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Weblogs: voices of emerging genres

Abstract

The advent of new media and the digital revolution have brought about fundamental changes in communicative practices that include public as well as interpersonal communication exchanges. Among the novel communicative strategies, the Internet holds a prominent position, having moved from being merely a source of information to representing a tool for a two-or more-sided interaction. The coming of the Web has thus radically transformed genres and discourses and several studies published since the early nineties have shown that not only does the Internet encourage the creation of new genres, but that existing genres often are altered when transmitted through this medium (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992; Crowston and Williams, 2000).

The EU, as well as other supranational institutions, has been exploiting the various new forms of communication since the beginning of the digital age, in reply to an ever-increasing need to involve citizens after the double referendum failure on European Constitution in 2005. Weblogs - frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence - are a genre which is becoming a relevant channel of institutional communication. Nowadays, most European Commissioners commonly make use of their own blogs to attain political objectives through a supposedly direct interaction with their “community”.

Starting from an examination of the textual and the visual material contained in the different sections of the EU commissioners' blogs, this paper intends to analyse in a diachronic perspective how EU institutional/political communication strategies are changing as a consequence of the blend between private viewpoints and political objectives. The work is based on an investigation of 10 EU commissioners’ weblogs selected over the period from January 2009 to June 2009.

The analysis will be basically carried out from a critical discourse analysis viewpoint, namely through Fairclough’s research on media production (Fairclough 1995, 2006), Kress and Van Leeuwen’s grammar of visual images and social semiotics (Kress – Van Leeuwen 2006), Web communication, political communication and Media studies (Bell 1991; 1998; Garrett 1998). The variables will be studied in detail, taking into account Swales’ general theory of genre (1990) and genre theories applied to electronic communication (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). Register variables (Halliday, 1989; Martin, 2001) will also be thoroughly studied. The results of this study will show some typical lexical and syntactic features of political blogs and the particular use of pronouns.

KEYWORDS: genre, political blogs, media, institutional/political communication, register.
REFERENCES

European sources


Books and articles


**Current readings**