PHILANTHROPIC DIRECT MAIL IN AN ENGLISH/ ITALIAN PERSPECTIVE: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY

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Abstract. *This article illustrates the generic move structure of Italian philanthropic fundraising letters as compared to their US American counterpart described by Upton (2002). The purpose is to highlight similarities and differences in an intercultural perspective, and show the main ways in which nonprofit organizations in Italy and the United States structure and use written texts to persuade their donors to give. For his study of fundraising letters as a genre, Upton (2002) used the ICIC Fundraising Corpus, a large electronic corpus of philanthropic texts which has been built and widely described by ICIC scholars (e.g. Upton & Connor 2001; Upton 2002; Connor & Gladkov 2004). For the purposes of the present study, an Italian corpus of Italian direct mail letters was built, with a view to comparing the Italian generic discourse features of philanthropy with the American ones as they emerge from an analysis of the ICIC Fundraising Corpus.*

Key words: *genre analysis, corpus linguistics, nonprofit organizations, English, Italian*

1. INTRODUCTION

The language of fundraising has fascinated many scholars worldwide as a type of language that persuades, involves and informs readers at the same time: Myers (1991: 41) described it as "the most basic form of scientific writing"; Bhatia (1998: 100) portrayed it as "one the most dynamic illustrations of form-function correlation, second only to literary genres"; finally, Connor & Upton (2003: 71) said that "fundraising texts are fascinating: they persuade, inform, request, catch one's eye, wrench one's heart, and twist one's arm in a tidy attractive package", referring to what is probably the most widespread text type that nonprofit organizations (henceforth, NPOs) resort to in order to contact their donors and prospects: direct mail fundraising letters.

This paper illustrates the generic move structure (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993) of Italian philanthropic fundraising letters in comparison with their American counterpart described by Upton (2002). The aim of the study is to highlight similarities and differences in an intercultural perspective, in order to show the main ways in which NPOs in Italy and the United States write and use direct mail letters to persuade their donors to give. For his own study of fundraising letters as a genre, Upton (2002) used the ICIC Fundraising Corpus, a 3 million-word electronic corpus of philanthropic texts which has been assembled and widely described by ICIC scholars in a variety of conferences, public events and publications (e.g. Upton & Connor 2001; Upton 2002; Connor & Gladkov 2004). For the purposes of the present study, an Italian electronic corpus of Italian direct mail letters has been built, with a view to comparing the Italian discourse of philanthropy with the American one as it emerges from an analysis of the ICIC Fundraising Corpus. The Italian corpus has been named SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, after the research institute (Department of Interdisciplinary Studies on Translation, Languages and Cultures, SITLeC, University of Bologna at Forlì, Italy) where the project was initiated in 2002. In this time span, several features of the Italian language of philanthropic fundraising have been analyzed in depth with these corpus data, including rhetoric (Fusari 2005), genre (Fusari 2008), and translatability of culture-specific concepts (Fusari 2007; 2009)

Before going on to analyze the main generic features of philanthropic direct mail in Italy, some background information will be provided concerning fundraising there. Despite the global economic downturn, the Italian philanthropic sector is growing constantly, partly due to recent privatizations which have deprived the state of its key role in most sectors of public interest, including health, education, arts, transport, services for children and the elderly. Fundraising for NPOs is therefore an emerging sector: research in Italy has started relatively recently (in the 1990s) and there is still much to be done and said about what economists call "the Italian way of raising philanthropic funds" (Melandri & Zamagni 2001). However, despite recent interest in NPOs by academic researchers, philanthropic fundraising is far from being a new concept in Italy: indeed, fundraising practices are known to have been taking place since the Renaissance, a period which was characterized by patronage of arts and by rich families establishing charitable institutions to help the poor and possibly to "score points" to go to Heaven. However, over the years, the state took a more important role in the management of public issues, and philanthropy came to be seen as a matter of solidarity, religious piety and compassion towards the needy: in short, the idea that philanthropy could be an investment to make the world a better place tended to disappear as the state increased its influence on most sectors of public interest. Only recently have issues of "ethical added value" and "stewardship" (Melandri 2004) begun to be discussed in Italy, whereas "venture philanthropy" and "engaged grantmaking" (Emerson 2004) are focused on only in specialized conferences and symposia, and are not yet in use in the daily practice of NPOs.

As a consequence, many Italian NPOs still tend to communicate with their donors by emphasizing compassion, solidarity, and principles of the Roman Catholic religion rather than public interest and investment in a better society that people can build through their collective effort. Extralinguistic differences, i.e. differences between the role, scope and nature of the philanthropic sector in Italy and the United States, are therefore quite important for this study. In the course of this article, we shall try to show how these differences are reflected in language.

2. THE SITLeC FUNDRAISING CORPUS: DESIGN AND TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The SITLeC Fundraising Corpus contains 108 philanthropic direct mail fundraising letters (about 62,000 words) in Italian. The dimensions of this corpus might seem to be rather limited as compared to those of the ICIC Fundraising Corpus[1]: a prominent expert of direct mail marketing and fundraising, Geoffrey W. Peters, recently observed[2] that the average donor in the United States receives hundreds of solicitations a year, mostly by mail. No official data exist about Italy, but previous research (Fusari, 2005: 5) indicates that the average Italian donor receives about 35 a year. This explains why an Italian corpus of philanthropic direct mail letters will necessarily be smaller and will take longer to build than its American counterpart.

For this study, about 100 Italian NPOs were selected: by "national" is meant organizations that work throughout the country, as well as international NPOs that have at least one national office in Italy. These organizations were contacted through a questionnaire sent to their national fundraising offices together with a request for material and a privacy disclaimer that the Italian privacy law obliges Italian researchers to send to their contacts if they intend to use whole texts for research purposes. The response rates from different fields within the non-profit sector are illustrated in Plate 1:
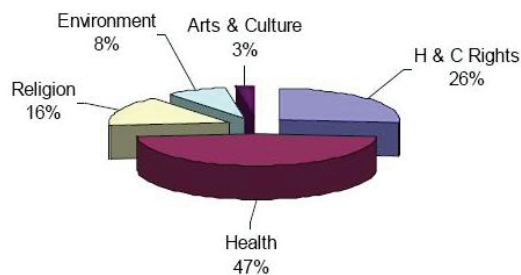
As can be seen, the majority of respondents are healthcare organizations (47%) followed by human/ children's rights[3] (26%), religious (16%), environmental (8%) and artistic/ cultural (3%) NPOs.

Plate 1 Response rates from different fields in the nonprofit sectors

Plate 2 illustrates the percentages of letters in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, once again presented by field of interest:

Plate 2 above shows that letters sent by religious and artistic/ cultural NPOs are rather under-represented in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus: a possible explanation is that religious organizations usually
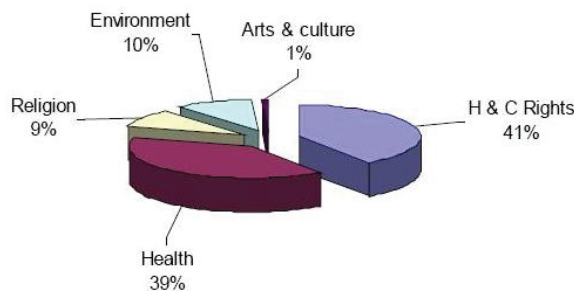
Plate 2 Percentage of direct mail letters by field

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[1] The direct mail partition of the ICIC Fundraising Corpus contains about 200,000 words (http://www.iupui.edu/~icic/corpushome.htm).
[2] Geoffrey W. Peters, President of the Maryland-based direct marketing international consultancy firm *Creative Direct Response*, private communication.
[3] Human rights and children's rights organizations are grouped together because many human rights NPOs reported in their questionnaires that they also raise funds specifically to support children; children's rights organizations, on their part, reported that they raise funds to support entire families and villages, not just the children.

prefer face-to-face fundraising (e.g. in parishes), and arts & culture is still a largely state-run sector, so there are fewer artistic and cultural private institutions, including nonprofit ones, in Italy in general.

Concerning corpus design, some major differences between the ICIC Fundraising Corpus and the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus must be highlighted. The ICIC Fundraising Corpus has been coded by using a special mark-up system, developed by the ICIC itself, to indicate nonprofit field, NPO name, and NPO size (in the header of each file), as well as rhetorical moves and other discourse features (in the text of each letter); by contrast, the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus was annotated with a standard mark-up language known as Text Encoding Initiative-XML (or TEI-XML), the same mark-up system adopted by the British National Corpus Consortium at Oxford University Computing Services[4]. TEI-XML is quite widespread in Europe and it allowed tagging of the generic move structure of all the Italian fundraising letters in the corpus during the course of a preliminary close reading. Other features of discourse were annotated, such as markers of formality, presence of honorific titles to address the donors, and graphic information such as use of color, bold characters and presence of pictures.

Table 1 shows an excerpt from an XML-tagged fundraising letter compared to one from the ICIC Fundraising Corpus:

Table 1 ICIC Fundraising Corpus and SITLeC Fundraising Corpus: the mark-up

ICIC Fundraising Corpus (ICIC mark-up)	SITLeC Fundraising Corpus[5] (TEI-XML mark-up)
<102MTL001> <296> [begin iii] Dear FIELD(contact person), [end iii] <begin 2> My name is Joe Cooper. Last year I was so proud to be named student of the year that I thought my chest was going to burst when I was on stage. I learned first hand what GILL is all about, giving to others unselfishly. This year at the GILL Recognition Party on April 18, 1998 there was a silent auction sponsored by the students. <end 2> <begin 6> We as students thank you for donating FIELD(we got 98) for the auction. <end 6> [Letter continues]	<salute><rs type="formal"/> Egregio Signor GIACOMO</salute> </opener> <seg type="move1"><hi rend="colour">Nel mondo </hi> ogni <hi rend="colour">30 minuti</hi> un <hi rend="colour">bambino</hi><lb/> si ammala di <hi rend="colour"> neuroblastoma </hi> <lb/> Probabilmente Lei non è a conoscenza di questa realtà e di quanti bambini ne soffrono: il Neuroblastoma è un tumore dell'infanzia, di cui purtroppo poco si parla, che origina dal sistema nervoso simpatico e alla diagnosi si presenta principalmente con metastasi a scheletro e midollo. Come Lei ben sa questo significa avere poche speranze di guarigione. Il Neuroblastoma è oggi la prima causa di morte per malattia in età prescolare.</seg> [Letter continues]

At first, the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus mark-up system might seem to be more difficult to read than the ICIC one: in fact, TEI-XML makes it easier for machines to read and process the files, and there are even programs specifically designed to read corpora in XML. One of these programs is Xaira, the XML Aware Indexing and Retrieval Architecture developed by Oxford University Computing Services: while Xaira is optimized to be used with the British National Corpus, it can index and read any other corpus of well-formed XML-encoded texts[6]. The main reason why Xaira was chosen for parsing generic moves in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus is that this program can not only count generic moves automatically – provided they have been previously tagged in XML – but it can also calculate the frequency of any word within a particular move, thus showing the moves in which a particular keyword is most frequent. Despite its relative complexity, Xaira allows linguists to retrieve the tags in a corpus in a much more direct way than can simple concordancing software packages like Wordsmith Tools, although Wordsmith and other concordancers are still very useful for extracting wordlists and keyword lists, and for performing lexical analysis on "raw" (i.e. untagged) corpora of texts.

3. THE MOVE STRUCTURE OF ITALIAN DIRECT MAIL LETTERS

Based on a close reading of all the texts in the corpus, the basic move structure of Italian direct mail letters appears to be as follows:

1. Introduce the problem
   a) General problem
   b) Specific problem (e.g. story of a beneficiary)

2. Ask for a gift
   a) Ask for a specific sum (in €)
   b) Ask for membership card renewal
   c) (rare) Ask for other forms of support (e.g. volunteering)

3. Describe activities of NPO
   a) Activities currently performed by NPO
   b) Goals of future NPO efforts

4. Pressure tactics
   a) Common indignation at people who "do nothing"
   b) Appeal to "act now"
   c) Negative consequences of not giving

5. Offer incentives
   a) Offer of participation in special programs (e.g. child sponsorship)
   b) "Freebies" (stickers, cards, board games, etc.)
   c) Tax incentives (rare)

6. Express gratitude
   a) Current financial support
   b) Future financial support

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[6] http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/rts/xaira/

    7. Reinforce key argument (usually in PS)
      a) Repetition of appeal to give
      b) Contacts
      c) Tax benefits
      d) Inserts
      e) Invitation to volunteer (rare)

In addition to these moves, a "preliminary" move was identified which, when present, always comes first ("Move 0 – Reference previous contacts"): this move only appears in follow-up letters, most typically when the prospect has not replied to previous solicitations. The presence of Move 0 thus qualifies the letters that contain it as being addressed to potentially lapsed donors.

This structure may be usefully compared with Upton's (2002) list of generic moves in the American letters of the ICIC Fundraising Corpus:

1. Get attention
   a) May include pleasantries
   b) Includes comments made before initial greeting

2. Introduce the cause and or/ establish credentials of organization
   a) General problem/need indicated (e.g. "homelessness")
   b) Specific problem/need highlighted (e.g. "Sarah is a homeless single mother")
   c) Successes of past organization efforts highlighted
   d) Goals of future organization efforts outlined

3. Solicit a response
   a) Financial
     - stating benefit of support to the need/ problem (who/ how it helps)
     - asking for pledge/ donation
     - reminding of past support to encourage future
   b) Other
     - contact organization to volunteer/ ask questions/ give comments

4. Offer incentives
   a) Tangible (e.g. a mug)
   b) Intangible (e.g. "you will feel good knowing you have helped")

5. Reference insert
   a) Brochure
   b) Pledge form
   c) Return envelope

6. Express gratitude
   a) Past financial or other support
   b) Current/ future financial or other support

7. Conclude with pleasantries

Since Move 0 of the Italian corpus (Reference previous contacts) is only present in follow-up letters, especially those that are addressed at a minority of donors who have not renewed their support, the basic structure seems to consist of 7 moves in both corpora, and there are only minor differences in move order. However, some moves exist in the

Italian letters and not in the American ones and vice versa, a mismatch that can be explained on two levels. Firstly, it is important to look at the data from a quantitative viewpoint, especially by verifying move length and move frequency in both corpora and comparing them; the second, and perhaps more important stage is a qualitative discussion of these findings based both on the reading of lines taken from concordances, and on the role, nature and scope of the nonprofit sector in the two countries. This is a procedure that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies, by having corpus analysis "assist" traditional discourse and genre analysis (Flowerdew 2005; Partington 2003, 2006, 2008). Researchers in this field obviously have to be very careful not to privilege their own intuitions and qualitative explanations at the expense of evidence coming from the data. In fact, the crucial element for this methodology to work is widely considered to be the need to look at the data first, and to suggest possible qualitative explanations only after a clear picture of quantitative corpus data has emerged (Partington et al. 2004).

4. FREQUENCY AND LENGTH OF MOVES

Plates 3 and 4 I illustrate and compare the relative frequency and length of each move in the SITLeC and ICIC Fundraising Corpus respectively.

Move 2 (Ask for a gift) is the most frequent (22% of total), with Move 3 (Describe activities of NPO, 20% of total) a close second. The moves for gift solicitation and description of activities/ cause are the most frequent in the ICIC Fundraising Corpus as well, as illustrated in Plate 4:
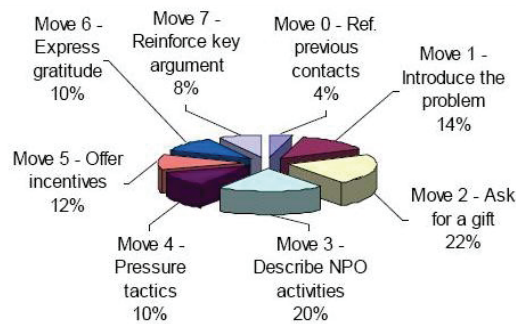

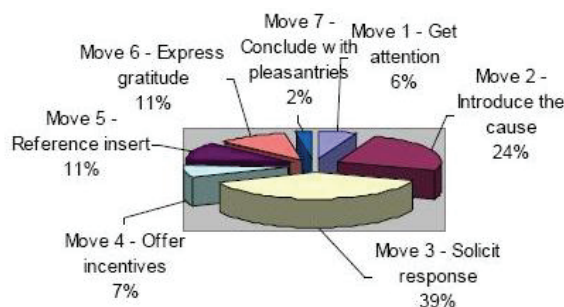Plate 3 SITLeC Fundraising Corpus move frequency

Plate 4 ICIC Fundraising Corpus move frequency

In the American corpus, Move 3 (Solicit a response) is by far the most frequent (39%), followed by Move 2 (Introduce the cause, 24%): another term of comparison with the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus is the frequency of Move 6 (Express gratitude), which is almost the same in the two corpora (10% in the Italian corpus and 11% in the American one). Major differences occur in the other moves, partly due to the presence of three extra moves in the Italian corpus, i.e. Move 0 for follow-up letters, Move 7 (Reinforce key argument), and Move 4 (Pressure tactics), to which we return.

If we look at move length in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus (Plate 5), we will realize that

Move 1 (Introduce the problem) and Move 3 (Describe activities of NPO), the longest moves, both average 145 words. Interestingly, Move 2 (Ask for a gift), which comes first in order of frequency, comes only fifth in terms of length (54.2 words on average). This relative brevity may be connected with the fact that Italian letters also contain a move for Pressure Tactics (61.2 words on average) and a move for Reinforcing key argument (57.8 words on average), where the appeal to give is usually repeated.
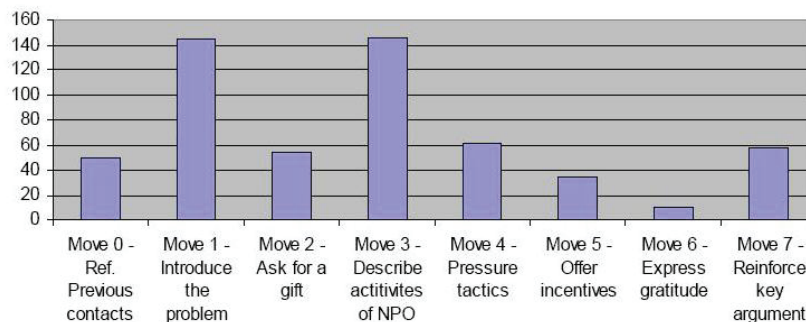

Plate 5 SITLeC Fundraising Corpus move length (in word tokens)

A comparison between these data and those from the American ICIC Fundraising Corpus (Plate 6) shows that Move 2 (Introduce the cause) and Move 3 (Solicit a response), which we have seen to be the two most frequent moves, are also the longest ones: however, Move 2 (Introduce the cause), which was the second in order of frequency, is here by far the longest move (150 words on average), with Move 3 (Solicit a response) a distant second (about 48 words).
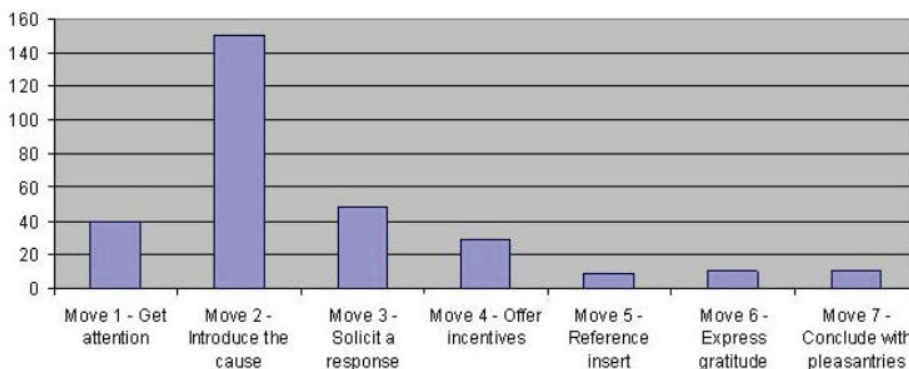

Plate 6 ICIC Fundraising Corpus move length (in work tokens)

If we compare Plate 5 and Plate 6, the most obvious feature is the fact that Italian moves are typically longer: this is in agreement with the length of letters, which averages 580 words in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus as against 400 in the ICIC Fundraising Corpus. However, there are some exceptions: the length of Move 6 (Express gratitude) is about 10 words in both corpora, and the move "Introduce the cause", which is functionally quite similar to "Describe activities of NPO" in Italian, is almost the same length as its Italian counterpart (150 vs 145 words).

5. DISCUSSION

Starting from the title of so-called "equivalent" moves in the two corpora, one of the most striking differences is the more precise nature of the "support" requested by Italian NPOs: this is why the solicitation move was called "Solicit a response" in English and "Ask for a gift" in Italian. Indeed, whereas American NPOs in the ICIC Fundraising Corpus systematically ask for financial *or other* support, Italian NPOs tend to ask just for financial support – only rarely do they introduce the subject of volunteering. The reason lies most probably in the fact that Italian and American NPOs use different strategies for volunteer recruitment: in particular, Italian NPOs do not typically use direct mail to involve new volunteers[7], but prefer to offer volunteer opportunities in newsletters, newspaper ads, specific job offers and so on.

Another interesting consideration that emerges from a comparison between the move structures of direct mail letters in the two corpora is that Italian NPOs seem to be unable to distinguish between incentives and inserts: whereas the letters from the ICIC Fundraising Corpus have one specific move for inserts (Move 5) and one for incentives (Move 4), especially tax incentives, the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus has only one move for both (Move 5). This is connected with the fact that tax incentives for citizens who give to charitable causes are rather limited in Italy[8], so Italian NPOs prefer to offer other types of incentives, such as freebies or, for major donors, the possibility to participate in special programs, like child sponsorship. The lack of emphasis on tax incentives has clear implications for the role of donors: self-interest is still largely seen as a "taboo word" in the language of philanthropic fundraising in Italian, and notions such as "venture philanthropy" and "stewardship" do not even have an equivalent in the Italian language (Fusari 2007). In fundraising materials, Italian donors are thus largely represented as unselfish people who give without any personal advantage for themselves: this image of donors emerges quite clearly if we look at Move 4 (Pressure Tactics), which does not have a counterpart in the American corpus.

The presence of "pressure tactics" in Italian philanthropic direct mail letters seems to contradict Bhatia's (1997; 1998) argument according to which pressure tactics are not needed in philanthropic direct mail, as opposed to commercial direct mail, given "the assumption that we have self-interest in the establishment and maintenance of community values" (Bhatia 1997: 39). Bhatia (1993: 54-55) defines pressure tactics as "tactics to prompt the already half-inclined customer to take a quick decision … this is generally realized in the form of an offer of some additional savings and gains if the customer decides to buy the product or use the service before a specified deadline". In the framework of Italian philanthropic direct mail, this definition might seem to blur into Move 5 (Incentives and Inserts), as can be seen in the following example, in which an Italian NPO references the insert that it has attached to its letter:

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[7] In 2002, when the first version of the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus was compiled, an attempt to retrieve a concordance of the word "volontario" (volunteer) and its derivatives within Move 2 in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus would have found only 6 matches. After the latest update (2008), the number of occurrences of "volontario" within Move 2 had risen to 20, to include explicit requests for volunteer services. Therefore, patterns of volunteer recruitment via direct mail in Italy might be changing. A thorough description of volunteer recruitment strategies in Italy and the United States is offered by Ellis & Melandri (2003).

[8] http://www.agenziaentrate.gov.it/ilwwcm/resources/file/eb94ac4f2c82ee6/guida_erog_fiscali.pdf

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        ...La Sua Tessera di Socio di [NPO] riassume queste
   vittorie e tante altre. Ma su quella Tessera ci sono anche tutte
   le cose che dobbiamo ancora fare insieme. Le battaglie, le denunce
    e la nostra indignazione — la mia e la Sua, vero? — per tutti
            coloro che restano a guardare senza far nulla....⁹
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In fact, this is a moral condemnation of those who do not give, much more than it is an incentive for those who do give. "Pressure tactics" as they have been identified in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus thus consist in highly emotional appeals to give, which typically focus on the negative consequences of not giving (e.g. "se non si agisce subito, il loro grido di sofferenza resterà inascoltato/ if we don't act now, their [the beneficiaries'] cry of suffering will remain unheeded"), and on the urgency of the gift (e.g. "mi perdoni se insisto, ma la situazione è disperata/ I apologize for urging you but the situation is desperate"). In rare but interesting cases, the appeal in Move 4 of the Italian corpus borders on face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson 1987), as in the example below:

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       ...Come milioni di altre persone nel mondo, vittime
   dell'indifferenza e della disinformazione, anche lei non ha
          reagito a questa situazione catastrofica...¹⁰
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in which – by conventional implicature – the donor is accused of being indifferent and misled because s/ he has not renewed his/ her membership card in time.

The rhetorical strategy exemplified in these concordance lines is conceptually similar to *pathos* appeals in fundraising letters as described by Connor & Gladkov (2004). The most widespread category of *pathos* appeals in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus is the one that Connor & Gladkov refer to as "charged language": "the appeal that usually arouses emotions of anger and indignation ... Such words as 'misuse', 'destruction', 'harsh', 'deadly', 'lose … forever' are charged with negative emotions. While employing such an 'angry' description, the writer attempts to make the audience experience *relevant* emotion. Consequently, being in a relevant emotional condition, the readers might take a relevant action" (Connor & Gladkov 2004: 278).

If we compare Connor & Gladkov's examples with what we have in Move 4 (Pressure Tactics) of the Italian letters, there seems to be a crucial difference in what "a relevant emotion" is for Italian and American NPOs (Table 2).

Although the wording looks quite similar, the emotions that the writer is trying to arouse in the right-hand column (SITLeC Fundraising Corpus) are systematically negative: in the first example, the NPO is implying that if the donor (a company) is unwilling to give, it will thereby not be upholding the values of Christmas, which is by far the most heartfelt event of the year in Italy, a country where the Roman Catholic tradition is very important for the majority of the population; in the second example, the NPO is trying to arouse feelings of guilt through the contrast between the happy childhood of the donor's children and the misery of children in poor countries; in the last example, the writer implies that the reader will be directly responsible for the gloomy environmental future of the planet over the next generations ("il tuo [futuro], ... quello dei tuoi figli e dei tuoi nipoti") if s/he does not give.

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⁹ "... your [NPO] membership card symbolizes all these victories and many others. But the card also represents all the things that we still need to do together. Battles, campaigns, and our indignation – mine and yours, right? – at all those who don't do anything...", my translation.

¹⁰ "... like millions of other people who have fallen victim to indifference and disinformation, you too have failed to react to this catastrophic situation...", my translation.

Table 2 Pathos appeals in American and Italian fundraising letters

ICIC Fundraising Corpus (my italics)	SITLeC Fundraising Corpus (my italics)
Please, make a tax-deductible gift to Community Centers of Indianapolis in 1999, and know that <company> is *playing an important part in meeting the needs of its community.*	Confidiamo molto che, quest'anno, la Sua Azienda vorrà affiancare e potenziare l'attività dell'[NPO], *così interpretando nel modo più elevato la tradizione del Natale*[11].
Do you remember *how wonderful and how proud you felt* in 1980 when the young United States Hockey Team beat the powerful Soviet Team 4-3, and then went on to beat Finland 4-2 for the gold ...	Ricorda quand'era un bambino?.... Guardando negli occhi i nostri bambini felici *non posso non vedere gli occhi pieni di tristezza, le espressioni di paura dei bambini che soffrono*[12].
When it comes to the misuse and destruction of our natural areas, reality is not only harsh, it is deadly. *Once they are developed or altered, and their fragile ecosystems are disrupted, we lose them forever.*	[NPO] opera per il futuro di tutti, e quindi per il tuo, per quello dei tuoi figli e dei tuoi nipoti: *per non lasciare gli oceani e quel che rimane delle antiche foreste nelle mani di chi li vuole solamente sfruttare e distruggere*[13].

Connor & Gladkov (2004) also emphasize the importance of writer and reader's image, both of which need to be represented in a positive light if the appeal is to be persuasive. As we have seen, appeals to the reader's responsibility are more direct in Italian letters, and it is quite common to find emotional (*pathos*) appeals in Italian letters where you would expect a rational (*logos*) appeal in English: for example, the wording of the English sentence shown in Table 3 (described as a *logos* appeal in Connor & Glakdov's analysis) is very similar to an instance of Move 4 (Pressure Tactics) in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus:

Table 3 *Logos/ Pathos* appeal in American and Italian fundraising letters

ICIC Fundraising Corpus (my italics)	SITLeC Fundraising Corpus (my italics)
...you join the ranks of *those who believe that bringing art and art education to the city makes life better, richer, and more rewarding for the entire community.*	...attesterà la sua appartenenza alla schiera delle *poche persone, ancora poche, purtroppo, che alle parole di generica commiserazione preferiscono, per quello che possono, un gesto concreto*[14].

In the example from the ICIC Fundraising Corpus, the reader's image is positively defined by his/ her belonging to the ranks of those who believe in a given set of values; by contrast, in

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[11] "We are confident that this year your company will support and strengthen the activities of [NPO], thus interpreting the traditions of Christmas in the highest possible way ...", my translation.

[12] "Do you remember when you were a child? ... When I look at our children in the eyes, I cannot but think of the sadness-stricken eyes and the terrified expressions of suffering children", my translation.

[13] "[NPO] works for everyone's future, including your own, that of your children and of your grandchildren: do not leave oceans and what remains of ancient forests in the hands of those who only want to exploit and destroy them", my translation.

[14] "...you join the ranks of the few people – very few, unfortunately – who are not content with words of generic commiseration, but prefer to do whatever they can in terms of direct action", my translation.

the Italian example, the good image of the reader is negatively defined by his or her not belonging to the ranks of those who "are content with words of generic commiseration".

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has illustrated the main differences in terms of generic move structure between nonprofit direct mail letters in the ICIC Fundraising Corpus, a large electronic corpus of philanthropic fundraising texts in English, and in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, a corpus of similar texts in Italian. We have tried to show that, in most cases, linguistic differences are closely connected with the extralinguistic environment, especially as concerns the role, scope and nature of philanthropy in the two countries. For example, the rare mention of tax incentives in Italian letters is connected with the low deductions that are available to Italian donors, unlike American ones. In addition, "Pressure Tactics", whose absence Bhatia (1997; 1998) considers to be typical of philanthropic advertising, can actually be found in Italian philanthropic direct mail. More research needs to be done to verify the effectiveness of these appeals in Italian, in order to establish whether the highly emotional nature of fundraising appeals in Italian is really effective, or if, as Sargeant & Jay (2004) are convinced, donors in general, regardless of their national culture, prefer a more positive vision of the beneficiaries and of the whole role of NPOs in civil society.

This study is confined to direct mail letters in an American English/ Italian perspective, but the same approach could be used for other genres (Fusari 2008) and other languages in order to have a complete picture of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences across philanthropic sectors in different countries. The implications for further research are twofold: firstly, corpus-assisted genre analysis can extend corpus-based studies beyond their traditional focus (e.g. lexis and syntax) while finding a quantitative basis for comparative qualitative analysis; secondly, these findings emphasize that linguistic features lie at the heart of the "striking difference" that many economists and sociologists have observed between the nonprofit sector in Italy and the United States.

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STUDIJA ZASNOVANA NA KORPUSU DIREKTNIH ELEKTRONSKIH PORUKA FILANTROPSKOG DISKURSA U ITALIJANSKO/AMERIČKOM KONTEKSTU

Sabrina Fusari

Ovaj rad ilustruje generičku strukturu pisama upućenih u cilju dobijanja donacija na italijanskom jeziku i poredi ih sa njihovim američkim pandanima opisanim kod Uptona (2002). Cilj rada je da se nađu i istaknu sličnosti i razlike u interkulturalnoj sferi, kao i da se pokažu glavne sheme diskursne strukture na kojima se zasniva korespondencija prilikom traženja donacija u Italiji i S.A.D. Osnovu istraživanja čine pisani tekstovi u kojima autori ubeđuju potencijalne donatore da daju svoj doprinos određenom projektu. Upton je u svojoj studiji koja se bavila pribavljanjem donacija i deskripcijom iste kao posebnog žanra koristio ICIC Fundraising Corpus, ogromnu elektronsku bazu filantropskih tekstova koju su proučavali i opisali ICIC naučnici (Upton and Connor 2001, Upton 2002, Connor and Gladkov 2004). Za svrhe ovog rada koristili smo specijalnu bazu podataka, odnosno italijanski korpus direktne elektronske pošte kako bismo došli do italijanskog generičkog filantropskog diskursa i kasnije ga uporedili sa američkim.

Ključne reči: *analiza žanra, lingvistika korpusa, neprofitne organizacije, engleski jezik, italijanski jezik*