

WHEN ITALIANS TALK 'BUSINESS' THEY MEAN IT

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ABSTRACT: In business Italian the use of anglicisms is characterised by two main features. One is the growing proportion of non-adapted versus adapted loan words, the other is the significant role played by the media in introducing anglicisms into the Italian vocabulary. Translator trainees are often faced with the problem of identifying the correct contexts in which an English lexical item can be translated with an anglicism in Italian, particularly with polysemic words whose respective range of meanings in the source and target language tend to differ, as revealed by the definitions contained in monolingual dictionaries (Laviosa, 2003). An additional difficulty is that the context provided in the target language is either very limited or non-existent (see for example *Grande dizionario italiano*, De Mauro, 2000; or *Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, Zingarelli, 2003, respectively). The present study adopts a corpus-driven and a corpus-based approach to investigate the use of the lemma 'business' in an Italian-English comparable corpus of business language (COMIC-SALCA), as a first step towards a fuller analysis of this term as a *functionally-complete unit of meaning* (Tognini-Bonelli 1996a/b; 2000, 2001). The aim is descriptive and pedagogic.

KEYWORDS: bilingual comparable corpus, corpus-based methodology, corpus-driven methodology, anglicism, functionally-complete unit of meaning, colligation, collocation.

RESUMO: Na linguagem dos negócios em italiano, o uso de anglicismos tem duas características principais: uma é a

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crescente proporção de empréstimos não adaptados em relação aos adaptados; a outra é o papel relevante da mídia na introdução de anglicismos no vocabulário italiano. Os aprendizes de tradução com frequência se vêem diante do problema de identificar os contextos corretos em que um item lexical em inglês pode ser traduzido por um anglicismo em italiano, em especial com palavras polissêmicas cujas extensões de significado tendem a diferir nas línguas de partida e de chegada, conforme atestam as definições nos dicionários monolíngües (Laviosa, 2003). Outra dificuldade é que o contexto na língua de chegada é muito limitado ou até mesmo inexistente (vide, por exemplo, o Grande dizionario italiano, De Mauro, 2000; ou o Vocabolario della lingua italiana, Zingarelli, 2003, respectivamente). Este estudo adota uma abordagem baseada em corpus e uma abordagem direcionada pelo corpus para investigar o uso do lema 'business' num corpus comparável italiano-inglês da linguagem de negócios (COMIC-SALCA) como primeiro passo para uma análise mais completa desse termo como unidade de significado funcionalmente completa (Tognini-Bonelli 1996a/b; 2000, 2001). O objetivo é descritivo e pedagógico.

UNITERMOS: corpus comparável bilingüe; metodologia baseada em corpus; metodologia direcionada pelo corpus; anglicismo; unidade de significado funcionalmente completa; coligação; colocação.

Italian corpus studies

Corpora representative of general written and spoken Italian are widely used. Highly reputed is, for example, the programme of research led by the OLCI group (Osservatorio Linguistico e Culturale Italiano) coordinated by Tullio De Mauro in the Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio at the Università La Sapienza in Rome in cooperation with the Centro di Ricerche IBM-Italia. This work led to the creation of the *LIP* (Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato) (De Mauro et al., 1993). The predecessors of

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the *LIP* are the *LIF* (Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano scritto) (Bortolini et al., 1971) and the *VELI*, *Vocabolario elettronico della lingua italiana* published by the IBM-Italia in 1989. Another frequency list of written Italian is the *KBS*, created by the research group of the Università per Stranieri di Perugia (Katerinov et al., 1991). These sources of linguistic data led to a series of studies concerning, among others, the lexico-grammatical differences between written and spoken Italian (Piemontese, 1995; Serianni, 1994); the use of dialect in spoken Italian (Vignuzzi, 1994); the language of young people (Banfi, 1994); Italian regional varieties (Benincà, 1994); the distinctive features of the variegated typology of spoken Italian (Koch, 1994) and its phonological structure (Renzi, 1994). *Il Grande Dizionario italiano dell'uso* (De Mauro, 2000) is also based on corpus data.

Italian corpora have recently been the object of study in contrastive linguistics (Rossini Favretti, 1998a; 1998b; Tognini-Bonelli, 2000), language teaching methodologies (Laviosa, 1999), computational linguistics (Marinai, Peters, and Picchi, 1991; Peters and Picchi, 1995; 1998; Peters, Picchi, and Biagini, 2000) and translation studies (Zanettin, 1994; 1998; 1999; 2000; Gavioli, 1997b; 1999; 2000; Ulrych, 1997; Scarpa, 1999; Gavioli and Zanettin, 2000). New corpora are being created all the time; here is a sample:

- the CIBIT project (Centro Interuniversitario Biblioteca Italiana Telematica) led by Mirko Tavoni at the Università di Pisa, which aims to create an electronic library of texts representative of the period from the Middle Ages to 1900. Information is available at: <http://131.114.83.3/cibit/index.htm>
- Archivio italiano (CD-ROM containing a complete database on the commentary on the *Divina commedia*) (*Archivio italiano*, 2000)
- *Classici del pensiero europeo* (CD-ROM containing a sample of major philosophical, scientific and literary works by European authors) (*Classici del pensiero europeo*, 2000)
- *CORIS/CODIS* (respectively Corpus di Riferimento dell'Italiano Scritto and Corpus Dinamico dell'Italiano

Scritto), a corpus of 100 million words designed by CILTA at the Università di Bologna and available at: http://www.cilta.unibo.it/SITOCORIS_ITA.htm (Rossini Favretti, 2000)

The COMIC project

While corpus research in general language use is well established, the systematic creation of samples of Italian language in specialised domains such as business discourse is still, to date, a *desideratum*, particularly in translation studies, where business languages occupy a prominent position. According to recent estimates (Nida, 1997 in Scarpa, 2001), half of the total number of translations is in fact made up of informative texts produced in industry and commerce. The *COMIC* project (*COMmercial Italian Corpus*) was set up to fill this gap and provide a resource for carrying out lexico-grammatical analyses of commercial terms in descriptive and applied Italian translation studies. Initially compiled at the University of Salford thanks to a small grant from the British Academy, *COMIC* – a 200,000 word corpus of written business Italian available at: <http://ota.ahds.ac.uk> – is currently being enlarged at the Università degli Studi di Bari. At the time of writing it consists of informative articles from leading Italian newspapers and specialised journals, as well as works on commerce and economics and Business Studies text-books.

What do Italians mean when they talk ‘business’?

The most frequent anglicisms found in *COMIC* are ‘business’, ‘partner’, and ‘economy’. In the present article I will examine the patterning of ‘business’ with a view to making some preliminary suggestions on when it is possible to translate ‘business’ with ‘business’ from English to Italian. The corpora studied are *COMIC* and the English component of the *SALCA* English-Spanish corpus of business language compiled by the Spanish section

of the University of Salford in collaboration with the Universidad de Castellón and the Universidad de Granada (Fernández Prieto and Maroto Garcia, 2000).

Drawing on Tognini-Bonelli and Manca (in press), the principle informing my analysis is that in interlinguistic translation the equivalence between a loan word in the target language and the original word in the source language can be established at the level of functionally complete units of meaning, which one can identify by unveiling their respective patterns of collocation, colligation, semantic preference and semantic prosody.

The methodological procedure focuses primarily on colligation and consists of three phases. Firstly I will study the context of 'business' in Italian in order to identify the relationship between meaning and form. Secondly I will look at how the meanings found in Italian are formally realised in English. Thirdly, on the basis of the above evidence, I will put forward some hypotheses concerning when 'business' can be translated with a loan word in Italian. Unlike other approaches aimed at discovering translation equivalents, my study does not start from the analysis of the source language but from the target language. This is because the word being examined is the same in both languages. What varies is only its range of meanings, which is narrower in the target language as revealed by monolingual English and Italian dictionaries. It is therefore thought to be more 'cost effective' to focus on the fewer denotations existing in the target language and then retrieve the equivalents in the source language rather than examining all the English meanings of the original word and then finding those which are rendered in Italian with a loan word. Of course, in a follow-up study it would indeed be useful to find out how the other meanings of 'business' are rendered in Italian. I will briefly talk about this later in the concluding section.

COMIC-driven results

The colligational pattern of 'business', that is, the tendency to collocate with certain grammar words, disambiguates four principal meanings. The first is a generic denotation of 'business'

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denoting the world of productive and financial activities and commercial transactions as a whole. This is characterised by the structure [Prep. + Def. article + business] as in the following examples:

- *Arriva Giallo.it, il portale dei giovani - Esordio in Rete per il Giallo.it, il nuovo portale di Seat Pagine Gialle dedicato **al business**.*¹
- *I leader **del business**² possono – e devono – scegliere tra un mercato globale guidato solo da calcoli di profitto a breve termine e un mercato dal volto umano.*
- *In questi giorni, gli occhi **del business**³ sono tutti puntati sulla Repubblica Federale di Jugoslavia.*

Sometimes the same structure, particularly with the preposition *di* (of), is used to refer to a particular business which was mentioned earlier in the text as in the following citation:

- *Ma secondo i vertici di Carnival, i margini di crescita **del business**,⁴ specie in Europa, sono oggi amplissimi.*

The second meaning denotes a particular entity of the universal class of production and commerce, namely a specific economic activity, usually highly profitable. The related syntactic structures are [Prep. + Def./Indef. article + business + Prep. + (Def. Article)⁵ + (Adj.) + N] or [Def./Indef. Article + business + (Adv.) + Adj.] as exemplified below:

- *Questa decisione rappresenta il primo passo per la costituzione, in Italia, di un polo di eccellenza di livello mondiale **nel business delle microfibre**.*⁶

¹ Back translation of 'al business': 'to the business'.

² Back translation of 'del business': 'of the business'.

³ See note 3.

⁴ See notes 3 and 4.

⁵ The round brackets are used to enclose word classes that may or may not appear in the syntactic structure.

⁶ Back translation of 'nel business delle microfibre': 'in the business of the microfibre'.

- *Il 34% vede proprio nell'incontro fra Internet e i nuovi standard della telefonia (Umts e Gprs) una delle carte vincenti **del business su Internet**.*⁷
- *«I tecnici e i ricercatori giapponesi stanno per trasferirsi nel nostro Paese - sottolinea Santangelo – per operare congiuntamente con i colleghi italiani, un riconoscimento dei brillanti risultati finora conseguiti nello sviluppo **di un business di nicchia**⁸ ad alta specializzazione».*
- *A Bari e a Lecce (ecco perché perdere Semeraro sarebbe un errore gravissimo) non hanno bisogno di deputati, ma di aziende robuste compatibili **col business calcistico**.*⁹
- *«Quello delle crociere è **un business estremamente elastico**¹⁰ che richiede decisioni rapidissime in funzione di cambiamenti altrettanto repentini – afferma Arison – e per questo motivo non può essere escluso a priori nessuno sviluppo».*

This is the only meaning which is explained and exemplified in *Grande dizionario italiano* (De Mauro, 2000) as follows: 'attività economica, specialmente di grande rilievo, molto redditizia: *entrare in un grande business; il business delle telecomunicazioni*. Anche con riferimento a rilevanti attività illegali: *il business della droga*.'¹¹

The third meaning, that focuses on the concept expressed by the word 'business' rather than on a particular entity, is formally realised by the pattern [N + di + business]. It can be paraphrased as 'enterprising activity'. Frequent collocates are: *occasioni, possibilità, opportunità, modello/i*, and *aree* as illustrated in:

⁷ Back translation of 'del business su Internet': 'of the business on Internet'.

⁸ Back translation of 'di un business di nicchia': 'of a business of niche'.

⁹ Back translation of 'col business calcistico': 'with the soccer business'.

¹⁰ Back translation of 'un business estremamente elastico': 'a business extremely flexible'.

¹¹ Back translation: 'a high profile, highly profitable economic activity: *to enter a large business; the business of telecommunications*. Also with reference to significant illegal activities: *the drug business*'

- *I finanziamenti della comunità internazionale, benché non giganteschi, sono comunque altre **occasioni di business**.*¹²
- *Tra le nuove **opportunità di business**¹³ segnalate, infine, da Bettineschi, spiccano quelle nel settore delle telecomunicazioni mobili.*
- *Hitachi data systems scommette sui mercati emergenti. «Esistono – afferma Hishida – molte **possibilità di business**¹⁴ nel settore della televisione digitale e del video on demand».*
- *Eppure, i consumatori sono molto diffidenti e le imprese della New economy faticano a trovare validi **modelli di business**.*¹⁵
- *Il gruppo Toray è impegnato su diversi fronti: dalle fibre tessili alle materie plastiche all'elettronica, per citare solo le grandi **aree di business**.*¹⁶

The fourth meaning, denoting industrial or commercial firms, is realised by the structure [Plural Def. Article + business] as in the following line:

- *Solo il Mit ha 10mila studenti e spende 400 milioni di dollari l'anno in ricerca, il 75% dei quali governativi, e **i business**¹⁷ che nascono tra i muri dell'università vengono accuditi all'interno del laboratorio.*

Moreover, the word 'business' forms compounds such as 'e-business', 'business-to-business' (B2B), 'business-to-consumer' (B2C), 'showbiz', 'agribusiness', 'businessman'. Examples of set noun phrases are 'business class', 'business game', 'business school', 'core business', 'show business'. In the present study, however, I have focused on 'business' as a single lexical item.

¹² Back translation of 'occasioni di business': 'chances of business'.

¹³ Back translation of 'opportunità di business': 'opportunities of business'.

¹⁴ Back translation of 'possibilità di business': 'possibilities of business'.

¹⁵ Back translation of 'modelli di business': 'models of business'.

¹⁶ Back translation of 'aree di business': 'areas of business'.

¹⁷ Back translation of 'i business': 'the businesses'.

SALCA-based results

The meaning of 'business' denoting the universal class of commercial activities such as trading, buying and selling, manufacturing, arranging deals is characterised by the structure [Prep. + (Adj.) + (N) + business]:

- *The Year 2000 (Y2K) or Millennium Bug (MB) issue attracted considerable attention **in business**, government and the press.*
- *Management guru Peter Drucker recently argued that as we move **towards 21st century business**, "the greatest changes will be in distribution channels, not in new methods of production and consumption".*

The meaning denoting a specific economic activity is characterised by the structures [(Prep.) + Indef. Article/Possessive Adj. + business] and [(Prep) + Def./Indef. Article + N + business]:

- *At a second, broader level, Relationship Marketing is said to focus on the relationship **between a business** and its customer base, with the emphasis on customer retention.*
- *Would you say that the equipment using embedded systems plays a significant role in the running **of your business**?*
- *Does **your business** retain or employ any dedicated IT staff?*
- *The core **of our business** is packaged goods.*
- *Australia: ahead of the game Shell's **retail business** in Australia is facing new competition and falling prices.*
- *Mr Green put **the jewellery business** in voluntary liquidation.*
- *Spiegel's, Franklin Mint, and Sharper Image have built fortunes **in the direct-marketing mail-order and phone-order business**.*

Similarly to Italian, 'business' is pre-modified by a definite article when the writer refers to a particular business which was mentioned earlier in the text:

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- *Suppose the toaster manufacturer has invested 51 million in **the business** and wants to set price to earn a 20% ROI.*

The meaning denoting the concept of 'business' as 'enterprising activity' is realised by the structures [(Prep.) + business + N] or [(N) + Prep. + business]:

- *Whilst a chaotic environment is undoubtedly a fact **of business life**, for some firms simple economic rationalism may be the principal driver.*
- *All respondents stated that the need to ensure **business continuity** had legitimised the exploration of the supply chain.*
- *Changes in design are relatively expensive but can bring quite large **business gains**.*
- *their financial ability, **volume of business**, special requirement, location*

Similarly to Italian, 'business' in the plural conveys the concrete meaning of 'firms'. Syntactically it is the head noun of prepositional and noun phrases that is [Prep. + businesses] and [(N/Adj.) + businesses]:

- *With **OUT WATS**, they can use the phone call to sell directly to consumers and **[to] businesses**.*
- ***Businesses** may be deluded through a lack of understanding or ignorance of the actual measures required.*
- *BOC is a corporate giant. It operates in about 60 countries and has **four main businesses**: industrial gases, health care, vacuum products and distribution services.*

Suggested corpus-based equivalences

It is now possible to match the four meanings identified in the two languages starting from the most generic one denoting the universal class of particular types of business enterprises, then moving on to specific entities. The aim is to attempt to give

some guidelines on the contexts in which it may be appropriate to use 'business' as a loan word when translating English texts.

COMIC-SALCA equivalences for the lemma 'business'

I) The world of production, commerce and finance:	
Gli occhi del business sono tutti puntati sulla Repubblica Federale di Jugoslavia.	<i>The Year 2000 or Millennium Bug issue attracted considerable attention in business, government and the press.</i>
II) An economic activity, usually a highly profitable one:	
La decisione rappresenta il primo passo per la costituzione, in Italia, di un polo di eccellenza di livello mondiale nel business delle microfibre . Quello delle crociere è un business estremamente elastico che richiede decisioni rapidissime in funzione di cambiamenti altrettanto repentini.	<i>Spiegel's, Franklin Mint, and Sharper Image have built fortunes in the direct-marketing mail-order and phone-order business. Relationship Marketing is said to focus on the relationship between a business and its customer base.</i>
III) Enterprising activity:	
<i>Esistono molte possibilità di business nel settore della televisione digitale.</i>	<i>Whilst a chaotic environment is undoubtedly a fact of business life, for some firms simple economic rationalism may be the principal driver.</i>
IV) Industrial, financial or commercial firms:	
<i>I business che nascono tra i muri dell'università vengono accuditi all'interno del laboratorio.</i>	<i>BOC is a corporate giant. It operates in about 60 countries and has four main businesses: industrial gases, health care, vacuum products and distribution services.</i>

Conclusion and suggestions for further research

In Italian the loan word 'business' is polysemic, as revealed by corpus findings. It expresses at least four different meanings which represent a subset of the denotations of the original English word, as revealed by English monolingual dictionaries. Given that only some of these four meanings are recorded in monolingual Italian dictionaries and with little context, it is difficult for a translator to be fully aware of the range of uses of 'business' in Italian target texts (unless translators have access to bilingual corpora, either comparable or parallel). The present findings can assist the translator in at least two respects. First of all they suggest that the colligational patterns associated with the differ-

ent denotations of 'business' in English source texts can be used as clues for disambiguating the meanings that can be effectively expressed in Italian with an anglicism. Secondly, they show the way in which these senses are formally realised in Italian. This investigation is the first step towards a composite analysis which will involve the study of the Italian synonyms of 'business' as revealed by monolingual and bilingual dictionaries (such as *affari, commercio, trattativa, transazione commerciale, lavoro, ditta, azienda, impresa, società, attività commerciale, campo, ramo, settore*) with a view to suggesting an array of potential equivalents of this high frequency lexical item in English for business purposes. Such extended analysis will also take into account the collocation, semantic preferences and semantic prosody of these words so as to identify translation equivalents at the level of *functionally-complete units of meaning*. In order to do this, the preliminary findings obtained with *COMIC-SALCA* will be tested with a reference bilingual corpus, that is, *CORIS-COBUILD*. Another follow up to the present investigation will be to analyse all the meanings of the word 'business' which are not rendered in Italian with an Anglicism, with a view to unveiling their translation equivalents. In such study it will be fruitful to begin the analysis from an English reference corpus and then proceed with the investigation of a comparable Italian corpus.

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