

Producing the Self and the Other: Stereotyping and Nationalism in the Rhetoric of Matteo Renzi

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1. Introduction

Matteo Renzi is undoubtedly one of the most complex political figures in the recent history of Italy. The youngest Prime Minister in the history of the Italian Republic, he claimed that Italian politics should be radically reformed and used to call himself "il rottamatore" (2011: 45; 182-202; 2012: 98; 2013: 6-7, 19; 2017: 56-59, 111)¹. A fan of information technology and social media, Renzi behaved as a "celebrity politician" by transforming political events into shows and relied on an informal communication style that was clearly influenced by marketing techniques (Barile 2014: 112, 132; Bordignon 2014: 13; Galimberti 2015: 45; Street 2004).

The mediatisation of Italian politics, however, was not a new phenomenon (Barile 2014: 3-4; Cheles and Sponza 2001: 11; Strömbäck 2008). At the beginning of the 1990s, the obscure jargon of politics gave way to colloquial everyday language and an overall more informal style (Crocì 2001; Galimberti 2015: 20; McCarty 2001). This process became even more overt when Silvio Berlusconi was appointed Prime Minister and used the full ideological potential of the media he owned (Loporcaro 2004: 22-23). This trend came to a standstill at the end of the so-called Berlusconi era, when political communication turned towards moderation and reliability (Renzi 2013: 5), only to regain its ground two years later with Renzi's cabinet.

¹ The Italian term has been translated both as "scrapper" and "demolition man" in the international media (see, for instance, the Financial Times: <https://www.ft.com/content/5fdb9710-940d-11e3-a0e1-00144feab7de>).

Although Renzi was inspired by Tony Blair and Barack Obama (Barile 2014: 58-62; Bordignon 2014, 6-8; Renzi 2011: 175), his message may have been more conservative than it aimed to appear. Not only did he act as a “political star” in the wake of Berlusconi’s style (Barile 2014: 4; Pozzato 2001: 213), but, more importantly, he also frequently quoted and (re)produced the stereotypes of the Italian national character and repeatedly showed admiration for some of the founding myths of the Italian tradition. This underlying narration was particularly noticeable in the speeches in English that he delivered to a “lay” audience, since he was not supported by interpreters and either digressed from the script or he improvised.

Although Renzi’s rhetoric in English may be the result of a complex interplay of contributions by consultants and translators, I shall consider him fully responsible for his communication, both as a speaker and an institutional leader who chose not to rely on interpreters (Wodak *et al.* 1999/2009: 71). Indeed, the frequent occurrence of Italian gestures, calques and presuppositions in his speeches may have been a symptom of his deliberate intention of conveying a specific identity and reinforcing a traditional view of the Italian national character, but also a failure to normalise an intercultural message.

Whatever Renzi’s intentions, his responsibility as a speaker was not limited to the purpose of engaging with the audience, but also involved the dynamics of power relations and group membership. The reason is twofold. On the one hand, since all utterances are evaluative, ideology plays a crucial role in generating meaning (Volosinov 1973: 10, 105). Accordingly, discourse produces and reproduces power relations (Bourdieu 1991: 127; Fairclough 1989/2015: 73-127). On the other hand, since a leader embodies the prototypical characters of his/her group, as we shall see below, s/he establishes the beliefs and goals of the group and defines its membership requirements (Hogg and Abrams 1988: 113–114; Jaspars 1990: 278–301; Moscovici 2000: 45). On the grounds of these assumptions, I analysed the resources Renzi used in his speeches as the consequence of a precise, deliberate choice that bears social and political implications.

The study draws upon the main tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): it built on the assumption that discourse is a social phenomenon embodying power relations, originates from a discourse-related problem, is multidisciplinary, has linguistic analysis as its main core and reflects on the analysis itself (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999/2001: 60-68). Although the research project examined two speeches, due to space constraints, this article focuses on a short extract that provides a relevant example to foreground implied meanings and outline Renzi's positioning towards the culture and international political role of Italy and Africa.

2. Stereotyping and national identity

2.1 Stereotyping

Before the term “stereotype” was first applied in its current sense, seminal studies focused on the notion of classification and defined it as a non-rational, social construct with a cognitive function (Durkheim and Mauss 1903/1965). It was Lippmann who, in 1922², defined “stereotypes” as categorisations that are illogical and may be easily manipulated by the media and the institutions (Lippman 1998: 90, 95, 120, 125). Subsequent studies focused on the complex nature of stereotyping, which contains an emotional component, is grounded on a “kernel of truth” and has an evaluative, albeit rationalising, function (Allport 1954: 21-22, 191, 204). More importantly, stereotypes were also analysed in their social dimension, both as language constructs (Allport 1954: 178-187; Bhabha 1988/1997; Moscovici 2000: 23-24; 74), and as criteria to determine group membership (Tajfel 1981). Indeed, not only do stereotypes – and self-stereotypes – define a positive group identity, but they also create a negative Other to reinforce membership and protect the group's system of values (Allport 1954: 66-67; Hogg and Abrams 1988: 20-23; Tajfel 1981: 63-70, 156-158).

² The term derives from the Greek words στερεός (stereos), “firm, solid” and τύπος (typos), “impression”. It was originally coined in 1798 to indicate a printing plate that was used to produce multiple copies (Sciarrino 2009: 25).

Since member categorisation is not an absolute, but is often “graded”, some members are more exemplary than others and act as prototypes: they best embody group identity and, accordingly, play a leadership role by defining ideologies, setting goals, maintaining cohesiveness, inspiring the other members and defining consensus (Hogg and Abrams 1988: 113-114; Jaspars 1990: 278-301; Lakoff 1987: 45-56; Moscovici 2000: 45).

Categorisation, however, may also act as a self-fulfilling prophecy, which consists in “a false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception come true” (Merton 1948: 195). In other words, stereotypes may generate the very behaviours they stigmatise, since targets may display the traits that they are being stereotyped for, whether deliberately or not (Allport 1954: 159-160; Eiser 1990: 252-254; Hogg and Abrams 1988: 88; Pickering 2001: 25).

2.2 The role of stereotyping in nationalistic discourse

One of the pivotal processes in the consolidation of nationalism consists in the discursive construction and reproduction of a national narrative to make culture and state coincide (De Cillia *et al.* 1999: 153-155; Smith 2008: 17-19). The ultimate purpose of the reproduction of a national narrative is the creation of what Benedict Anderson named an “imagined community” (1983/2006). As national identities emerge from a struggle among competing narrations, their ultimate purpose is to substitute old loyalties and hierarchies with a new “civic religion” that can satisfy the irrational component of the social psyche (Hobsbawm 1983/2004: 268-269).

The ruling élites, therefore, naturalise symbols and traditions (among them, religion, language and race) through ideological representations to transform them into unproblematic aspects of a shared culture. Indeed, representations make meanings emerge within the domain of familiar knowledge by acting on collective memory (Bell 2003; Billig 1995: 24-36; Gellner 2006: 55-56; 1998: 94-95; Hobsbawm 1972: 388-389; Moscovici 2000: 27, 33, 49, 55; Smith 1991/1993: 72-73, 77-79; 2008: 19, 21, 185). The reappropriation of time and

space, in particular, plays a fundamental role in this process: on the one hand, the past is reinvented and turned into a myth; on the other, a specific geographical space provides an idealised landscape and borders that are meant to be defended (Bell 2003; Billig 1995: 38, 74-78; De Cillia *et al.* 1999: 150, 154-155; Kedourie 1960/1993: 70-82; Smith 1991/1993: 14, 69, 117, 140, 161).

These brief considerations allow us to highlight some similarities between the dynamics of nationalism and stereotyping, and to anticipate some considerations on Italianness³. First, the myth of the nation shapes an ingroup that provides members with values, pride and loyalties towards their community, and protection against an external Other (De Cillia *et al.* 1999: 153; Pickering 2001: 95). Second, nationalism and the social identity it brings forth are ideologically reproduced and enacted by the ruling class (Hall *et al.* 2013, 249-251), which, in doing so, embodies the dynamics of ingroup leadership. Third, as we shall see, the unification of Italy embraced the dynamics of nationalism, as it was glorified as a myth (Loporcaro 2004: 190-191), glorious ancestors were invented and a stereotypical national character was systematically reinforced by various political ideologies (Dickie 1996; 2001: 32; Graziano 2010: 50-51).

3. The Italian national character

Although an exhaustive analysis of Italianness exceeds the scope of this paper, the traits that are most frequently associated with the Italian character deserve to be presented, as they explain Renzi's communicative stance and, accordingly, account for some methodological criteria of the study. The existence of an Italian character that has persisted throughout history was demonstrated by several intellectuals, who, long before its unification in 1861, considered Italy a cultural entity of its own, despite its long-lasting political fragmentation (Casillo 2006; Duggan 2007; Dickie 1996, 2001; Galli della

³ In addition to theoretical analyses, similarities between the patterns of national (self) identification and ingroup membership have been confirmed by experimental data (Nigbur and Cinnirella, 2007).

Loggia 1998; Livolsi 2011; Patriarca 2010; Tullio-Altan 2000). Not only did some of these voices defend Italy's right to independence, but they often invoked a regeneration of its national customs.

On the one hand, Italy was often described as backward, especially in comparison to the industrial countries of northern Europe (Graziano 2010: 121-125; Galli della Loggia 1998: 53-54; Patriarca 2010: 38; Schiavone 1998: 76-96; Tullio-Altan 2000: 24-26). This condition was often attributed to the Counter-Reformation and the extraordinary power of the Society of Jesus, which exerted social control, pressing censorship and monopoly over the education system, thus contributing to Italy's social and economic decline (Barzini 1964/1996: 317-320; Galli della Loggia 1998: 95; Patriarca 2010: 65, 69; Tullio-Altan 2000: 12-26). In their search for myths to redeem the country from its apparent backwardness, intellectuals and politicians have frequently looked towards Italy's past and especially to the Roman Empire, the city-states of the Middle-Ages, or Italy's role as the cradle of civilization and a bridge between cultures due to its position in the Mediterranean (Agnew 1997: 34-35; Dickie 1996: 24; Forlenza 2016: 30; Patriarca 2010: 79-107).

On the other hand, this urge for regeneration often encompassed the Italian national character. Whereas the debate focused on forging the citizens of a unified country in the first decades after Italy's unification, after the Second World War it turned towards (re)defining the national character in relation to dictatorship. Fascism was dismissed as a disease that had affected a small minority (Duggan 2007: 541; Patriarca: 2010: 193-195), and the myth of Italians as "good people" was invented to help the country regain credibility and cleanse its reputation (Dickie 1996: 24-27; Focardi 2013: vii-xiv; 20-32; 107-144; Patriarca 2010: 188-215).

Besides the notions of backwardness and regeneration, a pivotal concept in the definition of Italianness is its loyalty to one's own primary community (Forgacs 2000: 145), be it the family or one's hometown (Banfield 1958; Patriarca 2010: 214-226). This loyalty is rooted in the Roman Empire and its clusters of growing communities. Such a municipal organisation, ranging from the family unit to the network of towns that served as the central nervous system of the Empire,

survived the end of the empire and flourished anew in the late Middle-Ages in the form of city-states (Alföldy 2012: 20-21, 43; Galli della Loggia 1998: 31-84; Schiavone 1998: 60-64, 70-71).

As the Christian Church expanded along the social structure of the Roman Empire, it took on a crucial role in strengthening local loyalties, both towards the family and the town (Galli della Loggia 1998: 99-100; Ginsborg 2001: 78); so much so that the centralised power of the Church hindered any attempt to political unification during the Counter-Reformation (Graziano 2010: 122; Schiavone 1998: 84-85). On a social level, these local loyalties encouraged dissimulation and clientelism, and even portrayed them as virtues (Galli della Loggia 1998: 87-112; Ginsborg 2001: 97-102; Schiavone 1998: 84-85; Tullio-Altan 2000: 18-24).

An overview of the main traits of the Italian character would not be complete without mentioning its extensive use of nonverbal language (Barzini 1964/1996: 62-65; Poggi 2004; 2007: 147; Sciarrino 2009: 48-49, 81, 99)⁴. Two concepts are worth mentioning for the purpose of this paper. First, some gestures, called *emblems*⁵, are culturally-based and semiotic, namely they have a verbal equivalent that they can substitute (Ekman 1976: 14). Being deliberate and autonomous, they differ from *illustrators*, which frame verbal language but cannot substitute it (Ekman 2004: 43). Second, gestures contain some biologically-based elements that cause them to be generally perceived as more reliable (Andersen 1999: 15-29; 36-38). It is worth noting, however, that although the audience's emotional response generally increases in the presence of gestures, its intensity and nature depend on the cultural proximity and understanding of gestures as semiotic indicators.

⁴ I follow the scholarly tradition that restricts the usage of the term “nonverbal” to indicate hand gestures, or gesticulation (Argyle, 1972; Birdwhistell, 1982; Diadori, 1999; Efron, 1941/1972; Kendon, 1981, 2004; Poggi, 1987).

⁵ I adopt the definition that Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen (1969) drew from David Efron's classification (1941/1972: 96).

4. Methodology and Methods

The study applied Jeremy Munday's framework for evaluation in translation (2012) to second language speeches. This framework combines Paul Chilton's "Deictic Space Theory" (2004, 2009, 2010) with James Martin's and Peter White's "appraisal theory" (2005) to foreground the speaker's system of values (axiology) and beliefs (ideology).

Deictic positioning assesses the position of the speaker with reference to the hearer and the situation of communication. It does not represent physical space, but rather a projection in discourse of the speaker's position towards facts and events. It consists of three axes (vectors) that represent space, time and modality, and show the relative distance from the deictic centre/speaker (see Figure 1). Such representation is possible because the speaker can foreground or background information and express evaluation through his/her linguistic choices. At the opposite end of the deictic centre, along each axis, lies what is distant in time and space, or deemed uncertain or untrue.

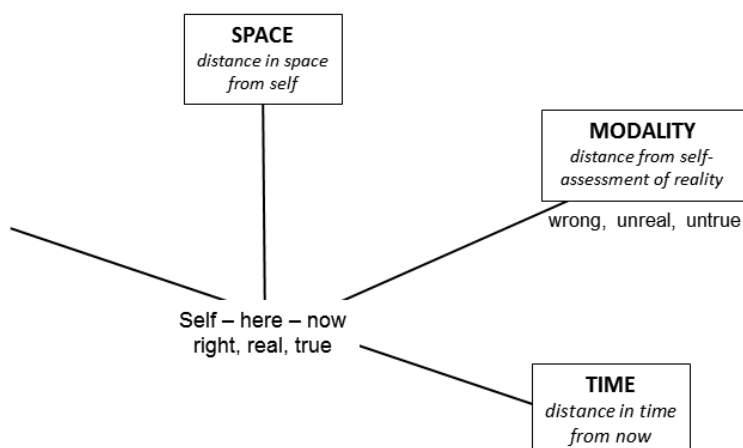


Figure 1. An overview of heteroglossia (Martin and White 2005: 134)

Martin and White's model is based on three main categories, i.e. *engagement*, *attitude*, and *graduation*. *Engagement* expresses the position of the speaker towards alternative voices, whether as acknowledgement (*heteroglossia*), or avoidance (*monoglossia*). *Attitude* foregrounds the speaker's feelings

concerning emotions (*affect*), behaviours (*judgement*), or things (*appreciation*). It may be explicit (inscribed attitude), or implicit (invoked attitude). *Graduation* applies to the other two categories and expresses a degree of intensity. It can be scalable (*force*), or non-scalable (*focus*) and embedded (infused) in a lexical resource (see Figures 2-4). This evaluation grid expands into several sub-categories, but my analysis mostly adopts the broadest categories in the classification, due to the limited syntactic and lexical resources that Renzi used in his speeches.

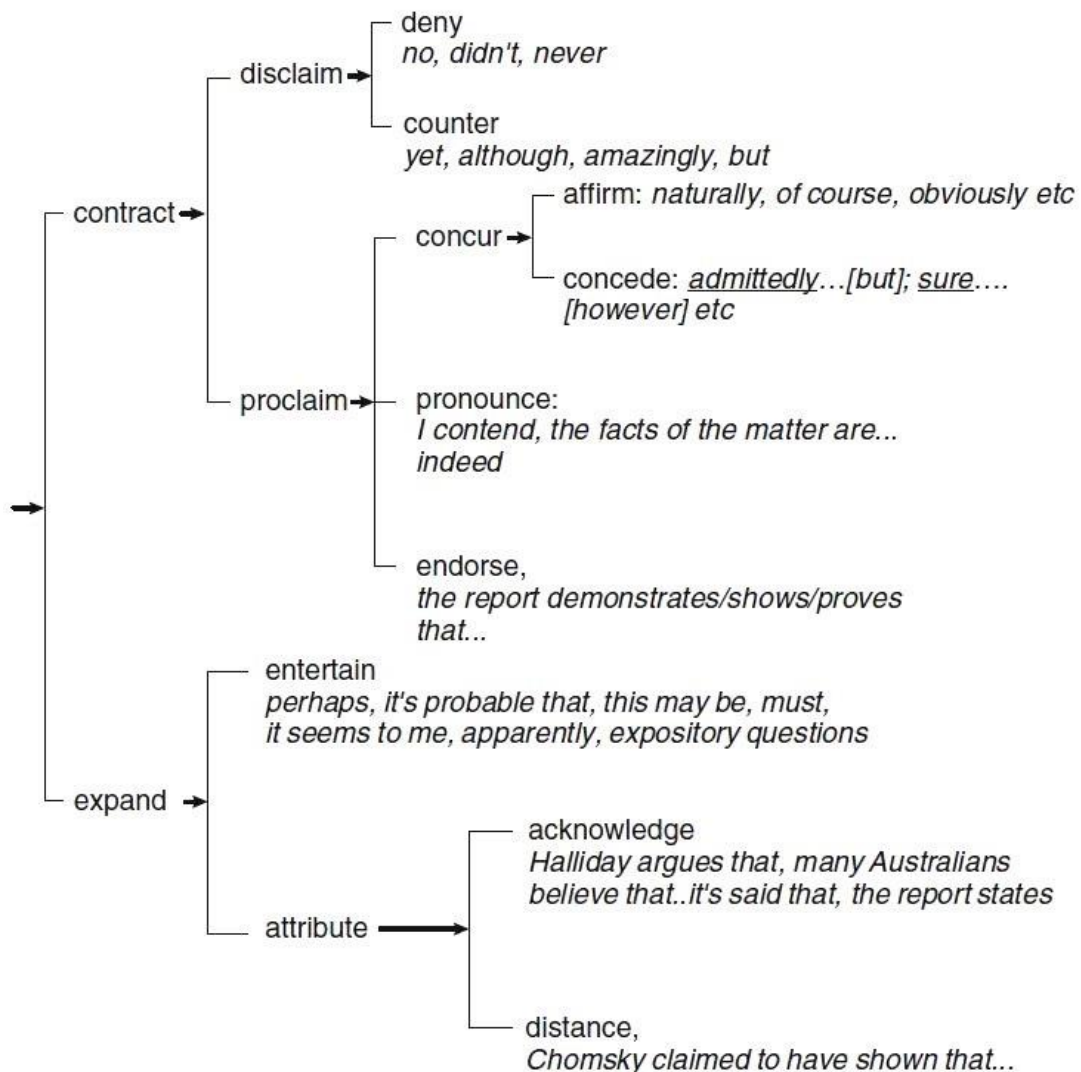


Figure 2. An overview of heteroglossia (Martin and White 2005: 134)

Variables of AFFECT	Examples
happiness	The captain felt happy
unhappiness	The captain felt sad
security	The captain felt confident
insecurity	The captain felt anxious
satisfaction	The captain felt absorbed
dissatisfaction	The captain felt fed up

JUDGEMENT	
Social esteem (positive/negative)	
- normality	'how special?'
- capacity	'how capable?'
- tenacity	'how dependable?'
Social sanction	
- veracity [truth]	'how honest?'
- propriety [ethics]	'how far beyond reproach?'

APPRECIATION	
Reaction (positive/negative)	
- impact	'did it grab me?'
- quality	'did I like it?'
Composition (positive/negative)	
- balance	'did it hang together?'
- complexity	'was it hard to follow?'
Valuation (positive/negative)	'was it worthwhile?'

Figure 3. An overview of attitude (adapted from Martin and White 2005: 49-56)

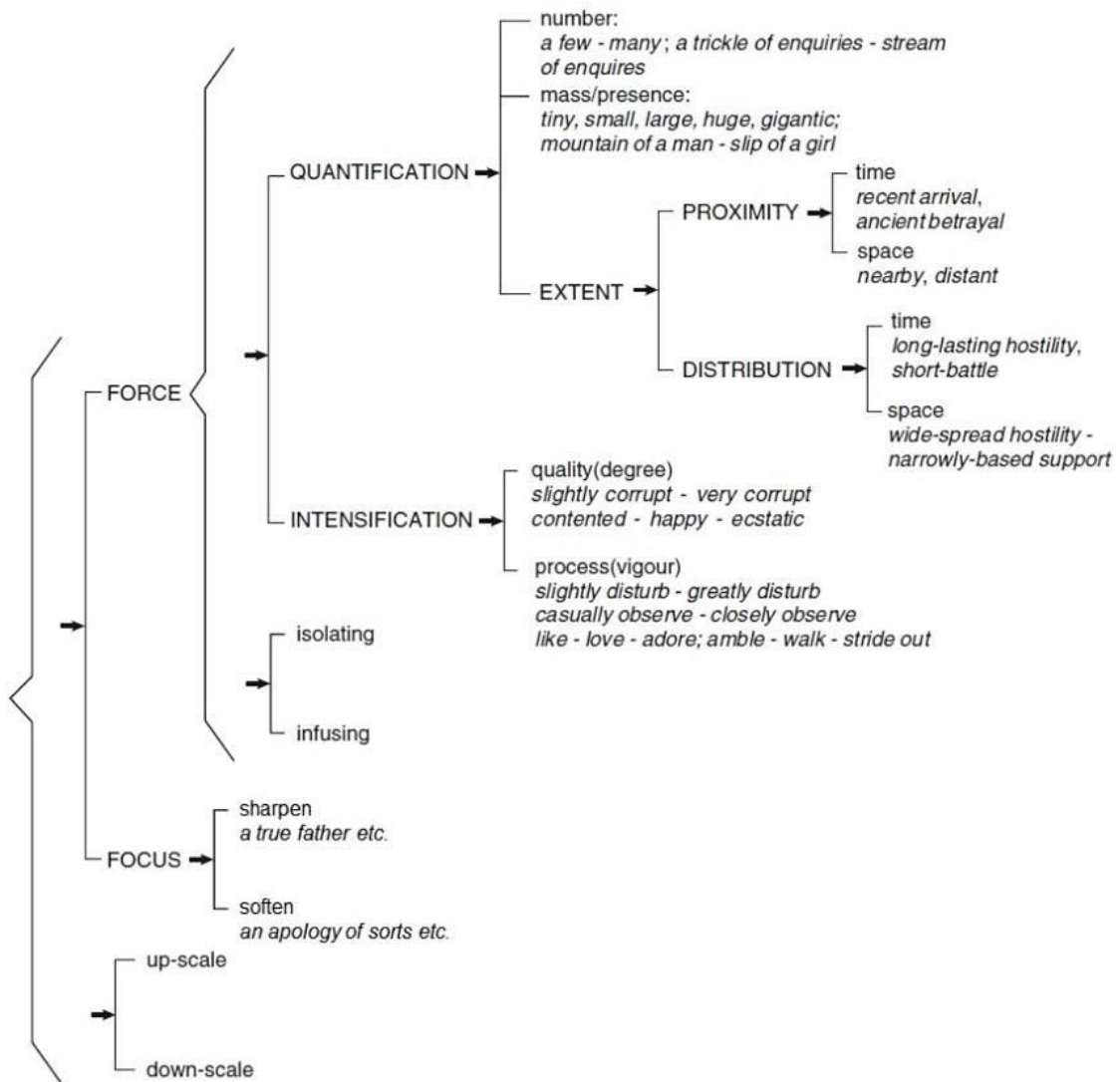


Figure 4. An overview of graduation (Martin and White 2005: 154)

To foreground the subtexts implied in Renzi's speeches, the research project was conceived as a pilot study that tested some integrations to Munday's model. Firstly, the framework was applied to second-language production instead of inter-language translations. Moreover, the two models were completely integrated, since the data from the appraisal analysis were used to populate the deictic positioning chart. More importantly, the study also accounted for the cognitive resources that contribute to the creation of background knowledge. Among these, I chose jokes, hand gestures and stereotypes of national character. Jokes possess an implicit cultural value, as they serve the purpose of winning the approval of the audience, and, therefore, recall the Italian tradition of familism and clientelism. Explicit and implicit

stereotypes, clichés and semiotic hand gestures provide a representation or are a direct enactment of Italian culture. Semiotic hand gestures, moreover, are pivotal in the analysis of Renzi's rhetoric not only as indexical of the Italian stereotype, but also as a significant visual resource, thus contributing to yet another innovative feature, multimodality.

The method of analysis was applied to two videos recorded at Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.) and Harvard⁶, which I chose on the grounds of their lengthy question times and spontaneous interaction with general audiences. The following extract from the Harvard speech is exemplary of Renzi's viewpoint on migration from Africa and presents a varied sample of the resources and stereotypes that he explicitly and implicitly used to convey his message. The extract is the literal transcription of Renzi's words, with no amendment on my part except for a few repetitive, idiosyncratic "deviations" from the norm (e.g. earth/heart, word/world, this/these, think/thing, ourself/ourselves, through/true), which I normalised.

The outcome of the analysis is organised in a table with screenshots and brief descriptions of hand gestures and facial expressions. For the classification of Italian nonverbal language, I refer to De Jorio (2000), Diadori (1990/2003), Kendon (2004), Munari (1958/2005) and Poggi (2007). Relevant resources are also used to populate the deictic positioning chart.

5. Analysis

5.1 Extract from the speech delivered at Harvard University⁷


I'm really... worried when in a... ehm... during a meeting in European Council some colleagues explain us the importance of walls, for Europe (...) the sense of solidarity in face to refugees for me was a surprise in 2015 because in 2014 Italy was alone in this battle. When in Lampedusa, 2013, a lot of people died in front of coasts of Sicily, a lot of people cried but nobody helped us, and when in April 2015 (...) near to Libyan coasts, a lot of migrants died in the sea, more than seventy... seven hundred people,



⁶ <http://www.governo.it/diretta-video> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8ntWEIntGg>




⁷ Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, March 2016.




I remember only two countries ask a... meeting... extraordinary meeting of European Council: Malta and Italy (...) My answer is that: first, to be an... to maintain human being. This means we invest, the Italian government, twenty million, twenty million of euro to come back on the Mediterranean and bring the ship under the sea and give a tomb to these people (...) our culture, you know because I think you're Italian, and I think the culture of American people and the culture of every civilization think it's important to give to the man and the woman died a place to stay for ever. It's a value. It's a value in the... ehm... Omero, in the... the... the... Iliade and Odissea and Eneide in the our culture and I invest money to give this right to these poor people. (...) European people don't think about Africa. I show Italy, Italy is a bridge, natural bridge in the relation between Europe and Africa, and I propose, to my company, to the companies of Italian people, obviously, to invest in Africa (...) But at the same time we must help these people to create jobs in... in Africa, to give a strategy of innovation in this continent and this is the only way to show European leaders as able to give an answer not only in the short term, but in medium and long term.




5.2 Appraisal analysis

	Transcript	Appraisal analysis	Value
1	I'm REALLY ... I'm REALLY ... <i>worried</i>	really worried: affect: –happiness and graduation (force: +intensification also by repetition)	I: deictic positioning
2	during a meeting in European Council some <i>colleagues</i> explain us the IMPORTANCE of walls, for Europe	colleagues: invoked judgement (social esteem: +normality); importance of walls: invoked appreciation (–reaction) and infused graduation (force: +quantification)	European Council/Europe: deictic positioning; hand gesture: possible variation of Italian emblem indicating the explanation/ comment to a core concept
3	 <i>[Renzi slightly cups his hand downwards while pronouncing the word 'wall']</i>		




4	<p>(...) the <i>sense of solidarity</i> in face to refugees for me was a <i>surprise</i> in 2015</p>		
5	 <p>[Renzi opens his hands, draws a circle in the air and moves them back and forth a few times while pronouncing the phrase 'because the sense of solidarity']</p>	<p>sense of solidarity: valuation (+appreciation); surprise: affect (+happiness)</p>	<p>2015: deictic positioning; hand gesture: illustrator</p>
6	<p><u>in</u> 2014 Italy was alone in this battle.</p>		
7	 <p>[Renzi pinches his thumb and forefinger in a ring shape, keeps the other fingers straight and moves his hand up and down to mark the tempo while pronouncing the utterance]</p>	<p>Italy was alone: monoglossic engagement and invoked judgement (social esteem: -capacity); battle: judgement (social esteem: +tenacity)</p>	<p>voice: higher pitch and loudness; 2014/Italy: deictic positioning; hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'precisely'</p>
8	<p>When in Lampedusa, 2013, <u>A LOT OF people died</u> in front of coasts of Sicily, <u>A LOT OF people cried</u> but nobody helped us,</p>	<p>died/cried/nobody helped: monoglossic engagement; a lot of: graduation (force: +quantification); nobody helped: judgement (social esteem: -tenacity)</p>	<p>Lampedusa/2013/in front of the coast of Sicily: deictic positioning; invoked stereotype of Italians as 'good people'</p>

9	<p>and when in April 2015 (...) NEAR TO Libyan coasts, A LOT OF migrants died in the sea, MORE THAN seventy... seven hundred people</p>		
10	 <p><i>[Renzi pinches his thumb and forefinger almost closing his hand and moves it to mark the tempo of the utterance]</i></p>	<p>exactly: graduation (focus: +sharpen); less than: graduation (force: -quantification); near to/ a lot of/more than: graduation (force: +quantification); died: monoglossic engagement</p>	<p>April 2015/near to Libyan coasts: deictic positioning; hand gesture: Italian emblem indicating the core meaning</p>
11	<p>I remember ONLY TWO countries ask a... meeting... extraordinary meeting of European Council: Malta and Italy</p>		
12	  <p><i>[Renzi uses his hands to indicate number two, then counts up to two while pronouncing the phrase 'two countries' and 'Malta and Italy' respectively]</i></p>	<p>only two: graduation (force: -quantification and +intensification by hand gesture); ask: monoglossic engagement</p>	<p>European Council/Malta/Italy: deictic positioning; hand gestures: Italian emblems indicating numbers</p>

13	<p>My answer is that: first, to be an... to maintain <i>human</i> being. This means we <i>invest</i>, the Italian government, <u>TWENTY MILLION</u></p>		
14	 <p><i>[Renzi points at his chest with both hands while pronouncing the phrase 'my answer is that']</i></p>		
15	 <p><i>[Renzi uses his hands to indicate number one and holds it while pronouncing the utterance]</i></p>	<p>invest: judgement (social esteem: +capacity); human: appreciation (+reaction); twenty million: (infused) graduation (force: +quantification and +intensification by repetition and hand gesture); give a tomb: invoked judgment (social esteem: +tenacity)</p>	<p>my answer/we/the Italian government/ Mediterranean: deictic positioning; to maintain human being: Italian calque; first hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'I/my'; second hand gesture: Italian emblem indicating numbers; third hand gesture: Italian emblem indicating the core meaning</p>
16	<p><u>TWENTY MILLION</u> of euro to come back on the Mediterranean and bring the ship under the sea and <i>give a tomb</i> to these people</p>		
17	 <p><i>[Renzi pinches his thumb and forefinger in a ring shape, then holds it horizontally and moves it up and down to mark the tempo while pronouncing the phrase 'twenty million of euro to come back']</i></p>		

18	<p>(...) <u>our culture</u>, you know because I think you're Italian,</p>		
19	 <p><i>[Renzi points at his chest with both hands while pronouncing the phrase 'our culture']</i></p>	<p>it's not concrete: heteroglossic engagement (proclaim: concur) and invoked appreciation (-valuation); culture: appreciation (+valuation) and graduation (force: +intensification by repetition and hand gesture); I think: heteroglossic engagement (entertain)</p>	<p>inclusive 'our' /Italian: deictic positioning; reference to the Italian culture; hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'I/my'</p>
20	<p>and I think the <u>culture</u> of American people and the <u>culture</u> of every civilization think it's <i>important</i> to give to the man and the woman died a <i>place to stay</i> for ever</p>		
21	  <p><i>[Renzi slightly cups his right hand far from his body then closes his fingertips while pronouncing the phrase 'think it's important to give to the man and the woman died']</i>.</p>	<p>I think: heteroglossic engagement (entertain); culture: appreciation (+valuation) and graduation (force: +intensification by repetition); think: heteroglossic engagement (attribute: acknowledge); important (appreciation: +valuation); a place to stay: (appreciation: +reaction)</p>	<p>American people: deictic positioning; hand gesture: Italian emblem indicating a core concept and its explanation</p>

22	It's a <i>value</i> . It's a <i>value</i> in the... ehm... Omero, in the... the... the... Iliade and Odissea and Eneide in the our <i>culture</i>		
23	 [Renzi points at his chest with his hands while pronouncing the phrase 'in our culture']	It's a value: monoglossic engagement, judgement (social sanction: +propriety) and graduation (force: +intensification by repetition); culture: appreciation (+valuation) and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture)	Omero/Iliade/Odissea/ Eneide: Italian; in the our culture: Italian calque; inclusive 'our': deictic positioning; hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'I/my'
24	and I invest money to give this right to these poor people.		
25	 [Renzi mimics the gesture of paying money and moves his hand up and down to mark the tempo while pronouncing the utterance]	invest money: judgement (social esteem: +capacity) and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture); give this right: judgement (social esteem: +capacity)	I: deictic positioning; hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'to pay'
26	European people <i>don't think about</i> Africa.	don't think about: monoglossic engagement and invoked judgement (social sanction: -propriety)	voice: higher pitch and loudness; European people/Africa: deictic positioning
27	I show Italy, Italy is a <i>bridge</i> , <i>natural bridge</i> in the relation between Europe and Africa,		
28	 [Renzi cups his hand downwards and moves is diagonally several times while pronouncing the phrase 'I show Italy, Italy is a bridge, natural bridge in the relation between Europe and Africa']	Italy is: monoglossic engagement; a (natural) bridge: invoked appreciation (+valuation) and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture)	Italy/Europe/Africa: deictic positioning; Italy is a bridge: cliché reinforced by repetition

29	<p>and I propose, to my company, to the companies of Italian people, obviously</p>		
30	 <p><i>[Renzi clenches his fists while pronouncing the phrase 'I propose']</i></p>	<p>I propose: monoglossic engagement and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture)</p>	<p>I/my/Italian people: deictic positioning reinforced by second hand gesture (Italian emblem meaning 'I/my'); first hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'being sure/strong'</p>
31	 <p><i>[Renzi points at himself with both hands while pronouncing the phrase 'to my company, to the companies of Italian people']</i></p>		
32	<p>to invest in Africa</p>		
33	 <p><i>[Renzi mimics the action of paying money while pronouncing the word 'invest']</i></p>	<p>invest: judgement (social esteem: +capacity) and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture)</p>	<p>Africa: deictic positioning; hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'to pay'</p>



34	<p>(...) But at the same time we must help these people to create jobs in... in Africa, to give a strategy of innovation in this continent</p>		
35	 <p>[Renzi mimics the act of paying money while pronouncing the phrase 'but at the same time we must help these people to create jobs (...), to give a strategy of innovation']</p>	<p>we must help: heteroglossic engagement (entertain); create jobs; create jobs/give a strategy of innovation: judgement (social esteem: +capacity) and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture)</p>	<p>we/Africa/ this continent: deictic positioning; hand gesture: Italian emblem meaning 'to pay'</p>
36	<p>and this is the ONLY way to show European leaders as able to give an answer NOT ONLY in the short term, but in medium and long term</p>		
37	 <p>[Renzi opens his thumb and forefinger in a 'U' sign and repeats it several times while pronouncing the words 'short term', 'medium' and 'long term']</p>	<p>this is the only way: monoglossic engagement and graduation (force: -quantification); able to give an answer: judgement (social esteem: +capacity); not only: graduation (force: -quantification); short: invoked appreciation (-valuation) and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture); medium/long: invoked appreciation (+valuation) and graduation (force: +intensification by hand gesture)</p>	<p>European leaders: deictic positioning</p>

Figure 5. Appraisal analysis

5.3 Deictic positioning

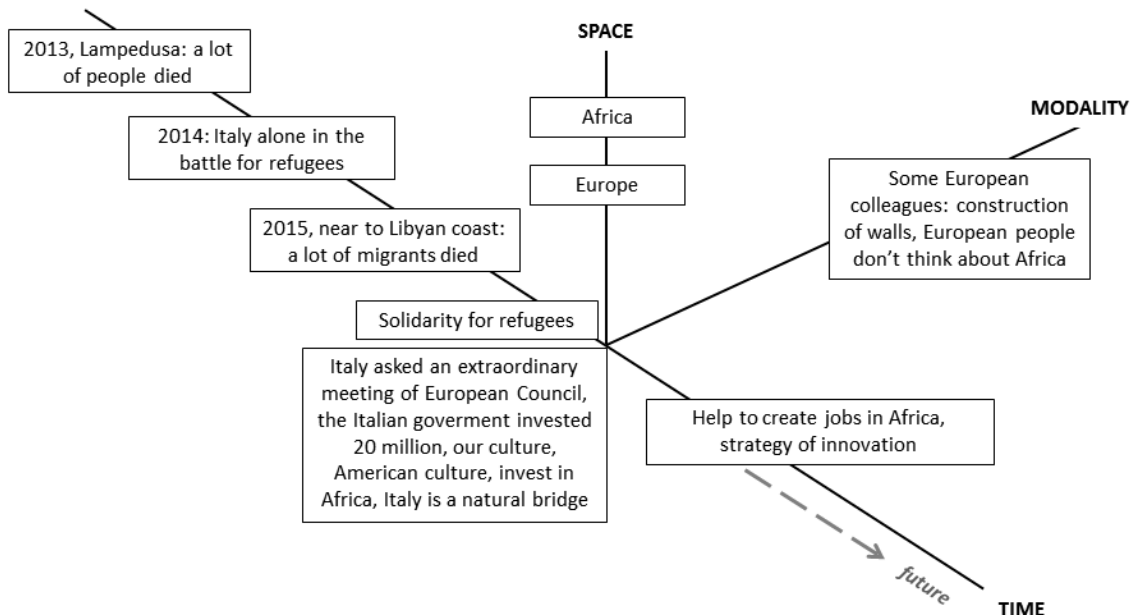


Figure 6. Deictic positioning

5.4. Discussion

This extract shows that Renzi’s statement of intent to promote ground-breaking innovation hides an articulated process of consolidation of the myth of the Italian nation and national identity. This process develops along the selective re-narration of Italy’s past and its role in the Mediterranean and the construction of shared background knowledge about what Italianness entails, which the speaker shares with his audience through (self-)stereotyping.

Renzi celebrates his cabinet while depicting some European partners as the Other and recalling the myth of Italy as a the “cradle of civilization” that plays a fundamental role in the migrant crisis. The opening statements sum up the pivotal resources Renzi uses to keep his cabinet and himself at centre stage: monoglossic engagement (no alternative or dialogic voices are present), self-referentiality and the implicit judgement of the stance of some European countries. Renzi presents himself as the direct agent of some pivotal events that serve the purpose of describing his own strategies as humanitarian and development-oriented (“I invest money to give this right to these poor people”; “I

propose, to my company, to the companies of Italian people, obviously, to invest in Africa”). These actions stand in contrast to European policies, whose negative evaluation is expressed through indirect judgement (“Italy was alone”, “nobody helped us”, “European people”).

Renzi reinforces the celebration of his cabinet by extensively using graduation in the form of lexical resources, repetitions and hand gestures, which also contribute to creating shared knowledge. This common ground is instrumental for Renzi to complete the persuasive function of his speech by gaining the audience’s trust. Thus, he uses calques and Italian names, and is the active agent of the cliché of Italy as a bridge in the Mediterranean (“I show Italy as a bridge”) in contrast to the European Other. Finally, Renzi explicitly recalls Italianness in the crucial discussion about culture: he appeals to the questioner’s identity to define a common cultural ground, which invokes the cliché of Italians as good people, a myth that was skilfully orchestrated in post-war Italy to dismiss the heavy heritage of Fascism.

Interestingly, while Renzi outlines his political strategies as being humanitarian and development-oriented – as opposed to other European policies – he also portrays Africa as a passive beneficiary. It is Italy and Europe that should invest in Africa, help the local population create jobs and provide a “strategy of innovation”. This approach to migration also shows in the Georgetown speech, where Renzi presents Italy as the cradle of culture, an active Mediterranean “saviour” against barrier-building European partners, whereas he depicts Africa as a victim of populist propaganda or, at its best, a place of energy and growth, but never as an active interlocutor.

Behind his open statement of intent, therefore, Renzi consolidates the myth of the nation as opposed to an external Other (mainly some members of the European Union) by reinforcing national identity through a selective narration of Italy’s past and its role in the Mediterranean, and by extensively using implicit and explicit (self-)stereotyping. In other words, by endorsing and promoting a stereotypical identity of Italy and Italians, Renzi implicitly reproduces the conservative myth of the nation in contrast to the European Other.

6. Concluding remarks on the outcome of the study

The extract analysed above presents some strategies that underpin Renzi's rhetoric. In both speeches, besides frequent, direct references to clichés such as football, art, food and the like, Renzi indulged in depicting a stereotypical country of emotions and beauty, but hostage to its own backwardness and (glorious) past. Moreover, Renzi embodied municipalism and familism by frequently referring to his city, Florence, as an example of excellence and by recurring to jokes and playful remarks to gain the approval of his public. Finally, Italianness was also reinforced by Renzi's extensive use of culturally-loaded nonverbal language, which, being more spontaneous than verbal language, was probably perceived as more sincere and trustworthy. Renzi's stereotypical behaviour therefore may have been interpreted as more honest than any of his statements fostering radical change.

By embodying stereotypes, Renzi may have simply been unaware that his own cultural background was acting as a self-fulfilling prophecy, which is one of the previously mentioned functions of categorisation. However, in the context of this study Renzi's deliberate references to the *leitmotifs* of Italian conservative tradition are significant. A detailed analysis of the variety of references would largely exceed the scope of this paper. I shall, therefore, limit my considerations to the most relevant examples.

Firstly, Renzi's pervasive references to the Florentine Renaissance echoes the debate on the regeneration of the Italian national character and, in particular, some post-unification theories on the (supposed) supremacy of Florentine culture over other regional traditions (Gioberti 1920 168-177; Marazzini 1999 161-177). Secondly, the opinions that Renzi expressed while discussing the current state of stagnation of the country, and his interest in forging the "new Italian" by promoting education and culture as a remedy against decadence, directly and indirectly recall mainstream theories of the Fascist period, with particular reference to Giovanni Gentile, a philosopher and Minister of Education at the time, and Mussolini himself (Falasca-Zamponi 2000; Vittoria 1984). The relevance of this heritage is reinforced by Renzi's direct quotations of some Italian intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s, with particular reference to

the negative epithets that Giovanni Papini, Giuseppe Prezzolini and Enrico Sacchetti addressed to their fellow citizens, whom they accused of being passive “museum custodians” (Patriarca 2010: 139, 192; Renzi 2006: 45; 2012: 85; 175). Thirdly, while praising the values of the Italian civilization, Renzi follows the example of 19th and 20th century reformers who looked at Mediterranean cultures as a viable alternative to the industrial civilisation of Northern Europe. Finally, while paying a special tribute to the Jesuits during his talk at Georgetown University, Renzi both celebrated his own spiritual education as a Catholic who practises Jesuit spiritual exercises, and stood in dramatic contrast to his role as the “demolition man”, since the Society of Jesus has largely been deemed responsible for the decadence of Italian society during the Counter-Reformation period.

It is worth underlining that both the pervasive use of stereotypes and references to traditional political theories and values serve the purpose of reinforcing nationalistic discourse. On the one hand, Renzi presented national identity as a fixed, unproblematic matter of fact, with its plethora of traditions, semiotic gestures and clichés, which Renzi never seemed to call into question. On the other, Renzi created a mythical geographic space and an idealised past to elicit a sense of belonging by surrounding the country with an aura of virtue and passion.

This multi-layered communication process bears significant implications. By appealing to memory and emotions rather than rationality, Renzi’s style adhered to the communication style of the “mythical” narration, which is widely used by contemporary Italian media and is typical of conservative politics (Loporcaro 2004: 13-28; 68). More importantly, the consequences and impact of Renzi’s discourse were particularly significant at the time of his institutional activity. As Prime Minister, indeed, he acted as a prototype for group membership, set values and embodied specific power relations; as a member of the élite, he created consensus and unanimity by turning a specific worldview into common sense (Bourdieu 1991: 13, 127). By describing himself through clichés, therefore, Renzi implicitly endorsed and promoted a stereotypical identity of Italy and Italians that, far from fostering innovation and progress, re-narrated a well-known conservative myth of the nation.

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