity and on the communicative purposes they serve. A discourse analytical approach integrating text grammar (Werlich 1983) and genre analysis (Bhatia 19993; 2004;

2010; Swales 1990), Critical Discourse Analysis (Dijk van 1998; 2000; Fairclough 1993; 1995a; 1995b; 2001; 2003) and functional–systemic grammar (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004), has been selected as the most appropriate for a complex object of research, which needs a multi-perspective study. Recourse to automatic queries has been combined with a close reading of texts in an attempt to uncover the ideational and the interpersonal dimensions of the meaning-making process (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004). To this end the corpus has been scanned through both quantitative and qualitative analytical tools, with a focus on the text type profile (Werlich 1983) and the alternation of propositions and proposals (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004), as well as on the handling of person (Benveniste 1966) and modality (Coates 1983; Palmer 1979; 1986). Texts have been examined from both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective aiming to indentify regularities and signs of change in the handling of discursive strategies, while the pattern of rhetorical moves emerging from texts in the three subcorpora has been analyzed with a view to delineating the generic integrity of institutional reports, whose interdiscursive nature can be explored through a genre analytical approach. Finally, a smaller corpus has been selected for a close-up on fine linguistic choices such as the handling of "semantic prosodies" (Sinclair 1991) and the transitive / ergative structures underlying the letter-like Forewords and Messages prefacing the reports proper, which have been chosen for closer scrutiny on account of their ability to epitomize the longer texts from which they have been extracted and because of the role they play along both the ideational and the interpersonal dimensions of the meaning-making process.

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