

'Us' and 'Them': The Linguistic and Visual Construction of the 'Other' through Facebook Pages

Lorena Carbonara

University of Bari

lorena.carbonara@uniba.it

Abstract

This paper addresses the linguistic and visual representation of contemporary migration from the Third World in social, cultural and political terms through the analysis of three popular Italian Facebook pages. The analysis of the posts, conducted in November/December 2017, aims to investigate the administrators' attitude towards the welcoming of immigrants, which may influence the users' attitude (Boswell et al. 2011; Komito 2011; Volpicelli 2015; Chouliaraki/Stolic 2017). The general role of Italy in the so-called 'migrant crisis' is universally acknowledged for obvious geopolitical reasons, but it still needs to be scrutinized, especially as regards the role individuals play in the creation of public narratives and discourses of dissent/consent. In fact, it is necessary to broaden the study of how stereotypes are created and spread not only through official and national media, but also through large communities of individuals who, on one hand, exercise their freedom of speech, but who, on the other, are responsible for the stratification of populist and xeno-racist discourses that, both linguistically and visually, represent migrant people as a threat to the supposed cultural, ethnic and religious 'purity' of Italy and Europe. It is commonly agreed that social media, such as Facebook, target vast and varied audiences and that they are responsible for the spreading of both meaningful and non-meaningful information through the use of both language and images. These modes of communication are employed in an extremely connoted way, which is investigated in this paper using the interdisciplinary perspectives of both Critical Discourse Analysis and Multi modality (mainly Kress/van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Wodak 2008; Machin/Mayr 2012; van Dijk 2015).

Keywords

migration, Facebook, stereotypes, discourse analysis, multi modality