

Book and article reviews

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BOOK AND ARTICLE REVIEWS

Fabiana Fusco e Carla Marcato (eds.). L'italiano e le regioni. *Plurilinguismo. Contatti di lingue e culture*, 8, 2001. Atti del Convegno di Studi, Udine, 15-16 giugno 2001, 238 pp.

L'ottavo numero della rivista *Plurilinguismo. Contatti di lingue e culture* è un numero monografico che pubblica gli atti del convegno "L'italiano e le regioni", tenutosi a Udine il 15-16 giugno 2001.

Nella parte introduttiva al volume, dopo la presentazione di Vincenzo Orioles, direttore responsabile della rivista, le due curatrici offrono una presentazione del progetto di ricerca "Italiano regionale nel Friuli: dal parlato al letterario", strettamente correlato con la pubblicazione degli Atti del convegno, e introducono brevemente la formazione e l'articolazione del concetto di italiano regionale.

Il volume si divide poi in due parti: la prima parte ("Bilancio e nuove prospettive sull'italiano regionale") riporta gli interventi della Tavola rotonda del convegno, la seconda ("La ricerca sull'italiano regionale: *corpora*, metodi e descrizioni") raggruppa in un'unica sezione i contributi presentati.

La tavola rotonda ha visto la partecipazione di Corrado Grassi (Università di Vienna e di Trento), Manlio Cortelazzo (Università di Padova), Luciano Canepari (Università di Venezia), Paolo D'Achille (Università di Roma Tre) e Tullio Telmon (Università di Torino). La tavola rotonda è stata

l'occasione per una messa a punto del concetto di italiano regionale, del quale è stato tratteggiato «un profilo storiografico e un confronto con omologhe categorie in uso in altre tradizioni linguistiche» (p. 14); durante la tavola rotonda sono state inoltre messe in luce alcune metodologie adottate per lo studio delle varietà regionali.

La seconda parte del volume propone rassegne e analisi condotte sul territorio italiano e all'estero, con contributi di Giuliano Bernini, Giuseppe Brincat, Robert Blagoni, Nicola De Blasi, Domenico Russo, Antonio Daniele, Salvatore Trovato, Claudia Crocco, Fiorenzo Toso, Attilio Giuseppe Boano, Patrizia Cordin, Sanzio Balducci, Immacolata Tempesta. In questa sezione, in particolare, vengono offerti approfondimenti su alcune varianti regionali dell'italiano (l'italiano parlato a Malta e ad Istria, l'italiano napoletano e campano, il lessico alimentare abruzzese, l'italiano regionale degli scrittori veneti, l'italiano letterario della Sicilia, i dialettismi in D'Azeglio, l'italiano regionale ligure, trentino, marchigiano e pugliese) e su alcune tematiche correlate, come ad esempio le varietà di apprendimento dell'italiano come lingua seconda e il problema della codifica degli italiani regionali in alcuni *corpora*.

Le lingue regionali costituiscono un interessante terreno di verifica per i principi interpretativi, i metodi e le procedure euristiche propri della ricerca sul plurilinguismo e per lo studio delle relazioni interlinguistiche. Lo studio delle lingue regionali all'inter-

no di una teoria del plurilinguismo trova la sua spiegazione nell'esigenza di «elaborare una teoria integrata del plurilinguismo e dell'interferenza che comprenda e ordini in uno stesso paradigma, disposti in un continuum scalare, l'intera sequenza dei fenomeni collegabili con la presenza simultanea di più sistemi linguistici nella competenza di un parlante ovvero nel repertorio di una data comunità linguistica» (dalla *Presentazione* di Vincenzo Orioles, p. 8; cfr. anche «*Plurilinguismo*», 6, 1999 [2000], pp. 101-111).

Lo studio del plurilinguismo legato alle varietà linguistiche – e alle lingue regionali in particolare – assume un particolare interesse anche nell'ottica delle scienze della comunicazione, poiché, come osserva ancora Orioles, «le lingue regionali tendono ad occupare uno spazio comunicativo sempre più ampio e a caricarsi inoltre di valenze sociosimboliche che assegnano a tali varietà una importante funzione identitaria sostitutiva e trasfiguratrice di dialettalità a volte obsolescenti» (p. 8).

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Martin J. Eppler: *Managing Information Quality. Increasing the Value of Information in Knowledge-intensive Products and Processes*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2003, 302 pp.

The advent of new technologies, the different ways people interrelate within organizations and the low quality of information make us suffer from information overload, paralysis of analysis and other symptoms. These are

some of the elements that make the call for qualitative information become more and more intense. Eppler's book *Managing Information Quality: Increasing the Value of Information in Knowledge-intensive Products and Processes* gives this call a very comprehensive answer and presents a useful framework with criteria for qualitative information.

The author approaches the information quality subject with the aim of facilitating knowledge processes and proposes therefore quality criteria not only for the information product itself but for the whole process of interaction between the user and the information (from the retrieval to the interpretation and the application of the information). On the one hand, this additional focus on the process of interaction but also on the process of interpretation and sense-making differentiates the framework presented in the book from others in the field of information quality such as those of Alexander and Tate (1999), Redman (1996) and others. On the other hand, what it shares with many other frameworks is that it includes various pragmatic quality criteria in order to turn information useful. In this regard, the author's question "What makes information useful?" (p.1) at the very beginning of the first chapter is quite emblematic.

The structural organization of *Managing Information Quality* into five main segments offers the reader a very effective orientation. Moreover, the author combines in a very consistent way a first theoretical part (chapters 1-3) with a successive empirical part (chapter 4, which consists of five case studies). This makes the book a valuable contribution for both the scientific community and for practitioners from the most various fields

but especially from the fields of information, knowledge management and communication. The further organization of the book – i.e. its very clear substructure within the chapters - facilitates the reading and the orientation.

Managing Information Quality starts with a first introduction on the subject and then outlines the information quality perspective defining the major concepts and positioning this perspective in relation to quality management and knowledge management. Furthermore, information quality problems are discussed. The author provides a problem typology by looking at the *origins* and the *consequences* of the information quality problems and also at the corresponding *responsibilities*. To motivate the development of the framework exposed, the author *reviews* twenty *frameworks* for information quality and evaluates seven of these more closely (Alexander & Tate, 1999; English, 1999, Königer & Reithmeyer, 1998; Lesca & Lesca 1995, Redmann, 1996; Russ-Mohl, 1994, Wang & Strong, 1996). Parting from this analysis, the author outlines the requirements for a new information quality framework.

In *chapter three*, which constitutes the main chapter of the book, the author presents this very comprehensive framework for information quality management. It contains sixteen criteria to achieve qualitative information. In order to ease its remembrance and comprehension, the author provides quite a sophisticated arrangement of the criteria into levels and phases. In the first place, Eppler categorizes information quality criteria according to *four levels*: the target community, the information product, the information process and the infrastructure (vertical structure of the framework). In order

to provide qualitative information its producer first has to analyse the characteristics of the community to which the information is addressed, then there are criteria for the information objects themselves, and thirdly there are requirements on the process with which the information is delivered. Finally, the author discusses criteria for the infrastructure that underlies the process. As a second way to structure the sixteen information quality criteria, Eppler uses a procedural categorization from the viewpoint of the information user (horizontal structure of the framework). He claims that the information user passes four phases when making use of information. He first identifies the necessary information, evaluates the gathered information (is it trustworthy?), then allocates and finally applies the information (p.76). After the presentation of the main elements and structure of the framework, the author discusses various tradeoffs between certain quality criteria of the framework. He questions, for example whether the pursuit of the criteria of “accuracy” permit the full pursuit of “conciseness” or not.

In order to implement the framework and to foster the quality criteria defined in it, Eppler presents *four principles* that he aligns along the four phases of the framework (horizontal structure; p.78). The first principle is the integration one that proposes a condensation and compression of the information so that the information becomes comprehensive, concise, convenient, and accessible, and consumers get an overview. The validation principle seeks the validation of the information in terms of correctness, consistency, timeliness and security. The third principle refers to the context. Is a piece of information presen-

ted within its context of origination or use, then it is much easier for the user to interpret this information and make it meaningful. Finally, the forth principle is about the activation of the information in the mind of the information consumer in order to render it useful and applicable (P.184). To further indicate how to implement the framework, the author identifies three general ways of applying it. First of all, it serves as an analytical lens and a diagnostic tool to assess information products and processes. Moreover, and especially in combination with the four information quality principles, it can also be used as an improvement tool. Finally, the framework finds its use also in education, planning and communication.

Chapter four presents five different case studies in which the information quality framework and its corresponding principles are applied. In an actual research in action setting, the author worked with the four information quality principles on very different information products (research and analyst reports, business book summaries and financial services). In order to improve the quality of the information products the author worked with the companies on the various information quality levels (target community, content management process and infrastructure level). The information quality framework usually helped as an analytical lens. Through these five cases, the author highlights the actual problems of assuring information quality and illustrates effective means of implementing the information quality-principles.

Managing Information Quality presents a very comprehensive framework for information quality and structures the criteria very effectively into four levels and four phases. It re-

views the existing literature on the topic using a very original approach and gives the reader a very quick though comprehensive overview on the topic. By pointing at the process of the interaction between user and information and by stressing the interpretation and sense-making process and within these the role of the context, *Managing Information Quality* gains a very remarkable position within the field of information quality and gives the discussion on qualitative information a stronger knowledge orientation. What could be the weakest point of the framework is that, due to its complexity, its visual representation is not fully self explanatory. Furthermore, quite a big engagement by the reader is required in order to understand (and remember) the four levels, the four phases and their correspondingly aligned four information quality principles, and other structuring elements for the information quality criteria that were not mentioned in this review but are discussed in the book (content vs. media quality; time, format, content and cost dimension). If this level of complexity and effort is by all means reasonable for the scientific community, the impact of the framework among practitioners may remain quite limited. The community could nevertheless profit immensely from the four very insightful and - in practice - very applicable information quality principles and from the well structured discussion of the five cases.

In summary, *Managing Information Quality: Increasing the Value of Information in Knowledge-intensive Products and Processes* gives one of the clearest and most comprehensive overviews on the topic. That is why it is highly recommendable for anyone working within a knowledge intensive field.

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