

“LIQUID JOB”. THE EMOTIONAL TEXT(URE) OF WORK UNCERTAINTY IN Q&A SITES

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1 Abstract

The transformation of professional and productive systems involves an increase in inequality and instability in working careers. It is reflected in an increase in precarious and low-paid Human Resources, subject to lack of social protection and representation, in a downsizing of the workers and their families' social rights. Specifically, the advent of globalization has led to the labor market opening and the research by companies for a niche in which to enter. In this framework, new constructs emerge in literature describing the evolution of the career that passes from traditional to 'protean career' (Hall & Mirvis, 1994) and 'boundaryless career' (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Protean career was defined by Hall and Marvis (1994) as the set of subjective career goals through vocational behavior; the boundaryless career has been defined by Arthur (1996) as the set of subjective and objective career dimensions on different levels of analysis, which include organizational positions, mobility, flexibility, work environment, opportunities and, at the same time, emphasize the connection between organizational promotions and career paths. However, work remains a primary element in defining the social structure, as well as a central experience in individual biographies (Dore, 2005). Work is the fundamental activity of man with which it adds value to the world and to himself. The work, therefore, is the foundation of the personality because it allows him to feel as an actor on the social scene. Thus, the lack of work deprives the person of a part of himself and of his social capital (Bourdieu, 1980; Putnam, 2001) because he puts him in an uncomfortable relationship with others. Indeed, in addition to globalization, this employment insecurity was amplified even after the Digital Revolution's explosion. If on the one hand the Digital Revolution has led to new demands in the labor market, above all following the introduction of increasingly smarter tools, but also following the emergence of generations of digital natives (Prensky, 2001) and adaptation the technologicalization of digital immigrants (Riva, 2014); on the other hand, the Digital Revolution has created new spaces for comparison and support for 2.0 navigating workers. The virtual environments, in which digital natives are engaged, offer the opportunity to quickly get in touch with other Internet users and overcome space-time barriers, typical of a face-to-face relationship; in fact the "connection" becomes the new and privileged form of interaction for the Third Millennium man. Thus, from the Nineties onwards, Internet users do not passively consume the information made available by the web, but turn into active users, who modify or create existing content based on own communication needs and that do not fear to expose their opinions on blogs or social networks about specific issues. These innovative technologies have provided various opportunities for collaboration and creation of user networks, generating virtual spaces in which each user is the author of signification practices. In particular, in a working world, like the Italian one that, above all in the South, creates fragmented and



uncertain professional identities, the Technological Revolution, on the one hand increases the "liquidity" (Bauman, 2003) work, on the other creates virtual spaces, in which the aim is generating a network to manage insecurity. With the Digital Revolution, we are witnessing of an increase in Internet users looking for information or asking for help in Question and Answer sites (Q&A sites). Participation in these virtual spaces is motivated by the interest of the participants in a subject treated in a relationship of reciprocity and pro-sociality. The topics covered are presented as digital contents that can be considered psycho-discursive practices, modulated in the "questions-answers" format. One of the most famous question and answer sites is Quora Inc., a virtual space that, unlike the others, is based on sharing: users can discuss any topic inserted in thematic macro-areas. A common fundamental aspect, which falls within the policy of all Q&A sites, is moderation by an administrator, appointed for each discussion, who has the task of enforcing the online behavioral code, called netiquette (Mintu- Wimsatt, Kernek, & Lozada, 2010). The research investigates, through a pilot study, how online sites, such as Q&A sites, become a sharing environments for marginalized Italian workers and a space to try resolving doubts. Starting from the hypothesis that Question and Answer sites become new virtual spaces of mutual help, the pilot study aims to detect, through the questions of 2.0 workers, which are the doubts of Italian Human Resources at the time of the working flexibility. In the study, 36 questions and 81 answers in Italian were collected, posted in one of the most famous Q&A sites, i.e. Quora, compared with 35 questions and 86 answers in English. The methodology used in the study is quanti- qualitative: with regard to the quantitative analysis, a Sentiment Analysis (Pang & Lee, 2008) and an Emotional Analysis were carried out; for the qualitative part, an analysis of mitigation strategies (Caffi, 2007) was carried out. In the research, the quantitative analysis has an exploratory function, as it has the task of detecting the limits of the results of Natural Language Processing (NLP) software. Starting from these limits, it has been highlighted the importance of a mixed (quantitative-qualitative) methodology to support the analysis carried out with Artificial Intelligence (AI). Specifically, the prevalence of positive sentiment and emotions of joy and fear in the Italian questions indicate a sense of hope. Qualitatively, it has been detected a higher presence of mitigation rhetorical strategies than questions in English and so it has been confirmed the presence of uncertainties in Italian workers, above all in topics regarding the request for advice on how to find work, as shown in the following WordClouds.

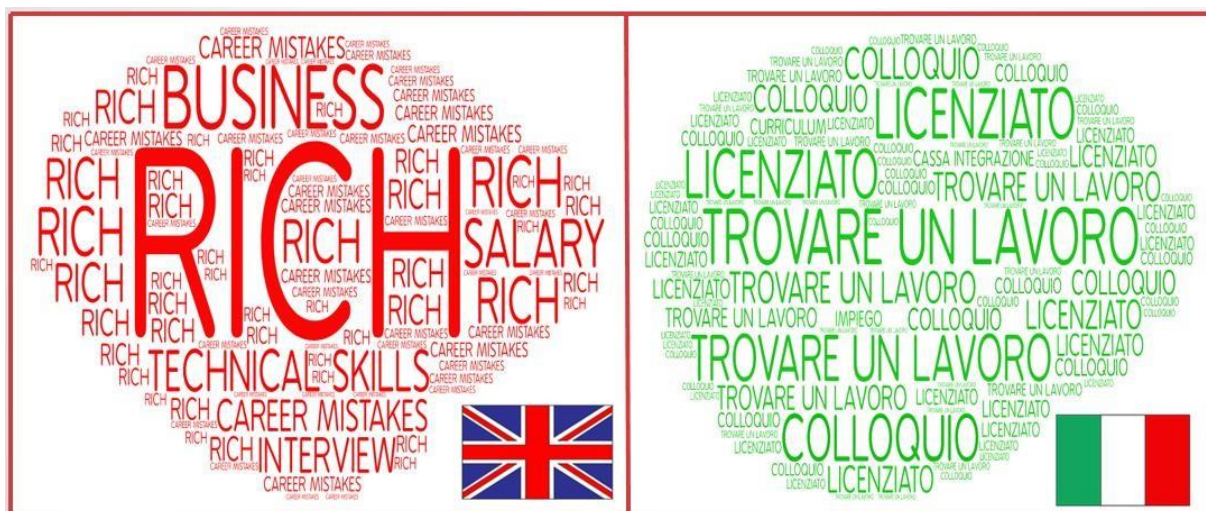


Fig. 1. WordClouds of the main topics of Italian and English workers' questions



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