This monograph traces American English from its origins to the present day. It describes the various waves of immigration from Britain and other countries and the development of the various recognized varieties of American English today. The book is structured in four chapters: the first one, which is introductory, briefly overviews the basic terminology and concepts which are subsequently taken for granted in the remaining sections. The second chapter summarizes the historical evolution of American English and its dialects, emphasizing the influence that the main settlers had on the development of its phonological system. The third chapter focuses on the differences between American English and British English. Finally, the fourth chapter, which deals with diatopic variation within American English, describes four of its main dialectal areas. A simplified description of some of the most common mistakes made by Italian speakers of English is also offered in Appendix 1, as a support for a contrastive approach to investigating American English.


This paper firstly examines the traditional linguistic status of movie language, as considered in literature. Movie language has been seen to be pre-fabricated speech, which is artificial, and of limited value, not being representative of language. Such a view, however, is shown in the paper to be impressionistic, rather than empirically based. It is recounted how the compilation of a corpus of transcriptions of movies, as opposed to scripts, and its examination via Biber’s Multi-Dimensional Analysis techniques, reveal that the language of movies is actually so similar, in the majority of its features, to spontaneous conversation, as to be, on the contrary, extremely representative of speech, and therefore worthy of consideration when studying spoken discourse. This scientific “defense” of the status of movie language overturns the view of movie language that has been held of over thirty years, and provides solid reasons for using movies in the classroom to teach features of spoken discourse.

The present paper aims to illustrate the applicability of corpus linguistics (CL) to audiovisual Translation (AVT) and to provide an empirical description of familiarizers in movie conversation as an example of such applicability. The paper is conceptually divided into two main parts: the first, which is introductory, illustrates the benefits that AVT can gain by adopting CL as a methodology, describes the modus operandi followed, and briefly introduces the linguistic items analyzed. The second part, which is more practical, first focuses on original American movies, by investigating the frequency, collocations, colligations and the lexical bundles of ‘guys’, ‘man’, ‘buddy’ and ‘dude’; and then focuses on dubbed Italian movies, by exploring the ways in which these familiarizers are translated. Results show that: the functions that familiarizers traditionally carry out in spoken interaction are also present in original movies; their use in more recent original movies is closer to spoken language than older movies; they tend to be less dubbed after the year 2000; and despite such cut, the function of the linguistic features used to dub them in more recent movies is closer to that of the original movies than those produced in older times.


Face-to-face and movie conversation are usually claimed to differ: the first is often described as the quintessence of spontaneity, whereas the second as the quintessence of artificiality. In fact, there are few empirical studies that demonstrate this and, in spite of what is generally maintained by the literature, empirical data, which are investigated here by applying Biber's (1988) Multi-Dimensional approach, prove that the involved production typical of face-to-face conversation also characterizes movie conversation. This resemblance has interesting implications for the teaching of spoken discourse as movies may be effectively used as a potentially valid source of material. The present research also illustrates an experiment with 3rd year Italian students of English that proves this potentiality especially in the learning of elisions, blends, repetitions, false starts, reformulations, discourse markers, and interjections.


Movie Language Revisited explores the linguistic nature of American movie conversation, pointing its resemblances to face-to-face conversation. The reason for such an investigation lies in the fact that movie language is traditionally considered to be non-representative of spontaneous language. The book presents a corpus-driven study of the similarities between face-to-face and movie conversation, using detailed consideration of individual lexical phrases and linguistic features as well as Biber’s Multi-Dimensional Analysis (1998). The data from an existing spoken American English corpus - the Longman Spoken American Corpus - is compared to the American Movie Corpus, a corpus of American movie conversation purposely built for the research. On the basis of evidence from these corpora, the book shows that contemporary movie conversation does not differ significantly from face-to-face conversation, and can therefore be legitimately used to study and teach natural spoken language.
The present paper highlights that, despite the primacy of spoken language in human society and the significant impact that corpora could have in teaching, both speech and corpora are still underestimated in the classroom. Teachers are perhaps unaware of the use to which corpora can be put, and students are generally given fewer explanations about features of spoken language than for written. In line with recent studies which have demonstrated that movie dialogs do not differ much from face-to-face conversation and that movies can be effective tools in the acquisition of spoken language features, some tasks are offered here to encourage learners to acquire the spontaneous features of spoken language through the use of movie corpora. The assumption behind the present tasks is the idea that movies are easier to access and transcribe, compared to the difficulties involved in building up spoken corpora, and they have a universal appeal that should not be underestimated in teaching.

Face-to-face and movie conversation are claimed to differ in terms of spontaneity (Taylor 1999, Sinclair 2004). Face-to-face conversation is generally considered the quintessence of spoken language as it is totally spontaneous (Chafe 1982, Tannen 1982, Halliday 2005, Biber et al 1999, McCarthy 2003, Miller 2006), while movie conversation is usually described as non-spontaneous in that it is artificially written-to-be-spoken, prefabricated speech (Pavesi 2005) and consequently not likely to present the features that characterize conversation (Sinclair 2004). The present paper investigates these two conversational domains in empirical data drawn from the Longman Spoken American Corpus, representing face-to-face conversation, and the American Movie Corpus (AMC), a corpus purposely built and manually transcribed to study movie language. Investigations employ corpus-driven criteria (Francis 1993, Tognini-Bonelli 2001) and Biber's (1988) Multi-Dimensional analysis approach, which applies multivariate statistical techniques, in order to study more than one statistical variable at a time. Preliminary results demonstrate that the linguistic features underlying involved production, non-narrative concern and situation dependent reference, typical of face-to-face conversation also characterize movie conversation. The resemblance between these two conversational domains has interesting implications for the teaching of spoken discourse as movies may be effectively used as a potentially valid source of material.

The present work is a collection of readings and language notes which sketch out a picture of North America and aim to stimulate interest in further investigations and studies. More specifically, Part 1 offers a series of selected passages introducing American Culture, while Part 2 focuses on American English as a language variety, comparing it to British English. In particular, aspects of spelling, lexis, grammar and pronunciation are accounted for. The examples given in the notes are taken from reference books, movies and from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).
Film translation is a challenging and creative process which requires the ability to decode the linguistic and cultural features of the source text and to transfer them appropriately and effectively into the target text. Differences between the Source Language/Culture and Target Language/Culture require translators to compensate for gaps in shared knowledge or linguistic features in order to achieve successful communication. Spoken discourse presents specific linguistic features (e.g. interjections, backchannels, attention signals, repetitions, reformulations, hesitators, discourse markers, vocatives, inter alia, cf. Halliday 1985, Biber et al. 1999, McCarthy 2003) which may not be readily transferred across languages. The present paper investigates whether the characteristics of spontaneous conversation are also to be found in movie language, an instance of non-spontaneous, prefabricated speech which is “written to be spoken as if it were not written” (cf. Gregory 1967 and Nencioni 1976) in order to sound authentic and if so, how they are translated in the dubbed version. In particular, the present paper focuses on the discourse markers you know and I mean. Their frequency of occurrence, semantics and pragmatics are investigated in a corpus of transcripts of dialogues from contemporary American movies directed from 2000 on and then compared to those found in the Italian dubbed versions of the same movies. The aim is to highlight the functional, rather than semantic, nature of discourse markers (cf. Bazzanella and Morra 2000) and to identify the strategies activated in the translation process to achieve an equivalent effect in the light of the constraints of the visual channel. A further aim is to verify whether the translation options provide evidence of universal features, such as simplification or normalization and leveling out, or whether they are influenced by cross-contact between the languages involved (cf. Baker 1998, Ulrych 1998). The analyses are corpus-driven (cf. Francis 1993, Tognini-Bonelli 2001) in that the theory is built up in the presence of the evidence found in the US spoken sub-corpus of the Bank of English and in the corpus of transcripts of American movies and their dubbed Italian versions.
This paper investigates the idiom principle realized as four-word phrases (4-grams) headed by prepositions in specialized corpora in English and Italian. Concentrating on at the end of, it reports that the collocates of at the end of regard time, and that apparently synonymic 4-grams are not used in the same contexts. It then explores realizations of at the end of in a specialized comparable corpus of Italian. Two findings emerge: firstly, that the most obvious equivalent, alla fine d’, occurs more frequently than in the English corpus; secondly, this n-gram is frequently used, but has weaker collocational relations, and several synonymic 3-grams share its collocates. This invites contrastive research on lexical variation and repetition and on the strength of collocations of multi-word units in English and Italian. Lastly, the paper recounts an experiment with students who gained awareness of language by concentrating on phraseology in comparable corpora.


Several interesting observations have been made about the multiple facets of get. Interest has however mainly been focused on the degree of difference between structures such as get passive and be passive (cf. Hatcher, 1949; Gee, 1974; Haegeman, 1985; Collins, 1996, inter alia). Less frequently, contrastive studies between get and other verbs like have (cf. Kimball, 1973; Johansson and Oksefjell, 1996; Gilquin, 2003), give (cf. Cattel, 1984), become (cf. Quirk et al. 1991), be and keep (cf. Johansson and Oksefjell, 1996) have been put forward in order to investigate some specific features of get. Little attention seems to have focused on what this study calls the get-unit, namely, the framework determined by get and the environment in which it occurs. The aim of the present paper is to explore the syntax and semantics of the get-unit with particular regard to the functions it displays in spoken language (both spontaneous and written-to-be-spoken – cf. Gregory 1967, Nencioni 1976, Rossi 2002, Pavesi 2005).

The primary aim is to demonstrate that, despite its syntactic versatility (cf. also Quirk et al. 1991 and Biber et al. 1999), get can be depicted semantically as a general result marker, on the basis of the resultative quality of the sentences in which it locates. Secondly, the paper aims at providing an explanation for these semantic similarities. Hence I suggest two interrelating and complementary meanings on which the semantics of the get-sentence may exclusively depend: the core and the peripheral meaning of the get-unit. The underlying theory is based on Lindstromberg (1991) and Johansson and Oksefjell (1996). Lindstromberg (1991:285) suggests that get should not be seen as a polysemic verb in the common sense of the term, but as a verb which displays different shades of meaning which stand in a non-complex, semantically motivated relation to each other. Johansson and Oksefjell (1996:73) maintain that despite the variety in syntax and semantic content, there appears to be a prototype to which all get constructions conform more or less closely. Thirdly, the paper investigates whether the features and functions which the get-unit displays in spontaneous spoken language are reflected in written-to-be-spoken conversations. Particular attention is focused on the language of movies. The analyses, which are based on authentic data retrieved from the US spoken subcorpus of the Bank of English (i.e. about 30 million words) and on transcripts of dialogues from American movies produced from 2000 on, are conducted according to both corpus-based and corpus-driven methodologies (cf. Tognini-Bonelli 2001): first, the uses of get described in various reference grammars (cf. Quirk et al. 1991 and Biber et al. 1999) are verified and illustrated by data from the Bank of English US spoken subcorpus; secondly, movie transcripts are used as a database from which occurrences of get are retrieved, and the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of the get-unit are explored.
This paper is an empirical investigation of the linguistic features characterizing American face–to–face and movie conversation, two domains which are usually claimed to differ in terms of spontaneity. Natural conversation is, indeed, considered the quintessence of the spoken language for it is totally spontaneous, whereas movie conversation is usually described as non–spontaneous, being artificially written–to–be–spoken and, thus, not likely to represent the general usage of conversation. However, empirical evidence from Multi–Dimensional and mono–analyses shows that the two conversational domains do not differ to a great extent. The claim that movie language has a very limited value because it does not reflect natural conversation (Sinclair 2004:80) is thus confuted through quantitative and qualitative analyses. The major implication is that movie language can be regarded as a potential source for teaching and learning spoken language features.

The first article, *English Pronunciation: where to start?* focuses on the importance of finding a model and of learning the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to reproduce the correct sounds corresponding to that chosen model. The second article, *Phonetics, Phonology and the Organs of Speech*, offers a short overview on how sounds are produced, transmitted and perceived. The aim of this section is to teach the basics of the speaking process and the proper terminology related to it. Special emphasis will be given to articulatory phonetics and the organs of speech: common mistakes made by non-native speakers of English are usually due to the mis-use of the organs of speech which are spontaneously trained to the movements of the native language. Keeping this in mind, the following six articles will then focus on the standard sounds of British English and the common mistakes usually made by Italian speakers when speaking English. The main topics are: *consonant sounds* (third article), *common mistakes related to consonants* (fourth article), *vowel sounds* (fifth article), *common mistakes related to vowels* (sixth article), stress, intonation and *common mistakes related to stress and intonation* (seventh article). The eight article, *British English vs. American English*, compares the two major standards of the world: after learning the main basics of phonetics and phonology, the student is taught the main phonological differences concerning British English, which is traditionally the main standard taught in Europe, and American English, which, nowadays, is the most widespread English variety of the world.