

Gerlinde Mautner and Franz Rainer (Eds.)
Handbook of Business Communication

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Handbooks of Applied Linguistics

Communication Competence
Language and Communication Problems
Practical Solutions

Edited by
Karlfried Knapp
Daniel Perrin
Marjolijn Verspoor

Volume 13

Handbook of Business Communication

Linguistic Approaches

Edited by
Gerlinde Mautner and Franz Rainer

with
Christopher Ross

DE GRUYTER
MOUTON

ISBN 978-1-61451-683-5
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-1-61451-486-2
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-1-5015-0064-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2017 Walter de Gruyter Inc., Boston/Berlin
Typesetting: RoyalStandard, Hong Kong
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck
♻️ Printed on acid-free paper
Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

Preface to the Handbooks of Applied Linguistics Series

The present handbook constitutes Volume 13 of the De Gruyter Mouton *Handbooks of Applied Linguistics*. This series is based on an understanding of Applied Linguistics as an inter- and transdisciplinary field of academic enquiry. The *Handbooks of Applied Linguistics* provide a state-of-the-art description of established and emerging areas of Applied Linguistics. Each volume gives an overview of the field, identifies most important traditions and their findings, identifies the gaps in current research, and gives perspectives for future directions.

In the late 1990s when the handbook series was planned by its Founding Editors Gerd Antos and Karlfried Knapp, intensive debates were going on as to whether Applied Linguistics should be restricted to applying methods and findings from linguistics only or whether it should be regarded as a field of interdisciplinary synthesis drawing on psychology, sociology, ethnology and similar disciplines that are also dealing with aspects of language and communication. Should it be limited to foreign language teaching or should it widen its scope to language-related issues in general? Thus, what *Applied Linguistics* means and what an Applied Linguist does was highly controversial at the time.

Against this backdrop, Gerd Antos and Karlfried Knapp felt that a series of handbooks of Applied Linguistics could not simply be an accidental selection of descriptions of research findings and practical activities that were or could be published in books and articles labeled as “applied linguistic”. Rather, for them such a series had to be based on an epistemological concept that frames the status and scope of the concept of Applied Linguistics. Departing from contemporary Philosophy of Science, which sees academic disciplines under the pressure to successfully solve practical everyday problems encountered by the societies which aliment them, the founding editors emphasized the view that was only emerging at that time – the programmatic view that Applied Linguistics means the solving of real world problems with language and communication. This concept has become mainstream since.

In line with the conviction that Applied Linguistics is for problem solving, we developed a series of handbooks to give representative descriptions of the ability of this field of academic inquiry and to provide accounts, analyses, explanations and, where possible, solutions of everyday problems with language and communication. Each volume of the *Handbooks of Applied Linguistics* series is unique in its explicit focus on topics in language and communication as areas of everyday problems and in pointing out the relevance of Applied Linguistics in dealing with them.

This series has been well received in the academic community and among practitioners. In fact, its success has even triggered competitive handbook series by

DOI 10.1515/9781614514909-202

other publishers. Moreover, we recognized further challenges with language and communication and distinguished colleagues keep on approaching us with proposals to edit further volumes in this handbook series. This motivates both De Gruyter Mouton and the series editors to further develop the *Handbooks of Applied Linguistics*.

Karlfried Knapp (Erfurt), Founding Editor
Daniel Perrin (Zürich), Editor
Marjolijn Verspoor (Groningen), Editor

Acknowledgements

Handbooks are invariably collaborative efforts, and the present one is no exception. Accordingly, there are a number of people to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. In particular, we would like to thank:

- the series editors, Karlfried Knapp, Daniel Perrin and Marjolijn Verspoor, for accepting our proposal and encouraging us to bring it to fruition;
- Lara Wysong from De Gruyter for her unwavering patience and support;
- our department managers, Elisabeth Peters and Vera Poschauko, for dealing with a variety of admin issues vital to the project;
- the Department of Foreign-Language Business Communication at WU Vienna (Vienna University of Economics and Business) for funding the translations;
- Anthony Copnall, Kirsten Drysdale, Miya Komori-Glatz, Lauren Landsmann, Tom Rankin, Travis Pittman, Kurt Ubelhoer and Milda Zilinskaite for language-editing individual chapters; and
- Chris Ross for language-editing the whole text and engaging in productive dialogue with the authors to ensure focus, clarity and consistency.

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I Introduction

Gerlinde Mautner and Franz Rainer

1 Editors' introduction

Aims of the volume

The present handbook provides a *tour d'horizon* of linguistic approaches to business communication. It brings together various strands of research, ranging from traditional LSP approaches (Languages for Special Purposes or *Fachsprachenforschung*) to contemporary discourse-based work. While it is true that business communication research is a highly diverse field that accommodates many different disciplines, it is equally so that applied linguistics has special competencies to bring to the task.

The book reflects a growing international interest in business communication. Of course, we are not alone in addressing that interest. The volume edited by Bargiela-Chiappini (2009) continues to be a milestone in the field, offering a broad panorama of the many approaches that have been applied to the study of business communication. More recently, Hundt and Biadala's *Handbuch* (2015) and the one by Kastens and Busch (2016) provide German-speaking audiences with an overview of the subject that also includes contributions from disciplines other than linguistics, such as economics, business administration, and communication studies, while also including a number of practitioners' voices. Interestingly, and regrettably, there are few handbooks of this kind for other languages, a gap clearly worth addressing in future, particularly for other languages with supranational reach. Actually, we only know of one recent handbook on Russian business language, cf. Milehkina and Ratmajr (2017).

Increasingly, business communication also features in curricula at the secondary and tertiary levels – which, in turn, has led to increased demand for teacher training in the area. At the same time, business communication remains underrepresented in standard handbooks and textbooks on applied linguistics, and, despite its day-to-day relevance, is often drowned out by studies of language in other social settings, such as politics, healthcare and education. Equally, across the disciplinary divide, in organizational, management and communication studies, the specifically *linguistic* aspects of business communication are generally sidelined or completely ignored. Thus, while there is a strong trend towards research in business communication, that trend needs strengthening further, and in parts refocusing, especially where the contribution of linguistics is concerned. Hence the present handbook.

Finding an appropriate title that would cover all subjects treated without raising false expectations was no easy task. We eventually opted for *business communication* plus the subtitle *linguistic approaches*. The restriction conveyed by the subtitle is essential because business communication has attracted researchers from many disciplines apart from linguistics, such as management studies, communication studies,

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-001

psychology and anthropology, to name just a few. Such disciplines can be considered only in passing in this handbook. There can be no doubt that a mature discipline of business communication will eventually have to provide a grand synthesis of the insights provided from these different angles. However, our scope here is much more limited: namely, to provide an idea, to both linguists and scholars from other disciplines, of what linguistics can contribute to this area of study.

Even the linguistic approaches to business communication have been far from homogeneous, as the following brief account will show. Essentially, we can distinguish an American and a European tradition, which have quite different origins, though of late these two research traditions have begun to converge.

Business communication research: The American tradition

The English term *business communication* has a decidedly modern tinge, but in fact reaches back to the 19th century. The term is absent from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed., 1991), but Google Books allows retrieval of earlier examples such as the following: “The business communication alone between this country and the continent is amply sufficient to keep the posting department on a perpetual *qui vive*, [...]” (*The New Sporting Magazine*, vol. III, Nr. 13, May 1832, p. 296). In its beginnings, it seems to have been roughly synonymous with *business letter* or, as in the example above, of *business correspondence*. When business became a separate discipline in higher education in the United States around 1900, *business communication* was the name given to the sub-discipline of business administration dedicated to establishing rules for efficient English-medium communication in the business world, and to teach these to students who mostly had English as their native language. Thus, the initial focus in the United States was on the teaching of English to native speakers. Foreign business languages would only become part of a tripartite curriculum including business, regional/cultural studies and language in 1946 at the American Institute of Foreign Trade (cf. Doyle 2012: 105).

The academic discipline of business communication soon broadened its scope beyond business correspondence. As the following extract from the 1916 course catalogue of Indiana University shows, by then it had already come to include all business-related writing. Interestingly, the syllabus also lists a number of genres although it predates the advent of genre analysis proper by several decades.

W204. Business Communications. (3 cr.) Mr. HALTERMAN.

Prerequisites, forty-five hours and English W103. A study of objectives, methods, channels, media, and forms of communication in business; consideration of communication theory and practice; discussion and laboratory practice in the use of correct, forceful English in written business communication; preparation of letters, memorandum forms, reports, advertising, news stories, and publicity.

In the early part of the 20th century, the domain of business communication drew heavily on the venerable tradition of rhetoric (cf. Hagge 1989). Over time it developed into a highly articulated academic field with its own journals and learned society, the Association for Business Communication, or ABC, founded in 1936 as the Association of College Teachers of Business Writers. To this day, the ABC encompasses and draws its membership from a wide range of disciplines including management, marketing information systems and indeed linguistics; yet in that tradition, unlike in our handbook, specifically linguistic perspectives are not privileged.

The array of subjects treated under the umbrella of business communication has also evolved along with the ever more complex articulation of the business world and its increasingly international diversification, which has inevitably raised questions of multilingual and intercultural communication. Furthermore, the media revolution of the last few decades, which has brought us e-mail, smartphones, video-conferencing and social networks, has directly affected business communication, both the real-world activity that goes under this name and the academic discipline dedicated to studying it. Just as the range of problems addressed has grown wider, so the range of disciplines working on business communication has broadened too. As a result, the rhetorical study of business communication has come into contact with neighbouring disciplines such as management communication, organizational communication and corporate communication. These disciplines have a business administration background but share many common goals with rhetoric (cf. Louhiala-Salminen 2009: 308). A certain uneasiness about this multiplicity of disciplines, and theories within them, seems to have become widespread among scholars working in the field (cf. Du-Babcock 2006, 2014). Although we acknowledge these concerns, it is hard to see how theoretical diversity can be reined in without sacrificing the richness it brings. The approach adopted in the present handbook is to focus on one perspective, that of linguistics, but to peer beyond its disciplinary boundaries if and when appropriate, particularly in Part Five.

Business communication research: The European tradition

In Europe, research on business communication was almost exclusively confined to German-speaking countries and the Netherlands until well into the 20th century. Very much as in the United States, the impetus for academic research came from the institutionalization of business studies at the level of higher education, specifically at the so-called *Handelshochschulen* (“higher commercial colleges”). This is the reason why research remained confined essentially to those countries where such higher commercial colleges had been founded, such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of World War I.

In contrast to developments in the United States, in Europe, with its multilingual landscape, foreign-language teaching was the centre of attention right from the beginning. Along with those responsible for the core subjects of business administration, many institutions also recruited professors of foreign languages, as well as of economic geography and history, commercial law and technology (*Warenkunde*). Referring to the case of the Cologne college, Tribe (1995: 113) highlights the key role that foreign languages played in the curricula of higher commercial colleges in those times:

The last component of the curriculum was modern languages, but this part of the course was no afterthought, as testified by the large amount of space devoted to languages in the Cologne annual reports. It was taken for granted in all European higher commercial colleges of the time that facility in two foreign languages was an important element in the training of future managers and administrators, and a substantial amount of the students' time at Cologne was taken up by teaching [i.e., instruction], conversation, and reading in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Dutch, Norwegian, and Danish.

By the time of World War I it was universally accepted in Europe that a practical command of foreign languages was important for business people. Yet some higher commercial colleges were nevertheless reluctant to establish chairs in foreign business languages. After all, the full professors occupying such chairs would not only teach general language skills to students, but also spend much of their time doing research on the new subject area – and thus need money for assistants and for setting up specialized libraries. During the 1920s, this reluctance led to a series of programmatic articles by linguists who felt that their discipline was being neglected and who wanted to make a case for creating more chairs in foreign business languages. Many of these articles were assembled in the collective volume *Zur Wirtschafts-Linguistik* (“On business linguistics”), edited in 1932 by Ewald J. Messing, a professor at the higher commercial college of Rotterdam. Those who engaged in this kind of justificatory discourse were fully conscious of the need to offer something more than simple language skills in order to gain recognition as a full-blown academic discipline. Depending on their training and intellectual leanings, and perhaps local circumstances of which we are no longer aware, they came up with a range of ideas, many of which continue to be highly relevant.

Since most of those who aspired to take higher academic orders in the new discipline were historical linguists, one much-discussed question was the place to be assigned to their discipline in research and teaching. Linguists at the higher commercial colleges generally acquired deeper knowledge of the economy, the business world and the economic sciences than did the average philologist of the time. Some authors therefore claimed that the research carried out by “business linguists” (*Wirtschaftssprachforscher*) was well placed to deal with both the synchronic and diachronic aspects of business genres and terminology. They showed that dictionaries, both historical and bilingual, were lacking as far as the terminology of

economics and business was concerned. Some linguists also claimed that occasional historical explanations of business terms in class would enhance students' language awareness, a claim recently renewed by Resche (2013). Overall, however, they were conscious of the fact that linguistics at the higher commercial colleges would essentially have to be "applied linguistics" (*angewandte Sprachwissenschaft*), a term that appeared as early as 1921 in an article by Arnold Schröder, professor at the higher commercial college of Cologne from 1900 to 1919 (Messing 1932: 133).

The endeavour to find a place for diachrony, while acknowledging the fundamentally practical or "applied" orientation of linguistics at the higher commercial colleges, was typical of the German-speaking countries, where philology departments at universities were still devoted essentially to historical linguistics – think of scholars such as Alfred Schirmer and Hugo Siebenschein for German, or Leo Jordan for Romance languages. Nonetheless, during the inter-war period, Czechoslovakia also witnessed the development of a rigorously synchronic approach under the influence of the Prague Linguistic Circle. The contribution of these Czech linguists, most of whom worked at the higher commercial college in Prague, long remained even less known than that of their German colleagues, mainly because they published in Czech. Several decades later, however, Pytelka (1972) made this strand of research accessible for an English-reading audience.

Following the precepts of the Prague School, these linguists based the analysis of business language on structural and functional principles. Business language was initially conceived of as a more or less independent language structure, later on as a "functional style" of the standard language, whose peculiarities were determined by "the social environment (and the thematic basis given thereby) and the purpose for which the language is used" (Pytelka 1972: 214). In that spirit, they endeavoured to cover "the whole area of linguistic material serving the needs of commercial and economic activities, and not merely isolated words and phrases" (Pytelka 1972: 215). Pytelka himself, for example, found the style of English business letters to be subject to six tendencies (218–220): automation (i.e., use of set phrases), clarity, conciseness, effectiveness, impersonality, and politeness. Hugo Siebenschein, another Prague scholar, pointed out as early as 1936 that such stylistic tendencies were bound to vary over time due to changes in society.

A further idea which few would object to today – at least in theory – was that the teaching of business language had to be "content-based". As Alexander Snyckers put it (Messing 1932: 301): "It is impossible to teach or understand the language of economics and business with its rich technical terminology, and in accordance with the regulations of commercial law and trade practices, without previously having familiarized oneself with the details of trade and the economy." Snyckers was a trained economist of Belgian origin who obtained a chair in Economic and Cultural Studies as well as French Business Language at the higher commercial college of Leipzig in 1929. This appraisal of the importance of content, unsurprisingly, came from a trained economist, not from a linguist. Even today, the divide between scholars

and teachers of business language recruited from linguistics, on the one hand, and the economic sciences on the other still characterizes the business communication community and foreign language departments at business schools. Those with a background in economics or business studies tend to emphasize the importance of terminology, while people with a background in linguistics and language teaching are often more comfortable studying and teaching the use of everyday language in the business context.

The “business linguists” at the beginning of the 20th century had already routinely classified *Wirtschaftssprache*, the language of economics and business, as a *Fachsprache*, a language for specific purposes. Yet apart from glossaries with a fundamentally didactic purpose, they have left us only a few works that comply with the highest scholarly standards, all of them on the history of business terminology (e.g. Schirmer 1911; Kuhn 1931 and, after World War II, Haschka 1960 and Peter 1969). Hundt (1998: 1296) is therefore right to complain that most of the special languages of the various subfields of economics and business still await thorough treatment, whether synchronic or diachronic, and in English as well as other languages. It is quite rare for researchers to have expert knowledge both of an economic or business domain and of the terminology that goes with it. In consequence, significant gaps remain, and every new publication can at best hope to make a modest contribution to filling them. The present handbook does so by way of two examples with regard to the terminology of accounting (Chapter 21) and marketing (Chapter 20).

The most original attempt to justify the need for chairs in linguistics at higher commercial colleges was made by Messing (1928: 1–16). He started from what he considered a “groundbreaking insight” (*bahnbrechende Erkenntnis*) of his, namely that language was an economic good (an idea that would not be taken up again until Marschak 1965, but is quite fashionable these days: see Coulmas 1992; Dulfano 2013). Messing even took the trouble to prove this contention by applying to language each of the criteria that contemporary political economists considered essential for economic goods. Language, he argued, was one of the means used by companies to satisfy consumers’ needs. It was as essential at the level of planning, of “value-creating thoughts”, as during the production process and later in convincing customers to buy a particular product. In his eyes, language was the key to understanding the world of the foreign customer. The economic subjects taught at higher commercial colleges should therefore be supplemented with a “*Nationenwissenschaft*” (literally, “science of nations”, something akin to today’s cultural studies), based on linguistic foundations.

In a similar vein, Leo Jordan, *Dozent* of Romance languages at the higher commercial college of Munich from 1913 to 1923, stressed the culture- and language-bound nature of all economic and business terms (Messing 1932: 240): “The conceptual world of the businessman and his language are a mirror of his thoughts.” He went so far as to reject neoclassical economics because it did not acknowledge the

time-bound nature of basic concepts like “price”, which he said were erroneously used in equations as if they referred to a-temporal Platonic ideas (p. 267). This over-emphasis (McWhorter 2014) on the importance of language as a window on cognition probably had its origin in Wilhelm von Humboldt’s philosophy of language, or more generally, in the idealistic school of linguistics and the historical school of economics then popular in the German-speaking countries. The language we use to talk about these matters and the general intellectual context may have changed considerably. Yet Messing’s, and especially Jordan’s ideas still resonate today, at least with more radical representatives of the “linguistic turn” in management studies, of critical discourse analysis, and of cultural studies.

Another aspect that, unfortunately, still resonates a century later is the struggle for academic recognition of many “business linguists”. In a recent survey, for example, Nickerson (2014: 50–51) found that, though business-communication scholars hold senior positions at the level of professor in some institutions, in the United States “many BC professionals now hold non-tenure track positions as BC instructors”. In a similar vein, Doyle (2012) proposes designating as Business Language Studies (BLS) a curriculum consisting of business + language + culture, in order to anchor the field more adequately in US higher education. “The absence of a disciplinary nomenclature and an accompanying theoretical discourse”, he complains (Doyle 2012: 107), “has also made it unnecessarily difficult for business language specialists within foreign language departments to present their dossiers for promotion and tenure review because of lingering doubts regarding the legitimacy of business language (BL) in terms of theory, intellectual foundations, and related scholarship – that is, as an unobjectionable field of inquiry, research, and publication.”

Our extensive treatment of the European tradition of *Wirtschaftslinguistik* during the first half of the 20th century reflects the fact that this interesting chapter in the history of business communication seems virtually unknown outside the German-speaking world. The reasons for its neglect are clear. Most works written within, and dealing with this strand of thinking (Drozd and Seibicke 1973: 68–78; Peter 1973; Picht 1973) were published in what have since become “exotic” languages: German and, even more so, Czech. We hope, nonetheless, that our comments on the “business linguistics” tradition will allow readers from outside the German-speaking world to better appreciate some of the contributions in this volume. One of the few institutions, in fact, where this tradition, especially its emphasis on foreign languages, on terminology and on content-based teaching, continued after World War II was the *Hochschule für Welthandel* (literally: “College for World Trade”) in Vienna. The *Hochschule* had originated in 1898 as a commercial college with the name *Kaiserlich-Königliche Exportakademie* (“Imperial-Royal Export Academy”), but in 1975 became a university of economics and business and was renamed *Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien*, *WU Wien* for short. The editors and several of the present volume’s contributors are based at this institution.

Much of the linguistic research on business communication carried out in Europe after World War II, and especially from the 1980s onwards, had different sources of inspiration. The functional approach of the Prague school found a successor in Halliday's "systemic-functional" linguistics, which has inspired a great deal of work on business language, especially in the UK. In the German-speaking countries, the advent of text linguistics enhanced the study of text types used in the business world, and the same later happened with genre theory in the English tradition. Conversation analysts tackled real-life business talk, such as sales talk or negotiations. Discourse analysis focused on questions of power and ideology, with which the business world is rife. Sociolinguists took a closer look at the question of language choice in businesses, as well as at overt or hidden language policies. In the German-speaking countries, *Fachsprachenforschung*, the study of languages for specific purposes, inspired extensive work on business language, much of it carried out in the context of translation studies. Last but not least, the increasing importance of teaching foreign languages, especially English, to students of economics and business, has provoked an ever-growing amount of research on pedagogical issues related to business communication. The following 27 chapters of this handbook provide a representative, but necessarily incomplete view of the achievements of this research.

The names of the discipline and the title of the book

The preceding discussion of the history of business communication as an academic discipline also allows us to put into perspective the question, raised at the beginning, about the various terms used to refer to the field. In the American tradition, *business communication* has been the name of the discipline right from the beginning, though it has greatly extended its semantic range over time. As communication in the business world became more and more complex, so did the academic discipline that studied it. The terms first used in the German tradition were either *Handelssprache* ("language of commerce") or *Wirtschaftssprache*, while the loan translation *Wirtschaftskommunikation* did not enter the scene before the 1960s. *Handelssprache* has become quite rare nowadays, while *Wirtschaftssprache* is still widely used. It expresses a concept that is broader than the one conveyed by English *business language*, both in the horizontal and in the vertical dimension. For sure, business is the central ingredient of the concept associated with *Wirtschaft* ("the economy"), but the German word also accommodates all those domains that in English are considered part of economics: monetary policy, the labour market, free-trade agreements and other macro-level phenomena. The word often also encompasses the vertical dimension in its entirety, from the shop floor up to the many special languages developed at university departments of economics and management.

The most accurate translation of *Wirtschaftssprache* would therefore be *language of economics and business*, admittedly a rather unwieldy expression which in the present handbook we will only use when economics is explicitly part of the picture. Some contributors have approached their subject with the German concept of *Wirtschaftssprache* in mind, which is why this volume addresses some linguistic issues that are not normally part of publications on business communication in the more restricted sense. A similar problem of translation, by the way, arises with regard to French, a language where *économie* (“economy”) and *affaires* (“business”) – the latter studied by *gestion* (“business administration”) – are rather strictly separated, very much like English *economy* and *business*, and *economics* and *business administration*. The French therefore distinguish between *langage des affaires* (“business language”) and *langage économique* (“economic language / language of economics”), with the latter having first appeared as characterizing the language – or “jargon”, as some critics preferred to call it – of the Physiocrats in the second half of the 18th century.

The second half of the term *business communication* is also in need of clarification, and indeed justification. While Americans have used *communication* right from the beginning, one of the best-known European publications on our topic, Bargiela-Chiappini’s 2009 *Handbook of business discourse*, opted for *discourse* instead. *Discourse* is a notoriously fuzzy term, and not even the contributors to Bargiela-Chiappini’s handbook use it consistently, as one reviewer observed (Sweeney 2010: 389):

The definition of business discourse itself varies from chapter to chapter. In some cases the discourse seems to refer to the process of everyday language use. In other cases, it is viewed at a societal or institutional level – for the way in which communication enables organisations to act together using a collective discourse, an area of study that interests organisational ontology and critical studies. On other occasions it can refer to both.

Our own handbook is likely to attract similar criticism. And indeed, perhaps the fuzziness of *discourse* is best accepted or even embraced for its richness (Mautner 2016: 22–23).

In her discussion of the relationship between the concepts of communication and discourse, Louhiala-Salminen (2009) points out that both “focus on text and talk in the context of business”, but that business discourse “focuses more directly on text and uses context to explain linguistic phenomena” (Louhiala-Salminen 2009: 305). She proposes treating *business communication* as an “‘umbrella’ term covering all formal and informal communication within a business context, using all possible media, involving all stakeholder groups, operating both at the level of the individual employee and at that of the corporation” (Louhiala-Salminen 2009: 312). From that perspective, *business discourse* qualifies as a hyponym of (i.e., a

more specific expression than) the more general term *business communication*. To refer to *business discourse* would be appropriate, for example, when one discusses the social relevance of text and talk in economics and business. The term *workplace discourse* (Koester 2010) would, from that perspective, also be considered a hyponym of *business communication*.

Structure of the volume

The handbook is divided into five main parts. The second chapter in the part headed *Introduction* looks at the language of economics and business from a historical perspective. The part headed *Genres and media* first discusses genres in general terms, and then moves on to specific examples: business presentations, negotiations, meetings, sales talk and sales training, business letters, e-mail and mobile communication, company websites and annual reports. In the third part, headed *Foreign languages and culture*, one chapter discusses intercultural business communication. Two more address various aspects of multilingualism, while a further two focus on the teaching and learning of business languages. The fourth part, *Lexical phenomena* in business communication, begins with a chapter that explains the structure of business terms. That chapter is followed by one on metaphor, metonymy and euphemism and another on language planning, standardization and linguistic purism. Next, two chapters deal with the terminology used in specific functional domains, namely marketing and accounting. The remaining three chapters in that part discuss the use of proper names, business lexicography and corpus linguistic approaches to studying business language. The fifth and final part is devoted to *Building bridges across disciplines*. It contains a chapter each on organizational discourse and spoken workplace discourse. The bridge that these two chapters build connects scholarly approaches to business communication with practitioners' viewpoints and concerns, related to corporate language and design, on the one hand, and the use of standardized text modules on the other.

Together, the 27 chapters cover a vast territory, ranging from the micro-level of lexical choice to the macro-level of language policy and culture, from the historical to the contemporary, and from theory to practice. Yet however broad the coverage, it is inevitably patchy, as editors and authors, of this and similar handbooks, grapple with the sheer vastness of the field. The map thus contains many blank spots. And while some will in time be filled by research, new ones will appear, as the landscape of business communication is changed by new media, new socio-cultural trends and new geopolitical scenarios, all with an impact on the role that languages play in business. Clearly, linguists interested in business communication will continue to have their work cut out for them.

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Franz Rainer

2 The history of the language of economics and business

1. Introduction
2. Antiquity
3. The Early Middle Ages
4. The High and Late Middle Ages
5. The Renaissance
6. Foreign languages in business in modern times
7. From “*Handlungswissenschaft*” to *Betriebswirtschaftlehre*
8. The language of economics from the Mercantilist period to the present
9. Conclusion

1 Introduction

To begin a volume about applied linguistics with a chapter on language history may strike the reader as strange. Yet, before turning to more obviously relevant topics, it may be useful to put the language of economics and business briefly into historical perspective. One benefit that the scholar can reap from a historical approach is a heightened awareness of the internal complexity that characterises our object of inquiry. At first glance, the catchy label “business language” might lead one to assume the existence of a homogeneous entity corresponding to that label in the outside world. However, the historical perspective shows how, from very modest beginnings in the language of commerce, this special language has developed ever more capillary ramifications in modern societies with the increasing division of labour, and with the growing sophistication of business techniques and economic thinking. Another benefit of the historical approach is that it sensitizes the researcher to the fact that the overwhelming dominance of English in this domain is a relatively recent phenomenon: Italian, French, German, and to a minor degree even languages such as Arabic, Dutch and Japanese, have all helped to shape the vocabulary and genres of the international language of economics and business. Last but not least, we should not forget that all speakers have memories, and that the latest stage of history is therefore part and parcel of synchrony. This verdict, of course, also applies to language history, as is shown by the many occasions on which speakers make metalinguistic comments about the obsolete or neologistic character of an expression. In a 2014 magazine I read: “Economists used to call this inflating the currency. Some still do, but in Washington DC they now call it quantitative easing.” And in a *Financial Times* article dated 17 September 2004: “For the

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-002

past 15 years, Intel [...] has been trying to find new opportunities to balance its core business. For the first half of the 1990s, managers referred to this ambition as ‘Job 2’, as opposed to ‘Job 1’, which referred to the core business.” These two quotations, which one could multiply indefinitely, remind us that the language of economics and business is highly dynamic, much more so than our dictionaries would have us believe.

2 Antiquity

If we limit ourselves to Europe and its neighbours, the documented history of business language reaches back as far as the 4th millennium BC. This is due to the exceptional durability of the clay tablets used by the Sumerians, and later on the Akkadians, to document important information. Much of this information concerned economic transactions, such as the purchase of houses or slaves, or an elementary form of book-keeping. According to Graslin (2007: 20), the Akkadians had separate words for local trade (*mahīru*) and long-distance trade (*kāru*), although in general the economic sphere and its vocabulary were not yet clearly separated from other activities of everyday life.

Proto-Indo-European is even older than Sumerian, dating back to the 5th or 6th millennium BC. However, given the lack of written documents, Proto-Indo-European “business language” can only be reconstructed by comparing the oldest stages of the daughter languages. An early attempt in that direction was made in 1886 by Otto Schrader, who discovered that Proto-Indo-European possessed words for concepts such as ‘property’, ‘barter’, or ‘price’. This meant that, by around 5,000 BC, the Indo-Europeans had already reached a level of economic development well beyond that of primitive civilizations as described by ethnologists. While Benveniste (1969: 146) agreed on that point, he insisted that the act of buying and selling involving two individuals should be distinguished from “commerce” in the more ambitious sense of an activity carried out by specialized agents – and for such concepts Proto-Indo-European had no specific designations (p. 140). The corresponding terminologies did not appear until later, in the individual Indo-European languages, along with the development of commerce – more specifically, long-distance trade (p. 141). They were created either on a native basis (cf. Latin *merx* ‘commodity’ → *commercium* ‘commerce’, *mercare* ‘to trade’ → *mercator* ‘merchant’; *otium* ‘leisure’ → *negotium* ‘business’ → *negotiarī* ‘to do business’ → *negotiator* ‘wholesaler’) or through borrowing (cf. *arrhae* ‘deposit’, taken from Phoenician). The same is also true of concepts such as ‘debt’ or ‘loan’, whose designations were created in the individual languages by means of semantic specialization of existing words (pp. 171, 181).

As well as confronting us with a world in which the language of business was not yet neatly separated from everyday language, the study of business-related

vocabulary in Sumerian, Akkadian and the older stages of Indo-European is instructive from a methodological point of view. In fact, the very nature of the linguistic evidence available, and the scarcity of independent information about the material and social world referred to, invite scholars to reflect constantly on the relationship between words, concepts, and “reality”. Graslin (2007: 26), for example, argues that our modern conceptual categories in the business sphere overlap only imperfectly with the ancient Akkadian categories. The same observation applies to Roman times. France (2007: 335), in a penetrating study of Roman fiscal terminology, warns against projecting modern categories on to the past without reflection, having found it difficult to pin down the exact meanings of such Latin terms as *stipendium*, *tributum*, or *vectigal*. The task is further complicated by the fact that words tend to be more stable over time than concepts. For example, Latin *tributum* was originally a neutral term reserved for Roman citizens, but it was later put to a new use by the Emperors – possibly with euphemistic intention – as a designation for the tax the provinces had to pay to Rome (France 2007: 352).

Problems of interpretation tend to be even more demanding in the realm of private finance, for which documents are scarcer. A lucid discussion of many banking and business terms in the Roman world can be found in Andreau (2004). For instance, the Romans had a word for ‘banker’, viz. *argentarius*, but there has been an intense debate among economic historians as to exactly what banking activities Roman *argentarii* carried out. Andreau (2004: 30) suggests that they were essentially deposit bankers. Furthermore, the Romans also had a word for ‘loan’, viz. *mutuum*, but to what extent did the related concept match that of our modern term? According to Andreau (2004: 147), the Romans had a much vaguer concept of ‘loan’, ignoring, for example, the modern distinction between loans for production and loans for consumption.

Indeed, by present standards, the Roman economy was relatively unsophisticated, lacking not only bank money, paper money, bonds and shares, to name but a few central features of the modern business world, but also commercial tools that did not appear until the Middle Ages, such as the bill of exchange or double-entry book-keeping. Unsurprisingly, Latin also lacked terms to express these concepts. In other cases, however, the lack of a direct equivalent for a modern term cannot be taken as evidence that the corresponding reality was unknown to the Romans. For instance, they had no term for ‘crisis’, that is, no term covering all the different situations that we today subsume under this concept, yet they did have words for more concrete instances, such as liquidity crises, which they candidly referred to as *inopia nummorum* ‘lack of coins’. Generally speaking, Roman reasoning about business and the economy was rather low on abstraction. Tellingly, the Romans have left us elaborate treatises on agriculture, politics and rhetoric but no systematic treatment of economic matters.

The problem of imperfect conceptual fit is still highly relevant in contrastive analyses of economics and business terminology in modern languages. In spite of

the profound homogenizing effect that several centuries of intercourse among European merchants and economists have had on our conceptual systems, there remain numerous differences that would deserve closer scrutiny by linguists. Valuable studies have been contributed, for example, by Levy (1932: 315–316) on the concept of ‘middle class’, by Hummel (1993) on ‘employee’, by Krause (2008) on ‘performance’, and by Kuße (2014) on ‘responsibility’. It is no coincidence that none of these scholars comes from the Anglo-Saxon academic sphere, where the conceptual structuring of the economy and the business world in present-day English tends to be taken for granted.

3 The Early Middle Ages

As mentioned in the previous section, the Roman business world was relatively unsophisticated in comparison to that of modern times or even the Later Middle Ages. Correspondingly, business-related terminology was also relatively scant: Andraeu’s (2004: xii–xvi) glossary, for example, does not exceed three pages if one discounts non-business-related and Greek material. On the one hand, there were terms for the agents, activities and places of commercial exchange: *circumforaneus* ‘travelling trader’, *mercator* ‘merchant’, *negotians* and *negotiator* ‘businessman, wholesaler’; *emptio venditio* ‘sale’; *mercatus* ‘market place’, *nundinae* ‘periodic market’ and, of course, the *Forum* in Rome. ‘Renting’ was called *locatio conductio*. The name for deposit banking was *argentaria*, that for a deposit banker, as already mentioned, *argentarius*, from the second century AD onwards *nummularius* and in late Antiquity *collectarius*. *Nummularius* originally designated a money-changer and money-assayer, with the latter also being referred to as *spectator*. A deposit banker used to keep an account (*ratio*) for his clients and to make loans (*commodare, mutuari*). Any person lending money at interest could be called a *fenerator*. A special category of loan, characterized by the high risk (*periculum*) involved, was the maritime loan, called *fenus nauticum, pecunia nautica* or *pecunia traiecticia*. The interest on a loan was referred to as *usura*, a word that did not yet have the pejorative tinge it was given later on by the Church. Though the Romans had no bills of exchange, they could transfer funds without material transportation (*permutatio*). Rich people had a treasurer (*dispensator*), a cashier (*arcarius*) and a farm manager (*vilicus*), who were mostly slaves. Slaves, incidentally, could also do business for themselves if entrusted with a *peculium*, money taken out of the master’s patrimony. Last but not least, the Romans also knew the institution of the company, called *societas*, most often in the rudimentary form of a sleeping partnership.

Only a few of these terms survived the Early Middle Ages, when the Western part of the former Roman Empire lapsed back into the state of a largely rural barter economy (Pirenne 1972), and schooling retreated to monasteries. It is true that, from

the High Middle Ages onwards, the conceptual needs of more advanced societies led to thousands of Latinisms being revived in the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* of medieval schools. However, almost uniquely, this did not apply to the language of business, where little Roman terminology was taken up even by the Romance languages, never mind other European tongues. To illustrate this, we call a ‘banker’ a *banker*, using a term taken from medieval Italian, and not by a term rooted in the Latin (e.g., “argentry”). The following discussion, based on the useful synthesis provided by Schiaffini (1930), further illustrates the fate of Roman business terms in Romance languages during the Early Middle Ages.

Thus in the domain of bartering, *mutare* ‘to exchange’ was replaced early on by *cambiare* (cf. French *changer*); at a later date, Italian added *barattare*, and French and the languages of the Iberian Peninsula contributed *troquer/trocar*, of uncertain origin. The word for ‘to sell’, *vendere*, has been retained everywhere, while its opposite, *emere* ‘to buy’, has been replaced by *comparare* (cf. Italian *comprare*) and **adcaptare* (cf. French *acheter*; the asterisk indicates that this verb is not attested in Latin, but can be reconstructed from later evidence). *Merx*, the word for ‘commodity’, has been partly preserved (cf. Italian *merce*, Old French *merz*), but modern terms such as Italian *mercanzia* or French *merchandise* are native creations from the same root. While *pretium* ‘price’ has survived everywhere, *solvere* ‘to pay’ has been replaced by *pacare* (cf. French *payer*), literally ‘to pacify’. Latin *finis* ‘payment’ survived in Old French *fin*, whence *finer* ‘to pay’ and *finance*, which originally meant ‘payment’. Among the Latin names for coins, *denarius* and *solidus* have survived, for example in French *denier* and *sou*.

As regards the designations for those places where business was carried out, *mercatus* has been retained in all Romance languages (cf. French *marché*), while *nundinae* has only survived in Sardinian *nūndinas*. *Forum* took on varied meanings, for example, that of ‘market tax’ in Old French *fuer*. Since markets were often held on Sundays and holidays, *feriae* ‘holiday’ came to mean ‘fair’ (cf. French *foire*, the etymon of English *fair*). Of the designations for different categories of traders, *mercator* and *negotiator* have only survived in a few languages (cf. Old Spanish *mercador*, Rumanian *negustor*). French *négociateur* is a loanword from the Late Middle Ages, which from the Renaissance onwards changed its meaning into that of ‘negotiator’. The most successful word for ‘trader’ was the agent noun **mercatans* (cf. French *marchand*), derived from the verb **mercatare* ‘to go to market’, itself a derivative of *mercatus* ‘market’. The synonymous Italian noun *mercante* is derived from *mercare*, a straightforward descendant of Latin *mercare* ‘to buy’. Old French *mercier*, the etymon of English *mercier*, was a native derivative from *merz* ‘commodity’.

One lexical field where much change occurred during the Early Middle Ages was that of money lending (cf. Jordan 1927). The likely reason is that this activity was stigmatized under the influence of the Church and therefore became prone to the use of euphemisms. The Latin verbs *commodare*, *fenerari* and *mutuari* all disappeared and were replaced by **impromutare* (cf. French *emprunter*) and *praestare* (cf. French

prêter), literally ‘to give’. Usury continued to be referred to by the descendants of *usura*, but also by those of *lucrum* ‘gain’ (cf. Spanish *logrero* ‘usurer’). In its original sense of ‘gain’, *lucrum* has been replaced by **profectum* (cf. French *profit*). *Capitale* first referred to livestock (cf. French *cheptel* ‘cattle’), the “capital” of agrarian societies, before it started a great international career, from Italian, in its modern sense (cf. Deschepper 1963–64; Knobloch 1972).

Latin *lucrare* ‘to gain’ also changed its meaning, as witnessed by Romanian *a lucra* ‘to work’ and Spanish *lograr* ‘to achieve’. Its place was taken by Franconian **waidanjan* (cf. French *gagner*), which is related to Modern German *Weide* ‘pasture’, pointing to the rural context of origin. Generally speaking, however, the Germanic contribution to the early Romance business vocabulary was quite restricted. One could add **sparanjan* (cf. French *épargner* ‘to save’), **barganiare* ‘to haggle’ (cf. Old French *bargaignier*, the ancestor of English *bargain*), or **waddi* ‘pledge’, which replaced *pignus* in Northern France (cf. French *gage*).

Even so, the Early Middle Ages are the moment when the Germanic languages first appear on the screen of business-language studies. The oldest layer of English business language was first examined in Bernhard Fehr’s *Habilitation* at the University of Zurich, a seminal work that is still an indispensable source. According to Fehr (1909, Part 1), the Anglo-Saxons of the Early Middle Ages already had expressions for the concepts ‘property’, ‘pawn brokering’, ‘money’, ‘price’, ‘debt’ and ‘usury’. More or less at the same time as Fehr, Alfred Schirmer outlined the history of German business language in his inaugural dissertation of 1911, which was republished in 1925 for a wider readership. Schirmer (1911a: 8–9) states that there is no evidence for the existence of anything one could refer to as a Proto-Germanic commercial terminology. In fact, some of the oldest German trade-related terms are of Latin origin. Examples are Old High German *mangāri* ‘trader’ (cf. English *monger*) from Latin *mango* ‘(slave-)trader’; *kaufen* ‘to buy’ going back to Latin *caupo* ‘inn-keeper, shopkeeper’; *Markt* ‘market’ from *mercatus*; *Zoll* ‘customs duty’, from *teloneum*; *kosten* ‘to cost’ from *constare*. These words must have entered the German language through contact with the Romans along the Rhine and the Danube rivers. Alongside these Latinisms, there also existed a sizeable number of indigenous business terms: *feil* ‘on sale’, *sellan* ‘to hand over, sell’, *krāmāri* ‘grocer’, from *kram* ‘tavern’, *wehsal* ‘exchange, trade’, *līhan* ‘to lend’, *werd* ‘price’, *wandelunga* ‘commerce’, *wantal* ‘business’, *gelt* ‘payment’, *wuochar* ‘gain’, etc., as well as complex words built from them by derivation or compounding. Overall, as one can see, the business-related terminology of German and English in the Early Middle Ages was still quite elementary.

The demise of the Western Roman Empire under the attacks of the Germanic tribes, and later the Arabs, severely compromised the unity of the Mediterranean as a trading area. Yet trading relations between West and East never ceased completely. Europeans maintained regular contact with the Arab world, which functioned as an intermediary between South-East Asia, Africa and Europe. Many business terms of

Arabic origin in the European languages, like *tariff*, testify to this fact. While European terms of Arabic origin have been studied widely, the Old Arabic business documents themselves (cf. Kaplony 2014) are yet to be analyzed from the perspective of business language history. The same is true of business texts in Hebrew, for example the abundant documents written by Jewish merchants, conserved in the storeroom (*Genizah*) of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Cairo and dating from roughly 950 to 1150 (Abulafia 2014: 258–259).

4 The High and Late Middle Ages

4.1 The “Commercial Revolution”

After the turn of the millennium, commerce in Europe returned to a level which made written documents indispensable (on commerce and writing from a general perspective, cf. Häcki Buhofer 1994). Many hitherto itinerant merchants, who had previously transported their commodities from market to market, settled down in the main trading centres, from which they organized their commercial activities by means of a network of family members, agents and partners. This new way of organizing trade, especially long-distance trade, converted business correspondence and book-keeping into two of the major requirements for successful commerce. The introduction of paper, which was much cheaper than parchment and had been brought to Europe by the Arabs in the 12th century, must also have been of vital importance in the diffusion of written commercial documents from the High Middle Ages onwards (Patzé 1970: 60).

4.2 Languages used in business

The question of language choice was by no means easy for medieval merchants. In local trade, they would obviously use the local dialect, though in bilingual societies, such as medieval England, even local trade sometimes made it necessary to choose between languages. But where language really became crucial, was, of course, foreign trade. There, where written communication had greater importance, the language issue was a different one. For, throughout the Early Middle Ages and even beyond, learning to write was synonymous with learning to write in Latin, which remained the language, not only of the Church and the administration, but also of trade (Pirenne 1929: 21).

As a result, it took some time before the vernacular languages were able to challenge Latin in this domain. Their adoption in business-related texts took place at different moments in different regions of Europe and depended largely on the type of text. The first country to adopt vernacular languages instead of Latin was

Italy, though with significant differences from region to region. Tuscany seems to have had a pioneering role. There we find vernacular registers of property, taxes and expenditures dating back to the 11th century (Castellani 1982), and we have fragments of a Florentine bank's ledger written in Old Tuscan from 1211. Venice also seems to have switched to Venetian early on (Stussi 1989, 1993; Formentin 2015), whereas Genoa and Milan did not abandon Latin until the 15th century (Tucci 1989: 554, 548). As far as text types are concerned, the vernacular languages were preferred in company-internal documents (ledgers, letters, notes, etc.), while in the public sphere (administrative texts, contracts, etc.) Latin was used until much later. Still, as courts began to accept merchants' documents as legally valid, the role of notaries, who drew up the Latin documents, decreased.

In other Romance countries, vernacular business documents from the High and Late Middle Ages are less abundant. With regard to French, Pirenne (1929: 28) mentions the preservation of many *lettres de foire*, that is, promises to pay at a later fair, from the 13th century, and the first known ledgers date from the 14th century. Occitan and Catalan ledgers exist from more or less the same time (cf., for example, Johan Blasi's ledger from 1329–37, edited by Hauck in 1965, which is written in the Occitan dialect of the Languedoc). In Northern Europe, the 14th century was also a crucial transitional period for the Hanseatic League: according to Tophinke (1999: 200), the transition from Latin to Low German took place within a period of 70 years, during which both languages were used side by side, sometimes in one and the same document.

Outside business practice, among medieval scholars writing on economic or business-related subjects, Latin remained *de rigueur* throughout the Late Middle Ages. However, these subjects were only rarely treated in academic circles. From the realm of economics, the only pertinent example is Nicolas Oresme's *Tractatus de origine, natura, iure et mutationibus monetarum* from 1355, in which the author chastised the common medieval practice of debasing coins. Nevertheless, moral theologians regularly included commentaries on usury and the question of just price in their *Summae* chapters. The theologians continued to publish in Latin well into the modern times, while later economic writers resorted to the vernacular languages, with the exception of some German cameralists of the 16th and 17th centuries. When Antonio Genovesi started lecturing as the first university chair of economics in Naples in 1754, he opted for Italian – a decision that still caused a scandal among his peers.

A special situation had arisen in England which, after the Norman conquest of 1066, remained a bilingual society for the following three centuries. As Fehr (1909: 17) observes, trade continued to be carried on mostly in English unless a public official intervened in the process, in which case French would enter the scene. The administration and the courts were French-speaking, which has left obvious traces in the English language today (English legal terminology is almost exclusively French). More to the point in our context, the Exchequer, which collected and managed the

royal revenue, provided much of the central terminology of book-keeping for English merchants (cf. Fehr 1909: 34–54): *account, amount, arrears, auditor, cancel, charge, control, discharge, enter, expenses, installment, item, rebate, receipt, sum, surplus*, etc. Fehr (1909: 58–60) also points out the profound influence that French exerted on the terminology of the market: *bargain, commodity, cost, count, market, merchandise, merchant, money, pay, price, profit, value*, etc.

At all times, foreign trade has stimulated the acquisition and use of foreign languages. An author from the late 18th century (Glück, Häberlein, and Schröder 2013: 323) provided the following rationale: “*Der Fremde gönnt seine Aufträge lieber dem, der ihn gerade zu versteht, als einen andern, der erst Dollmetscher dazu bedarf.*” [The foreigner would rather do business with somebody who is able to understand him directly than with someone who needs an interpreter]. In the Middle Ages, speakers of different Romance languages, or of different Low German and Scandinavian languages, could probably understand each other given some goodwill on both sides. But encounters among speakers of languages with no, or a more distant relationship inevitably involved communicative stumbling blocks. In the Eastern Mediterranean, “Italian” and “French” – note that at that time Italian and French did not yet exist as consolidated standard languages – seem to have been the most prestigious languages, spoken by the local trading partners with varying degrees of proficiency. Some scholars have claimed that this situation gave rise to a commercial pidgin, called “lingua franca”, but this idea is controversial: Cifoletti (2004), for example, holds that a stable pidgin existed only in North Africa from the beginning of the modern times until the 19th century.

More historical data is available on how Germans and Italians communicated in Venice during the Late Middle Ages. Consequently, we know that the sons of German merchants studied Venetian, and those of Venetian merchants “German”, either with a language teacher in their home town or through “immersion” during a prolonged stay abroad. Several “textbooks” used by such language learners are known to us, the most famous of which is by *maistro Zorzi/Meister Georg* of Nuremberg from 1424 (ed. Pausch 1972; cf. also Hollberg 1999; Rossebastiano 2002). The central part of this textbook consists in lively dialogues in Venetian and “German” – actually, the dialect of Augsburg – that were supposed to enable the learner to engage in business negotiations.

4.3 Business-related genres

Due to the complex organization of commerce, the merchant of the High and Late Middle Ages had to be able to make commercial calculations, to keep accounting records, to write letters and, as we have just seen, to speak foreign languages. Initially, the merchants’ children learned these skills either in schools run by the Church or by taking private lessons. As early as the 12th century, however, municipal

schools more specifically oriented towards practical necessities were set up in some commercial centres (Pirenne 1929: 21). In these schools, one learned to read, write, count and make calculations, while commercial skills in a narrower sense were acquired during an apprenticeship.

Apprentices, and also more experienced merchants, recorded much specific information in personal notebooks. Some Italian examples have been preserved, and several have already been published. The oldest Tuscan manuscript dates from 1278 (Lopez 1970), the oldest Venetian from around 1311 (Stussi 1967). Both contain a medley of commercially relevant information on weights and measures, coins, customs duties and related arithmetic problems, commodities, nautical information; they also include incantations against sea storms, poems, and a chronicle of the home town. The most well-known exemplar of the notebook genre is a relatively systematic manuscript by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti from the beginning of the 14th century, later titled *Pratica della mercatura* (Pegolotti 1936). The incredible confusion surrounding weights and measures, on the one hand, and coins on the other, is well-known, and constituted an important stumbling block for medieval commerce. Nowadays, both these areas are studied largely by distinct scholarly disciplines, including metrology (cf. Witthöft 1992) and numismatics; linguistic studies are few and far between (for French, cf. Glaser 1904).

The arithmetic problems described in one such notebook from the High Middle Ages, the Venetian *Zibaldone da Canal*, all come from the *Liber abbaci*, published by Leonardo Pisano (Fibonacci) in 1202, which for its part constituted a real breakthrough in the history of arithmetic. This Latin treatise, which among other things introduced Arabic numerals to European audiences, was the first of a long-lasting genre, viz. treatises of so-called practical or commercial arithmetic. Many such manuscripts from the Middle Ages, written in Italian, have been preserved (cf. Egmond 1980). Following the invention of the printing press, they served as models for countless similar books written in all European languages (cf. Hooek and Jeannin 1991–2001).

Another genre that reached its near-definitive shape during the Middle Ages was the ledger. The evolution of this type of book of accounts was characterized by an increasing conventionalization of both the entries and their position on the page, in Italy especially during the 14th century (Tucci 1989: 549). In the end, the entries were so formulaic that outsiders would have had difficulty understanding them correctly. The most important change in the layout occurred from the 14th century onwards, when the transition from a single-entry to a double-entry book-keeping system took place in Italy, and the debit and credit accounts were written next to each other and not one above the other as previously (Peter 1961: 251). The first printed treatise on double-entry book-keeping, contained in Luca Pacioli's *Tractatus de computis et scripturis*, dates back to 1494. So far, the evolution of the ledger genre during the Middle Ages has not been dealt with from a linguistic perspective or in a book-length study, with the notable exception of Tophinke's (1999) treatise on the Hanseatic League's books of accounts.

Conventionalization was also a distinctive feature of the evolution of business correspondence. In Italy, the oldest preserved business letter from Tuscany dates back to the second half of the 13th century (Koch 1988: 22), the oldest Venetian letter to September 27, 1327 (Tucci 1957: 2, fn. 1). Some 150,000 letters from the 14th century are preserved in the Datini Archive of Prato. According to Koch (1988: 24, 28, 39), business letters in Italian did not follow the precepts of the *ars dictaminis*, the art of writing letters in Latin as taught at school, but were essentially based on the principle of “listing”, very much like the earliest books of accounts. Yet, very soon, a typical format emerged (Tucci 1989: 550). Letters began with an invocation of God. This was followed by the place and date of writing, notification of letters received, commercial information or orders for the addressee, information on the market situation including exchange rates, and sometimes also on the political situation. The letter then ended with private information, the parting phrase and the signature. By and large, this is also true of the medieval business letters from Northern Germany analyzed in Penndorf (1932). There, the oldest business letter that has survived, dating from the middle of the 14th century, was still written in Latin. Even though German became predominant from the beginning of the 15th century onwards, a number of Latin set phrases continued in use. Generally, the language of the letters was very crude: as noted by Krieger (1933: 35) in his discussion on the letters of the Ravensburg Company from Southern Germany dating from around 1500, the merchants wrote more or less as they spoke.

The highest degree of conventionalization was attained in the Middle Ages by the bill of exchange, an important innovation which allowed the transfer of money from country to country without the need to transport cash. This instrument originated in Italy – where it was called *lettera di cambio* – around 1300 and was spread all over Europe by Italian merchants during the following two centuries. In this process of diffusion, the genre was translated one to one into all major European languages.

Notebooks, books of accounts, business letters and bills of exchange were not the only business-related genres that already existed during the Middle Ages. One could add to the list partnership agreements such as the *commenda*, insurance contracts, the *recordacione* (guidelines), invoices or bills of lading. Most of these genres still await detailed linguistic investigation (on insurance contracts, cf. Holtus 1988). Yet it has become clear is that the language of business from the High and Late Middle Ages must to all effects be granted the status of a language for specific purposes, with its own genres that fulfilled concrete communicative needs and, as we will see in the following section, with its own terminology.

4.4 Business-related terminology

Because the elaboration of new business techniques essentially took place in Italy, most new medieval business terminology came from Italian. However, one should

not overlook the occasional contribution of other languages. From the 11th to the 13th century, the fairs of Champaign in eastern France were the most important meeting point of European merchants; it is therefore hardly surprising that some early commercial terms entered the Italian language from French, as was the case for Italian *balla*, adapted from French *balle*, just like English *bale* (cf. Morgana 1994: 673–675). But most of the new terminology was indeed of Italian origin and has been transmitted to other European languages from Italy, either as crude borrowings or disguised as loan translations: Italian *netto* ‘remaining after tare is deducted’, yielding German *netto*, English *net* (as in *net weight*, a semantic loan); *lettera di cambio* ‘bill of exchange’, the model of French *lettre de change*, Early New High German *Wechselbrief*, later shortened to *Wechsel*; *bilancio* ‘balance sheet’, rendered as *bilan* in French; *cassiere* ‘cashier’, which was the basis of French *caissier*, (Southern) German *Kassier*; etc. Italian also became a hub for the diffusion of Orientalisms in Europe: Arabic *máxzan* ‘storeroom’, for example, was first adapted as *magazzino* in Italian and then passed on to German as *Magazin*.

4.5 The language of fiscal administration

As already mentioned in Section 4.2.2, the Middle Ages did not produce a relevant literature on what one might confidently call economics. Economic policy was essentially limited to setting a regulatory framework for the various economic agents and to collecting taxes. From a genre perspective, regulatory texts do not belong to economics or business but to law: nevertheless, they are, of course, an important source for the study of economic and business terminology. The terminology of fiscal administration tended to be very conservative. Heidel (1936: 135), for example, observed that in France it remained virtually unchanged from its medieval origins until the French Revolution.

5 The Renaissance

Although a certain number of Italian business genres and terms had already found their way into other European languages during the Late Middle Ages, it was the invention of the printing press that radically changed the landscape. Information about cutting-edge business techniques, such as the bill of exchange and double-entry book-keeping (largely exclusive to Italian merchants during the Late Middle Ages), now began to be diffused internationally through texts in several major European languages. As we noted in Section 4.3, the same is true of books on commercial arithmetic. Hooock and Jeannin (1991–2001) counted no less than 1,500 books on commerce in European languages from the 16th, 2,000 from the 17th and 8,000 from the 18th century.

This frenetic editorial activity is the reason why so many business terms in European languages – apart from Italian itself – date back to the 16th and 17th centuries and are to be considered straightforward Italianisms (cf. Schirmer 1911b and Wolf 1983 on German [Wilhelm 2013 unfortunately is very unreliable]; Bruijn-van der Helm 1992 on Dutch; Rainer 2003 on the Spanish and Rainer 2014 on the French terminology relating to the bill of exchange). The translations, however, were not always made directly from an Italian original; occasionally some intermediary source came into play. Haschka (1960), for example, has demonstrated that the English terminology of double-entry book-keeping had its immediate source in Jan Ympyn Christoffels' *Nouvelle instruction* of 1543 – itself based on an Italian source – which was translated “out of Frenche into Englishe”. Ympyn's treatise was published at Antwerp, which, together with Lyon, was then one of the two most important commercial and financial centres in Europe. As a fundamentally French-speaking city, it played a prominent role in the creation and diffusion of French commercial terminology (Jeannin 1989: 42).

Unfortunately, historical and etymological dictionaries often fail to reflect this state of affairs as faithfully as one would wish: in part because in-depth studies of the history of business terminology are still scarce, but also because, even where they exist, lexicographers do not always take them into account (Haschka's findings, for example, are still ignored by the *Oxford English Dictionary*). One important source of first attestations in French dictionaries is Kuhn's (1931) Leipzig dissertation on 17th-century commercial terminology. This, though, is essentially based on documents from the second half of the period and therefore leaves the earlier history of these terms in the dark (*lettre de change*, for example, is dated 1671, while the oldest attestation presently available is from 1401). Overall, the situation in the 16th century looks paradoxical: just as the commercial centre of gravity shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, and, consequently, Italy's position in international trade started to decline, Italian commercial techniques, commercial genres and terms conquered the world. Thus, from a linguistic point of view, there was no break at all, with the Late Middle Ages merging neatly into the Renaissance.

6 Foreign languages in business in modern times

Until the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), Italian remained the most important foreign business language in the German-speaking lands, at least in Augsburg and Nuremberg (cf. Glück, Häberlein, and Schröder 2013), while afterwards French became predominant. Polish and Czech were in little demand because of the German-speaking bourgeoisie in the countries where these languages were spoken. However, as noted by Peters (2000: 1502), the merchants of the Hanseatic League conducted business with Russia in the language of their customers. In 1423, Dutch merchants were

even prohibited to study Russian in order to protect the trade monopoly which the Hanseatic cities enjoyed with the Russians.

Low German, the language of the Hanseatic League, also had a deep influence on the Scandinavian languages. It was eventually abandoned in written communication in favour of High German in the 16th and 17th centuries. The dominant role of French in Europe in the second half of the 18th century can be inferred from the fact that in 1800, the German author Felix Reishammer published a treatise on foreign exchange arbitrage in French. His justification of the choice was that French was the most commonly known language, at least among people interested in the subject of his book (Jeannin 1989: 50). English did not gain prominence prior to the 18th century, with the first German-English textbook on business correspondence being published in 1780. Some 150 years later, Fehr (1909: I) observed: “*Das Englische gilt heute allgemein als die erste Handelssprache der Welt.*” [Today, English is universally considered to be the most important language of commerce].

7 From “*Handlungswissenschaft*” to *Betriebswirtschaftlehre*

The first all-encompassing treatises on commerce appeared in the 17th century. Particularly worth mentioning are Giovanni Domenico Peri’s *Il negoziante* from 1638 and Jacques Savary’s *Le parfait negociant* from 1675. These two treatises constituted a clear step forward with respect to the commercial literature of the Renaissance, and they are thus generally acknowledged to be the seminal texts for what would later become business administration (in German, *Betriebswirtschaftslehre*; cf. Bellinger 1967). By the 18th century, various German authors were trying to ennoble the new discipline by calling it “*Handlungswissenschaft*” [science of commerce, *Handlung* being an old word for *Handel*], but until the end of the 19th century it remained confined to the secondary level of education. A decisive moment for the field’s academic institutionalization was the creation, from 1898, of several “*Handelshochschulen*” [commercial colleges] in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands and some Scandinavian countries. In the first quarter of the 20th century, German universities finally condescended to create departments of “*Betriebswirtschaftslehre*”, a word modelled on the name of the more prestigious discipline of “*Volkswirtschaftslehre*” [economics] (on this process, see Tribe 1995: 95–139). Let us now take a look at how all this was reflected in the evolution of business language itself.

The chronological order Peri 1638 – Savary 1675 is highly suggestive, marking as it does Italy’s ceding of its position as the powerhouse of commercial literature to France. This shift had important consequences for the language of commerce in many countries. As mentioned in Section 6, French became the dominant foreign language in Augsburg and Nuremberg in the second half of the 17th century. Under

this new constellation, French terms were often substituted for older Italian ones in German business language, while on some occasions Italian terms were modified to appear more French. For example, instead of *Polizze* ‘policy’, which is still used in Austria and descends directly from Italian *polizza*, Germany adopted *Police* from French, and from the Italianism *spedieren* ‘to send’, a French-looking *Spediteur* ‘carrier, haulier, shipper’ was derived. Even Italian spoken in Italy came under the influence of French, imitating, for example, French *arbitrage* as *arbitraggio*. This neologism ousted the older *arbitrio*, which had been adapted to French as *arbitre* in the 16th century and then “Frenchified” in the next century as *arbitrage* (Rainer 2002). From the 18th century, French influence also became overwhelming in Spain (cf. Gómez de Enterría’s glossary of 1996), where it was further boosted by the switch in ruling dynasty from Habsburg to Bourbon. The change of winds in Spain can be illustrated with the fate of the commercial term *agio* (Rainer 2005), which had been taken directly from Italian in the 16th century in some of its senses, while the new ones such as ‘speculation’ added in the 18th were the result of French influence.

Interestingly, the growing importance accorded to the study of business from the 17th century also brought along a new role for Latin, a language abandoned in business practice during the Late Middle Ages even in conservative countries and regions. This new role derived from the fact that lawyers had become interested in commercial law, which they sought to accommodate in the conceptual framework of Roman law. Moreover, as late as the 19th century lawyers in the German-speaking countries and Italy, wrote in Latin which, in its classical form, often lacked exact equivalents for commercial terms now used in the vernacular. As a result, such equivalents had to be created in Neo-Latin, often by simply loan-translating the vernacular terms. For example (cf. Rainer 2015a), in Neo-Latin the repatriation of money effectuated by the drawer with a bill of exchange was called a *tracta*, after the model of Italian *tratta*, while the corresponding verb became *trassare*, after German *trassieren*, itself an imitation of Venetian *trazer*. On the basis of *trassare*, German lawyers then coined *trassans* for the drawer and *trassatus* for the drawee in a straightforward manner. Whether through inertia or for prestige reasons, such Latinisms were occasionally then integrated into the vernacular legal terminology; in that way, *trassatus* became *Trassat* in German and *trassato* in Italian. Historical-etymological dictionaries tend to ignore this contribution of Neo-Latin to modern commercial terminology, which was one early side-effect of commercial discourse having become more academic.

In other respects, too, the new “science of commerce” gained in complexity. At the beginning of the 18th century, France contributed the prototype of an important new genre, the dictionary of commerce (cf. Perrot 1992: 97–125), with the three volumes of Philemon-Louis Savary des Bruslons’ *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* (Paris 1723). Together with Nicolas Lemery’s *Traité universel des drogues simples* from 1714, which was continuously reedited until the 19th century, it was to become one of the foundational texts of what Carl Günther Ludovici would later refer to in

his *Kaufmanns-Lexicon* of 1752–56 as “*Waarenkunde*” [knowledge/science of commodities] (Hölzl 1982: 3). It was also in the 18th century that, as a reflection of analogous processes in the business world itself, the new discipline began to be divided into ever more specialized branches, such as banking, insurance, retail trade, transportation, etc. Each of these branches developed a terminology and genres of its own, which, shamefully, remain to be studied from scratch due to an almost complete neglect on the part of historical linguists up to the present day. In fact, I am not aware of any book that describes the linguistic history of any one of these branches from the beginning to the present day in any of the major European languages.

In the 20th century, a functional division was added to that by branches of activity, giving rise to disciplines such as accounting, finance, marketing, human resources, strategy, production, etc. Unfortunately, the historical-linguistic study of these functional areas of modern firms and the corresponding academic disciplines are hardly more advanced than that of the different branches of activity. One such study, rather restricted in scope, is Hänchen’s (2002) analysis of the evolution of the language of marketing in France from 1960 to 2000, on the basis of the *Revue Française du Marketing*. An up-dated and more compact version of her study is available in English (Göke 2009). Evans (2010), who published an article on the history of the terminology of accounting from an accounting scholar’s perspective, has confirmed my belief that the historical study of business terminology would gain enormously from closer attention on the part of professional linguists, ideally in collaboration with management scholars.

Although vocabulary undoubtedly constitutes the core of any language for specific purposes, scholarly work on the history of business language should not remain limited to terminology. The evolution of genres across the business world is no less interesting as a research topic. Mattheier (1986), for example, presented a framework for studying the evolution of the numerous genres that have arisen in industrial companies since the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century. Unfortunately, his pilot study has not given rise to the vast research project it announced. Yet there is one genre that is treated more in depth in the article, namely labour policy regulations. Mattheier observes that it has been given different names in German-speaking countries over the course of time (*Reglement, Arbeitsordnung, Betriebsordnung*), and that its evolution has been characterized by an increasing stylistic depersonalization and insistence on the mutual responsibilities of employers and employees. Quite recently, the annual report, which has undergone enormous transformations over time, seems to have begun to attract the attention of linguists (cf. Ditlevsen 2012; also Chapter 10 of this handbook).

One genre that has had the privilege of being treated repeatedly from a historical perspective, at least in German, is the business letter (cf. Penndorf 1932; Gebele 1949). In Section 4.3, I mentioned that the medieval business letter was stylistically rather unpretentious, even crude, and close to spoken discourse. More recently, the

business letter genre has experienced several transformations. From the Renaissance onwards, expressions of deference gained in importance, for example, the – by now utterly trivialized – use of *Herr* in analogy to French *Monsieur*. Another stylistic peculiarity was a growing tendency towards conciseness, which often resulted in daring ellipses of the kind “*wiß gen Salzburg hergekomen bin*” [[you should] know [that I] have come to Salzburg], which was later criticized by purists and eventually abandoned. Peppering one’s letter with foreign words of Latin, Italian and especially French provenance became *à la mode* in accordance with the general tendencies of baroque style. However, eventually this tendency would also become a *bête noire* of purists who, from the middle of the 18th century onwards, pleaded for a natural and unaffected style. Another remarkable feature of the evolution of the business letter was its diversification into ever more sub-genres, each with a specific set of guidelines and sample models.

A last contribution worth mentioning is Siebenschein’s (1936: 145–248) attempt to pin down the influence of industrialization on business German. He argued that the Industrial Revolution had changed German society so fundamentally that this was reflected in the language of business. For example, communication became more concise, even formulaic, although he added that this was to be avoided when communicating with customers. Additionally, the style became less personal (with the exception of reminders and sales letters) and less emotional. Finally, the use of foreign words decreased, while the importance of images increased. A particularly valuable aspect of Siebenstein’s contribution was his pioneering observations on the relation between image and text.

8 The language of economics from the Mercantilist period to the present

As seen above, during Antiquity and the Middle Ages the economy was rarely treated as a subject in itself. Since the middle of the 16th century, however, an ever-increasing number of publications on economic matters have appeared, written mostly by merchants, officials or politicians attempting to influence official decisions in their favour. In France alone, Perrot (1985: 23) counted almost 3,000 relevant publications before the French Revolution. In accordance with their purpose, these publications were characterized by an abundant use of persuasive and emotive stylistic devices.

Another, obviously related characteristic of these writings is the abundant use of metaphors. It appears that many metaphorical fields of modern economic discourse were already present in the “mercantilist” literature. The economy was commonly depicted using the old image of the body politic: accordingly, economic problems were referred to as diseases, and politicians in charge of economic policy as doctors.

The presently opaque term *crisis* goes back to this kind of figurative discourse (it originally designated a crucial moment in the development of a disease), and so does the metaphor of money as the “lifeblood” of the economy, which started “circulating” in European languages after Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of the blood in 1628.

As early as in the 16th century, the tendency of the money market to return to a state of equilibrium had been explained by Bernardo Davanzati by analogy with the behaviour of water. Indeed, from the second half of the 18th century, the metaphor of “money flows” was to become more and more frequent. Another fundamental metaphor – the economy as a “machine” – can also be found at that time; for example, a French text of 1767 speaks of the “*rouage de la machine économique*” [cogs of the economic machine]. Later, in the 19th century, the vocabulary of Newtonian mechanics would be consciously exploited by classical economists (“equilibrium”, “market forces”, etc.). War metaphors also go back to the mercantilist literature, especially that of a “trade war”, as does the analogy between the economy as a whole and housekeeping (“political economy”, as opposed to economy in the etymological sense of ‘household (Greek: *oikos*) management (*nomos*)’). Such metaphors circulated rapidly, which is why the metaphorical fields concerned with the economy are so strikingly similar across European languages. In the 17th century, English Mercantilists exerted the most decisive influence, contributing, for example, the metaphor of the “balance of trade”, while in the 18th century, France took the lead. Italian, Spanish and German, at that time, remained purely passive, importing economic metaphors but not creating any of their own.

A new chapter in the history of economic language was opened with the advent of Physiocracy in the second half of the 18th century. The Physiocrats’ ambition was to provide a logically coherent and empirically adequate systematization of knowledge about the economy (cf. Steiner 1998: 70–79). In that endeavour, they also forged a new-fangled terminology including, for example, *avances primitives et foncières* [primary agricultural investments], *produit net* [net product, i.e. value added], *classe stérile* [‘sterile class’, i.e., the class of skilled workers] – all of these being terms which sounded extravagant to their contemporaries’ ears. A 1768 review from the *Journal œconomique* referred to this type of language as “*jargon métaphysique, géométrique, algébrique*” [metaphysical, geometrical, algebraic jargon] (Steiner 1998: 75). Due to their pretentious way of writing, the Physiocrats were jokingly dubbed *Économistes* by their contemporaries, an initially scornful expression which would eventually become the neutral designation for the new profession. Physiocracy itself was short-lived, but its attempt to recast the economy in utterly new conceptual categories and to create a terminology that reflected these categories did leave a lasting legacy.

With the demise of Physiocracy and the subsequent hegemony of classical economics, built on Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776), the linguistic centre of gravity in economics shifted again from France to England. However, until the

Second World War, the development of economic terminology continued to be a “polyphonic” process, in which French and, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, German continued to play important roles. In 1884, for example, the Austrian economist Friedrich von Wieser coined the term *Grenznutzen*, which was then translated into English as *marginal utility*, into French as *utilité marginale*, and similarly into the other European languages which had historically played an essentially receptive role (cf. Dévényi 2007 on Hungarian). As in this case, economists generally adopted ordinary, native word-formation techniques when naming new concepts, or resorted to the semantic extension of everyday language vocabulary, such as *equilibrium* or *elasticity*. More rarely, they availed themselves of the lexical material and word-formation techniques of the classical languages, as was customary in medicine and other disciplines. A case in point is constituted by *oligopoly*, *oligopsony* and related expressions. As shown in Rainer (2015b), *oligopoly*, which was introduced into modern economic discourse by German scholars in the form *Oligopol* at the beginning of the 20th century, had been coined as *oligopolium* ‘sale by a few sellers’ as early as 1516 by Thomas More in his *Utopia*, on the model of *monopolium* ‘sale by a single seller’; the French then added *duopole* ‘duopoly’ in the second half of the 19th century. The second part of these words, which are quite opaque for the ordinary speaker, represents Ancient Greek *-polion* ‘sale’. In the 1930s, an analogous set of terms for the buyer side was generated on the basis of Ancient Greek *opsonia* ‘purchase’, yielding *monopsony*, *duopsony*, and *oligopsony*.

From a stylistic point of view, economic literature has witnessed important changes since the 19th century. Probably as a consequence of the academic institutionalization of the discipline, the style of economic publications became more objective during the 19th century and adopted typical features of academic writing such as nominalization, impersonal constructions and the avoidance of overly complex subordinate clauses (Kaehlbrandt 1989). Another important change occurred in the 20th century, viz. a sharp rise in the percentage of mathematical and statistical discourse in economic texts, which increased from 3% to 40% in the *American Economic Review* between 1940 and 1990 (Beaud and Dostaler 1993: 105). In relation to the above, McCloskey (1991: 141) notes that “[t]he theoretical articles of the 1920s took the philosopher as their model; the empirical articles took the historian; in English, ‘the scholar’. The implied author of the recent theoretical article is the mathematician, with his theorems and proofs”. At the same time, “[t]he percentage of terms that a non-professional reader could understand has fallen steadily in economic journals since the 1920s” (p. 142).

Rising interest in the economy on the part of specialists and the wider public has also brought along new genres of economic discourse. The first textbooks and scholarly journals appeared as early as in the second half of the 18th century, while the first half of the following one saw the emergence of weekly magazines and dailies specializing in the stock market or more broadly in the economy (on France, cf. Henno 1993). Unfortunately, most of these genres still await the analytic eye of

historical linguists (on the economics article, cf. Dudley-Evans and Henderson 1993). Last but not least, we also have to lament the almost complete absence of diachronic discourse-analytic studies that would answer the question of how, over the centuries, economic crises, inflation, unemployment, the ups and downs in the stock market, etc. were talked about (cf. Yeught 2012, for an incipient project in this direction).

9 Conclusion

The present chapter has demonstrated that what we call “business language” relates to a concept that has witnessed important changes over time. In the earliest documented or otherwise reconstructed stages, business language could hardly be distinguished from general language, consisting at most of a few business-related words with a somewhat specialized meaning. This is the case not only for Sumerian, Akkadian or Proto-Indo-European, but also for Old English or Old High German. The point at which business language first evolved into a full-blown language for specific purposes may be situated in the High and Late Middle Ages, when Italian merchants developed trailblazing commercial techniques, accompanied by textual genres such as the ledger or the bill of exchange and by a number of new business terms. The business languages of the other European languages depended on the Italian model well into the modern era, though eventually French, German and English emancipated themselves and started contributing their linguistic innovations which were then circulated among the other European nations. Business vocabulary continued to be closely linked to the merchant’s counter until the end of the 19th century. A new era dawned with the institutionalization of business studies at *Handelshochschulen* and universities in the 20th century, which led to an exponential increase in the number of business terms. In the related area of economics, Physiocracy might be considered the decisive point where a real language for specific purposes was born, though this theoretical current itself was short-lived. Economics was institutionalized at universities a century before business administration; correspondingly, the language for specific purposes of economics began to be elaborated earlier.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the business world has been increasingly fragmented by the growing division of labour, and, at the same time, it has become the subject of close academic attention. The same is true of economics. Yet, as argued throughout this chapter, the study of how this modern stage of the language of economics and business evolved is still in its infancy. Although the two macro-trends, fragmentation and “academization”, have undeniably left important traces, for the most part they still await closer scrutiny. There can be no doubt that in-depth diachronic investigations would prove to be highly relevant from an applied-linguistic perspective.

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II Genres and media

Nina Janich

3 Genres in the business context: An introduction

1. Introduction: State of the Art
2. From language to communicative practices and their ordering
3. Communicative practices in business: Linguistic perspectives and issues
4. Business communication as profession
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction: State of the Art

Business activity is, in general, constituted through language.¹ All production processes are organized and mediated through language. Language – in both its written and spoken forms – must therefore be viewed as central to any work carried out in a business context. As has already been shown in Müller and Kieser (2002), this fact has given rise to highly diverse genres in business communication, among other things.

Written forms of communication in particular have seen tremendous growth in recent years (Jakobs 2011: 78–79), for several reasons including the following:

- a. growing corporate interest in knowledge as a resource and in new ways of documenting that knowledge;
- b. the increasing standardization of work tasks, processes and outcomes, especially in order to make use of technology and automation for communication tasks;
- c. a growing need for legal safeguards on the part of both companies and their customers;
- d. the Europeanization and globalization of work and trade;
- e. the steady development of new electronic and interconnected information and communication media.

For long, it was the “products” of these uses of language that constituted the main focus of linguistics and, in particular, of text and applied linguistics (for texts and genres in business communication, see, among others, the typologies proposed by Hundt 2000, Diatlova 2003, and Nielsen 2011, as well as numerous individual studies in, for example, Evangelisti Allori and Garzone 2010, Demarmels and Kesselheim 2011b, and Garzone and Gotti 2011). Conversation analysis, a subdiscipline of linguistics focusing on spoken language, adopted a procedural perspective much

¹ Many thanks to Kathleen Cross for the translation of the original German version of this contribution.

earlier due to its more dynamic object of study, drawing in part on ethnographic approaches (for business as a domain of action, see Drew and Heritage 1992; Boden 1994; Brünner 2000; Müller 2006). Yet, given the dynamic development of business and communication media alike, scholars have more recently recognized the need to link the study of texts much more closely to research on processes of production and reception (Bazerman and Devitt 2014), to take different kinds of intertextuality as a point of departure (e.g., “dynamic textual worlds”, Jakobs 2011; “networks of text varieties”/“Textsortennetze”, Adamzik 2001a) and to look into their practical relevance in the workplace context (Janich 2007, 2009; Jakobs 2008, 2011; Adamzik 2011).

The present contribution adopts a text-linguistic perspective on “products” (Section 2.1) and looks at their functional ordering in genres (Section 2.2). With regard to possible linguistic research questions (Section 3), it discusses the ways in which texts become interwoven in communicative practices (Section 4.1) in order, finally, to discover something about their importance in relation to workplace requirements and communicative competence (Section 4.2). This approach is adopted because linguistic micro-studies of individual texts and genres, along with the ways they are ordered and interconnected, are ultimately indispensable for any practical, instructive guide (Bateman 2006: 178; Demarmels and Kesselheim 2011a: 9).

2 From language to communicative practices and their ordering

2.1 Text – genre – communicative practice

Since the 1970s, linguistics has adopted pragmatic methods to capture situation-specific processes and patterns of linguistic action as they are manifested in texts and conversations, starting from the purposes and objectives of speakers and writers. Various subdisciplines have evolved to apprehend and describe these patterns, ranging from text linguistics and systemic functional linguistics to various kinds of conversation analysis. For a long time these different approaches rarely took note of one another. In German linguistics the resulting diverse terminology makes any shared reliance on key basic concepts extremely difficult. In addition to *Text* (text) and *Gespräch* (conversation, talk), reference is also made to *Genres* (genres), *Text- und Gesprächssorten* (varieties of text and conversation), *Text- und Gesprächstypen* (text types and types of conversation or talk), *kommunikative* or *mediale Gattungen* (communicative or media categories), and *kommunikative Praktiken* (communicative practices). All of these are intended to help order and classify the numerous possible textual and conversational phenomena (for a general indicative framework, see Swales 1990, 2004; for a systemic-functional approach, Martin 1992; for an overview of English terminology, Lee 2001; for German linguistic terminology, Stein 2011; and for numerous articles that offer international overviews of these concepts, Habscheid 2011).

Text refers here to a sequence of signs which is coherent and, in its entirety, signals a communicative function or which is intended as a text (Brinker 2010: 17). Since the work of Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), the prototypical criteria of textuality have been considered to be:

- a. cohesion, i.e. structural interconnections at the surface level of the language (e.g., repeated reference to the same non-linguistic object or fact);
- b. coherence, i.e. semantic and contextual interconnections anchored in the deep structure of a text (patterns by means of which a theme or an argument is developed);
- c. informativity, i.e. the idea that a text contains a theme that has some kind of informative value;
- d. intentionality, i.e. the idea that it is intended by its producer to be a text and that it has a certain function;
- e. acceptability, i.e. the idea that it can be accepted as a text by its recipients on the basis of its characteristic features;
- f. situativity, i.e. the idea that it is tied to and influenced by the specific situations of production and reception;
- g. intertextuality, i.e. systematic reference to conventional textual patterns in the sense of manifesting a specific text variety.

By contrast, a conversation prototypically denotes a situationally-specific, verbal communicative event involving at least two participants which, according to Deppermann (1999: 8), displays the following characteristic features:

- a. constitutivity, i.e. the active participation of the conversation partners in creating conversation events;
- b. processuality, i.e. the “follow-on” character of talk that emerges from participants’ sequential activities;
- c. interactivity, i.e. each participant’s reciprocal references to the contributions of their counterpart;
- d. methodicity, i.e. the use of typical procedures in the production and interpretation of contributions to a conversation;
- e. pragmaticity, i.e. the idea that the participants engage in a conversation and use their contributions to pursue certain purposes.

One way of describing the typical and patterned character of texts and conversations is to reconstruct prototypical correlations of: a) communicative function or purposes pursued by the speaker-writer; b) topic; c) outward structure (division into parts/course of a conversation and, for written texts, text design); and d) linguistic forms (textual and conversational routines, styles and registers). These can then be placed in a rule-governed relation to the situational context. This context, in turn, consists in particular of the domain or the arena of action, the particular set of participants involved, the time-space relations of production and reception, the medium of transmission and the extent to which it is a public context (for this German approach,

see Brinker 2010; for the analytical categories of Anglo-Saxon systemic-functional linguistics, see Martin 1997). Text types in business communication include quarterly and annual reports, press releases, customer and employee magazines and business letters; examples of types of conversation, or talk, are meetings, telephone conferences, consultations, sales conversations, and press conferences.

Yet there now seems to be a consensus that the “spoken”/“written” dichotomy exists only in relation to the *medial realization* of a communicative event (i.e. phonic or graphic expression), but not with regard to the *linguistic form* of such an event. This is because written texts (e.g., a tweet on Twitter) may be similar in formal terms to spoken language, while, conversely, spoken texts (e.g., a job interview) may display typical features of written language. In order to better apprehend and describe such graded phenomena, it will therefore be assumed that the “medial orality”/“medial scripturality” dichotomy is cross-cut by a continuum relating to linguistic form and ranging from “conceptional orality” (“konzeptionelle Mündlichkeit”) to “conceptional scripturality” (“konzeptionelle Schriftlichkeit”). What this implies is that conceptionally oral forms of communication convey greater linguistic proximity (“sprachliche Nähe”) whereas conceptionally scriptural forms appear more formal and thus typically facilitate communication characterized by social distance (“sprachliche Distanz”) (Koch and Oesterreicher 1985; for the English terminology, see Murelli 2011: 49–50). In addition, research on intertextuality (e.g., Genette 1982) has shown with increasing clarity that interaction very often occurs through written and spoken texts that are closely interwoven with one another. Examples occur when meetings or telephone conferences are prepared and minuted in writing, or when project presentations are accompanied by text slides and supported by written handouts (for business communication, see Loos 1999 and Janich 2009).

Given these interconnections between genres, it makes sense to speak of “communicative practices” (“kommunikative Praktiken”, Stein 2011) when describing and analyzing business communication. The term *communicative practice* takes for granted the functional commonalities that exist between written and spoken language, as well as the situation-specific interweaving of various genres, without seeking to gloss over all that is specific about particular texts or conversations. Communicative practices also generally serve both to document knowledge and to organize relationships and community, and thus also to enforce power and ideology (Janich and Birkner 2015), fundamental mechanisms as prevalent in business communication as they are elsewhere.

2.2 Proposals for classifying business communication

Business communication can be viewed in very different ways. It can be seen as referring to all forms of communication within and between firms, and thus the object of research, as a type of corporate strategy or as an organizational unit (for further detail, see Janich 2015). With regard to communicative practices within

business organizations, it appears sensible to use those definitions which systematically differentiate the various levels of business communication according to criteria of relevance for language use. The economics-based definition introduced by Zerfaß (2004) appears to be particularly suitable here. Rather than accepting the blurred distinction between “inward” and “outward”, Zerfaß differentiates according to addressee and communicative purpose, and hence according to different “mechanisms of coordination” within the communicative process (Zerfaß 2004: 20–21). He distinguishes between:

- a. organizational communication, which occurs predominantly within the company and serves the specialized process of formulating and implementing strategic plans (Zerfaß 2004: 316: “arbeitsteilige [...] Formulierung und Realisierung strategischer Konzepte”), and so enhancing the performance and motivation of company employees;
- b. market communication, which is directed predominantly outside the company and occurs largely in a persuasive mode, serving to ensure that strategic objectives govern the company’s relations with its suppliers, buyers and competitors (Zerfaß 2004: 316–317: “Durchsetzung strategischer Konzepte in den Beziehungen mit Lieferanten, Abnehmern und Wettbewerbern”);
- c. public relations work, which is likewise directed first and foremost outside the company and serves to ensure its fundamental ability to act and to legitimize specific strategies (Zerfaß 2004: 317: “prinzipielle Handlungsspielräume zu sichern und konkrete Strategien zu legitimieren”). The aim is to secure a positive reputation and moral integration within society (Zerfaß 2004: 317).

This threefold classification of business communication can be positioned in relation to a number of nuancing distinctions based on the situational embeddedness of specific communicative practices, in order to facilitate more precise characterizations of situation, function, and formality. With regard to types of talk or conversation in business communication, for example, Gisela Brünner distinguishes between the following pairs of concepts (2000: 7–20):

- a. work-related communication (“Arbeitskommunikation”) vs. social communication (“Sozialkommunikation”);
- b. formal vs. informal communication (depending on the existence of rules and hierarchies that shape communication);
- c. factual/technical communication (specialist communication within the company) vs. hierarchical/economic communication (institutional forms of communication);
- d. specialist communication within company divisions (“fachintern”) vs. specialist communication between divisions, within or outside the company (“fachextern”);
- e. autonomous communication (linguistic acts with a predominantly communicative purpose) vs. subsidiary communication (linguistic acts with a predominantly non-communicative purpose);
- f. empractical communication (linked with non-linguistic action and relating directly to it) vs. non-empractical communication.

Distinctions (c) and (d) correspond in certain respects to the overarching categorizations established by Zerfaß, and can serve, within that framework, to make more precise differentiations in terms of communicative functions, addressees and topics.

These two proposals for ordering business communication provide an initial, approximate orientation, but are not sufficient to provide a typology of communicative practices in business contexts. Such a typology is likely to remain elusive if it seeks to be both scientific-exhaustive and practical-instructive, because the contradiction between achieving the greatest possible differentiation, on the one hand, and the best possible orientation for text production and reception at the workplace, on the other, is extremely hard to resolve (Adamzik 2008). Nonetheless, linguistic research has produced a number of proposals worthy of consideration that can certainly be used and further developed, at least in relation to specific research questions.

In his typological outline of business as a domain of action, for example, Hundt (2000) differentiates, in very classical manner, on the basis of textual functions. First, he distinguishes between texts containing business terminology for special purposes and texts that mediate between different domains (e.g., between organization and mass media). Within these two groups of texts he differentiates on the basis of the following textual functions.

- a. Information (“informativ”): For special purposes, texts that describe and serve to inform, such as reports, notifications, inventories and balance sheets; for general purposes, also including financial press texts such as stock market reports;
- b. Direction (“direktiv”): For special purposes, texts that demand or instruct, such as orders, invoices, reminders and instructions; for general purposes, e.g., advertising texts;
- c. Commitment (“kommissiv”): For special purposes, texts that contain a promise to do something, such as contracts and approvals;
- d. Declaration (“deklarativ”): For special purposes, texts that create social realities or document events, such as certificates, securities, receipts.

This mode of differentiation draws on a study by Rolf (1993) of types of non-literary texts for general and specific purposes (“Gebrauchstextsorten”). Rolf collected German language names for text types in dictionaries and produced from this corpus of words a typology of text types based on these designations. Hundt (2000) scoured this corpus to find names for text types from the business domain, noting that the functional distributions in the corpus as a whole (2074 names for types of text) differ markedly from the distributions in the “business” sub-corpus (475 names for types of text, i.e. 22.9% of the corpus as a whole) (Hundt 2000: 646–647):

- a. informative: Whereas 43.5% of all text types from Rolf’s corpus (1993) can be classified as informative, according to Hundt this is the case for just 22.5% of types of business text;

- b. directive: 24.3% of all text types can be classified as directive and the proportion is fairly similar for business, namely, 23.6%;
- c. commissive: 11.9% of all text types fall into the commitment category, while in the special field of business the figure rises to 27.4%;
- d. declarative: 15.0% of all text types have a declarative function, while 26.3% of business texts display this feature;
- e. expressive (i.e. the function of making and nurturing contact): These text types are rare in the corpus as a whole (5.2%) and virtually absent from the business subcorpus (0.2%), which is why Hundt omits it from his typology.

Hundt cautions against reading too much into these figures because this kind of quantitative dictionary evaluation neither guarantees exhaustiveness nor takes account of semantic relations between the different designations. Nonetheless, the importance of business texts for everyday communication is demonstrated by the high proportion of such texts in the corpus as a whole (more than one fifth). According to Hundt, their divergent function distribution relative to the corpus as a whole, especially the larger proportions in the commitment and declaration categories, reflect the key requirements of business communication, namely procedural certainty, procedural rules and the creation of institutional realities (Hundt 2000: 645: “Verfahrenssicherheit, Verfahrensregelungen und Schaffung institutioneller Wirklichkeiten”).

Other studies that have dealt with written and oral business communication, and the issue of classification, also conclude that functionality – or, more specifically, the “work task” – must be the primary criterion of differentiation (Müller 2006: 147 and, in a similar vein, Diatlova 2003: 219). Thus, what is otherwise a rather rough-hewn approach is rendered more specific by framing general text and conversation functions according to certain situational contexts.

In his ethnographic study of conversations in business communication, Müller (2006: 148–149) assumes that conversations and texts come to be interconnected with one another because work tasks are undertaken in a sequence of phases:

- a. the initial cause;
- b. the recognition of this cause;
- c. the announcement of a meeting;
- d. the preparation of a meeting;
- e. the actual conversation itself;
- f. the work resulting from the conversation;
- g. the elimination of the cause.

The need to run through each individual phase, he argues, decreases in each direction starting from the core phase (e).

In her likewise corpus-based, action-theory study of texts in business communication, Diatlova (2003) also sees the key task of these confirmed by the fact that a

complex pattern of action topoi (“komplexes handlungstopisches Muster”) dominates as a core pattern of argumentation in texts and clusters of texts. It always comes into play wherever a certain action is established from the very start as the one path towards a certain goal (Diatlova 2003: 219). She describes one such complex pattern of actions as a sequence consisting of the following topoi (Diatlova 2003: 178):

- a. starting point topos;
- b. principles topos;
- c. motivation topos;
- d. final topos;
- e. consequence topos.

According to Diatlova’s empirical corpus analysis, most text clusters (understood as interconnected texts in a process of communication) manifest this pattern of topoi in varying orders and with different weightings, thereby constituting alternative modes of procedure (Diatlova 2003: 219). The text types within these clusters can be more precisely defined according to their systematic association with the individual stages of an action, as long as their contextual embeddedness in such clusters is also taken into account (Diatlova 2003: 208). The result in the business context, according to Diatlova (2003, Section 9.5.5), consists in texts whose primary purpose is to describe a situation (starting point topos), assess a situation (motivation topos), establish certain values/norms/principles (principles topos), establish goals and purposes, and reach preliminary decisions (final topos), and/or demand or instruct a certain action (consequence topos).

Comparing the two approaches, we see that Diatlova’s description of a situation corresponds roughly to Müller’s identification of an initial cause of communication. Her assessment of a situation corresponds to this same phase (recognition of a cause) in Müller’s scheme, but also, and more closely, to the subsequent phases, viz. announcement and preparation of a meeting. The goal formulation and preliminary decision-making phases in Diatlova’s model coincide most closely with the actual conducting of a meeting or conversation in Müller’s. This phase is also a good match for establishing principles (Diatlova) – if this has not already been done while preparing for the meeting. Finally, the demand for action (consequence topos) can be found in Müller’s scheme in the work arising out of a meeting and the elimination of the cause of communication.

Diatlova (2003, Sections 8.10–8.12) makes the recipient the key classificatory criterion for determining specific text types within a text cluster. Here she distinguishes, in particular, between external recipients (suppliers, customers, shareholders and banks, ministries and government agencies, mass media) and internal ones. For conversations, as is logical, Müller enriches the analysis by adding as a secondary criterion the recipient (i.e. participant) constellation (Müller 2006: 149). By this he means not merely relations of symmetry/asymmetry but a situation-specific combination of participant roles and the tasks associated with them in

the conversation concerned (e.g., reporting, asking questions, informing, advising). Taking a corpus of different types of conversation as his empirical basis, he identifies eight genres (Müller 2006: 149–153), namely:

- a. personal conversations (“Privatgespräche”, e.g., canteen conversations, workplace conversations with colleagues who are also friends);
- b. introductory conversations (“Kontaktgespräche”, e.g., job interviews, anniversary celebrations);
- c. presentation conversations (“Präsentationsgespräche”, e.g., talks, presentations of workshop results);
- d. training conversations (“Schulungsgespräche”, e.g., training sessions of all types);
- e. assessment conversations (“Beurteilungsgespräche”, e.g., staff appraisals, discussions of objectives);
- f. planning conversations (“Planungsgespräche”, e.g., budget negotiations, strategy meetings, sales and purchases);
- g. crisis conversations (“Krisengespräche”, e.g., quality circles, dispute resolution); and
- h. analytical conversations (“Analysegespräche”, e.g., product team meetings, production analyses).

If we look at the results that emerge from these kinds of attempts to create typologies, there is ample reason to claim that communicative practices can be described according to relatively rough-and-ready pragmalinguistic criteria without necessarily introducing a fixed or rigid grid of genres. On the other hand, we can, like Hundt (2000), go further than merely identifying a general function and then proceeding immediately to describe individual occurrences, as is widespread in the research literature (see the literature quoted in Section 1). The comparison above of text- and conversation-oriented perspectives shows that it is possible to prove the existence in business communication of patterns of action that clearly intersect with one another, but which take different forms and can occur in differing ways in texts and conversations, and in the interconnections between the two.

3 Communicative practices in business: Linguistic perspectives and issues

3.1 Integrated communication and corporate style

Given that their aim is to create a uniform company image using a variety of communication tools, companies have an interest in so-called “integrated (marketing) communication” (Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn 1996; Bruhn 2005; Percy 2013). In terms of communicative practices in business, this means that, despite diverse objectives/work tasks, addressees and media, messages such as those relating to the company’s values should not contradict one another at the level of content.

Ideally, at the level of form, something approaching a consistent corporate style should also be recognizable. Both elements are necessary to establish a corporate identity within the company and to provide those outside it with an offer of identification (on this issue, see several studies in Evangelisti Allori and Garzone 2010). A corporate style may find linguistic expression, for example, in a specific and consistent terminology. But it may also be expressed in recurring routine turns of phrase, in the degree of politeness and formality used, or in the style of dealing with employees, stakeholders, customers, the press and the public. According to the linguist Vogel (2012: 198), corporate style must therefore also have an impact that is simultaneously:

- a. related to discourse, that is, appropriate to types of domain, media, text and conversation;
- b. related to social context, that is, appropriate in terms of addressee and culture;
- c. related to the company itself, that is, appropriate to the company and the author.

The mark of a successful corporate style, then, is that it is effective on four levels at once: as a readily recognizable means of expression; as a demonstration of stylistic competence; as an offer of identification; and as an implicit reference to corporate identity (Vogel 2012: 210–212).

The challenge here is to establish this kind of consistency and recognizability in the face of the myriad functions, patterns of action and text formulation routines associated with the different types of text and conversation, and of communication situations, that arise during a working day. These factors not only impact the specific form of communication in question, but are also manifested in the related quality assurance. There is a whole range of text types, for example, which are designed to ensure that a consistent and integrative company style is established and safeguarded at the meta-level (including terminology databases, codes of conduct, mission statements, style sheets, and similar texts containing instructions and standards). Hence the need to analyze not only the opportunities offered, and limitations posed, by individual genres in implementing and upholding integrated communication and a consistent corporate style, but also the associated procedures for negotiating and standardizing genres at the meta-level. Further issues deriving from the need for integrated communication relate to the optimal, integrated use of media (see Section 3.2), the opportunities and limitations of standardization, and where relevant, to the automation of communication (see Section 3.3).

3.2 Intertextuality and dynamic communication networks

Business activity can be understood as the interlocking of process chains geared towards value creation. These “value chains”, as Porter (1985) calls them, include

the business processes of “research & development”, “procurement”, “production” and “marketing” to “distribution” and “sales” (Jakobs 2008: 16). Business communication can then be understood as all linguistic-communicative processes and parts of activities that occur along such chains, together with all supporting and management activities, as well as the interplay between these (Jakobs 2008: 14: “die Gesamtheit der sprachlich-kommunikativen Prozesse und Anteile von Aktivitäten entlang von Wertschöpfungsketten, von unterstützenden Aktivitäten und von Managementaktivitäten sowie ihr Zusammenspiel”). Within the broad context provided by value chains, many varied contexts of interaction arise. Moreover, varied communication media (e.g., from printed texts to online texts) are interwoven in complex patterns with mutually referential and intertextual modes of communication (e.g., from spoken language to images). Productive and receptive processes too are closely interconnected (Jakobs 2011: 88). Companies face the challenge of making appropriate use of these increasing and increasingly diverse media options in order to create value (Jakobs and Spinuzzi 2014).

Thus, for business communication, “integrated” means not just something like “consistent in terms of content and language” (see Section 3.1), but also “coordinated and aligned among the different media”. Achieving this requires management of a large number of new text types (such as diverse kinds of hypertext) and forms of communication (such as Twitter and Facebook). It also, and above all, requires systematic treatment of intertextuality and the dynamic processual communication networks arising from it (Jakobs 2011; in a similar vein, Adamzik 2011). The task of applied linguistics is therefore to examine how and why such networks, or variants of networks, come into being, and how they can be described and evaluated with regard to the patterns they manifest (e.g., with regard to hierarchies, role model functions, acceptance or usability; Jakobs 2011: 90–91).

3.3 Standardization and automatization

Linguistics studies contain evidence both of the high degree of stability (Hundt 2000) of communicative practices in the business domain and of their powerful dynamics (Jakobs 2011). This apparent contradiction is resolved on looking at the diversity of genres in the business context, and at their transformation over time. Some are relatively stable for legal reasons (e.g., balance sheets, contracts or laws/ordinances), some because they have become standardized over time (e.g., delivery notes, invoices, bank statements) (Hundt 2000: 643). However, the development of new media technologies and a correspondingly wider range of electronic forms of communication have led to the emergence of new opportunities for interaction, in terms of both content and form. Furthermore, these also influence hitherto tried-and-tested communicative practices (e.g., e-mail has affected paper correspondence, the selection and ordering of goods online using e-commerce has influenced catalogue design and sales talk). Alongside the predominantly monologic texts in which

companies address customers and the general public, dialogic texts and interactive genres are becoming increasingly common (via diverse product review portals, comment functions, blogs, guest books, Twitter, etc.). This array of new and speedy communication media has spurred a growing need for legal safeguards and for the documentation and monetization of communicative processes (Jakobs 2011: 78–79). In other words, amidst the tensions between stability and dynamic development, one important issue for companies is the extent to which communication processes can be standardized and simultaneously documented – be it for purposes of quality assurance or of automation and efficiency.

The issue of standardization, like that of a consistent company style, depends largely on the communicative functions, patterns of action and situational settings of the practices to be standardized. The questions from a linguistic standpoint, then, are which communicative practices are stable, which are dynamic, and for what reasons, as well as how these practices develop and influence each other in the course of their reciprocal interactions (see Section 3.2). In terms of efficiency vs. effectiveness, particular attention needs to be paid to those communicative practices where standardization, and perhaps automation processes, appear desirable and feasible, while ensuring that “manual” formulation remains an option in order to achieve the communicative objectives in question (see, e.g., Habscheid 2003). Attempts to standardize communications would need to be examined as to whether they are appropriate in terms of function, medium and situational context; this would serve to highlight better alternatives. The cultural specificity of each genre also needs to be taken into account here (Günthner 2007).

4 Business communication as profession

4.1 Communicative practices as interconnected genres

Section 3 has shown that it is not enough to distinguish the various genres from one another and subsequently re-order them so as to cope with their diversity and complexity (see Section 2). From the point of view of applied linguistics, the purpose of these distinctions must instead be to enable description of interactive negotiation processes involving knowledge, decision making, enactment and control/monitoring (Kleinberger Günther 2003: 19) in the business context. The resulting processes of text production and reception as communicative practices must then be rendered comprehensible in order to generate descriptions that can be used for instruction purposes in practical training and work contexts. This will involve investigating the importance of communicative practices as a knowledge resource as well as analyzing the participants involved in interactions by modelling job and skills profiles.

In order to highlight the practical relevance of a linguistic approach to business communication, we shall conclude by focusing on communicative practices as examples of interconnected genres, with the aim of enabling participants to manage

the work tasks associated with a specific job (see the following) and the communicative competences necessary for doing so (Section 4.2). As should have become clear by now, genres and their written and spoken instantiations are variously related to one another in the business context, just as they are elsewhere (Loos 1999; Janich 2009). As the example below will show, the intertextual relations between different genres should be regarded as constitutive features of communicative practices which serve the purpose of managing tasks in everyday working life. Given that these tasks are fundamentally embedded in contexts, they involve a range of practical objectives and conditions specific to them. Depending on the perspective of the different interacting agents, these may conflict with one another. For every specific work task, therefore, it is necessary to establish which media and which genres are available for managing the task, and how much room for maneuver there is to utilize them in a specific situation. Klein (2000: 36) points out that the use of genres and their interconnectedness can – but need not – be fixed depending on the procedure involved; in a legislative procedure, for example, the spectrum of text types and their inherent relations are both largely fixed. By contrast, the field of text types associated with an advertising campaign, although often adhering to standard conventions, is in principle also to some extent variable.

Potential options for action thus arise not only from the task itself, but also from the genres. For example, there are systematic, and so more or less fixed, chronological relations between individual genres when, say, one genre characteristic consists of referring back (or forward) to previous (or future) texts or conversations (e.g., in the sequence “invitation to a meeting” – “meeting” – “minutes of the meeting”). Adamzik (2001b: 30) describes this sequential-functional relation as a *syntagmatic* relationship and contrasts it with what she terms *paradigmatic* relationships, which are concerned with potential replaceability. Thus the question posed from a paradigmatic perspective is which genres are available, in a particular case, as options for realizing certain actions and fulfilling the communicative task (e.g., in advertising: poster, newspaper ad, TV ad, radio ad, cinema ad, brochure, webpage, etc.). Adamzik also points out, however, that these two types of relationship are probably insufficient and that, as a result, multi-dimensional interconnections are also conceivable.

A number of points can be drawn from a case study of business communication concerned with the complex task of “enhancing efficiency by cutting jobs” and described by Janich (2009). Paradigmatic relations were found above all in text types which:

- a. differ in terms of medium (e.g., information e-mail vs. newsletter);
- b. are prototypically structured in different ways (e.g., information in the form of prose texts vs. question-and-answer lists);
- c. are geared towards different target groups (e.g., information event for employees vs. telephone conference for managers).

In this case study, then, paradigmatic relations probably played a less important role because only a few genres are completely interchangeable – precisely because

certain contextual differences mean that each genre has its own special significance within the communication process. For example, information events for employees may provide an opportunity to acquire information and take part in a shared discussion, but their function is generally much more about confronting employees with facts and perhaps recommending potential courses of action. By contrast, telephone conferences for managers held in parallel – although perhaps also serving to inform and to hold discussions – provide more room for maneuver in making decisions. They can therefore have a totally different influence on the further course of communication than the more open information events.

The new opportunities for communication offered by social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, internet forums and blogs pose a significant challenge, not least for the development of communicative and medial competence. That is because the overlaps between them are rapidly becoming denser and more compact, making it increasingly difficult for text producers to make functionally motivated choices (or, in the case of parallel use, to establish coherence based on content or form).

In contrast, the *syntagmatic relations* between genres are not only numerous and dense, they can also be differentiated further according to the type of relation involved. In the case study in question, for example, the following types of relation were in evidence:

- a. chronological relations: for example, situation report for a company → catalogue of measures → negotiations on the catalogue with the works council → reports on the status of negotiations and the implementation of the measures for management and/or information contained in round-robin e-mails and/or newsletter articles for employees → instructions to act and provision of forms and draft contracts → signing of contracts (Here, iterative loops of varying magnitude and at very different points in time are possible; in addition, parallel management telephone conferences take place, organized continually by the project team for the purpose of coordinating decisions and measures);
- b. relations based on either content or function: for example, types of text and conversation which serve to plan and implement measures vs. giving reasons for and justifying these measures vs. implementing and negotiating the measures vs. adopting the measures and subjecting them to contractual regulation (on this point, see also Diatlova's 2003 patterns of action topoi, as well as Section 2.2);
- c. hierarchical relations: for example, newsletter, question-and-answer texts and sets of project documentation a) for management only; b) for company affiliates in general/for all employees; c) where appropriate for the general public and the press;
- d. technical relations between different media: for example, an online project documentation containing web links to other texts which played a role in the course of the communication process (e-mails, newsletter articles).

This overview of possible genre relations shows that they are not only numerous but also multi-layered – in other words, every text and every conversation is linked in multiple and various ways with other genre instantiations. Thus, we do indeed need to assume that there are not only intertextual but also multi-dimensional and dynamic interconnections between communicative practices. Moreover, these must consist not merely of systematically ordered paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations between different genres, but can also be used in a deliberate way to pursue strategic goals and to reinforce hierarchies (see also Briggs and Bauman 1992). In sum, this means that analyses of systematic relations in dynamic genre networks must remain related to the participants in interactions, to their objectives and positions, and to the specific tasks they are pursuing and the business processes that frame all these. Only then will such analyses be relevant to actual business practice. It is additionally necessary to provide supporting linguistic micro-analyses, as called for by Bateman (2006: 178).

With regard to concrete tasks in business communication, it will be difficult methodologically to capture exhaustively all the relevant genres and genre manifestations in text and conversation. Communication processes within companies very often occur in highly complex ways, weaving together oral and written as well as formal and informal communicative events. In consequence, it would appear virtually impossible to achieve any all-encompassing collection and analysis. The analytical effort and complexity of the study are further heightened if we seek to include the specific features and individuality of concrete texts and conversations beyond the patterns they display, and not merely – as considered above – the far more abstract genre characteristics and genre relations. Additional obstacles include limited accessibility and obligations of confidentiality or anonymity. Finally, background information is frequently needed in order to provide any realistic assessment and evaluation of communicative practices, at least in the case of flexible communication processes that display little formality. And in many cases such information is neither readily available nor widely usable. So, even once all linguistically legitimate analytical steps have been taken, the question remains as to how to guarantee an appropriate and realistic interpretation of those elements that characterize, enable or constrain the communicative practice in question, especially in the sphere of communication within a company.

4.2 Communicative practices and competence: Job-based communication profiles

The genre interconnections and resultant complex communicative practices described in Section 4.1 show, at the least, the extent of the challenges individuals face when they have communicative work tasks to manage, often within a team (see, e.g., Pogner 2005). What has so far been largely lacking – and this is something that must be done

within a very limited domain if it is to be genuinely instructive for business practice – are linguistically robust analyses of communicative practices in the business context in terms of what competences they actually require (practical introductions can be found, for example, in Femers 2011 in relation to individual text types, and in Schnurr 2013 in relation to genres and pragmatic dimensions of professional communication). Nonetheless, some initial proposals do exist for general models of job-specific communicative competences (for the following, with regard to the business domain, see Janich 2007; also Kammhuber 2007; Jakobs and Spinuzzi 2014).

- a. First, a profile of communication requirements should be established for specific work tasks: What information needs to be conveyed in what linguistic form and via which media, to whom, how often, how regularly, in what amount of detail, etc.? Which genres are to be utilized? (Here it may be useful to draw on insights from research on text production and writing relating specifically to “writing at work”, Jakobs and Perrin 2014);
- b. On this basis, a corresponding profile of communicative and media competence needed to fulfill these requirements can be drawn up. What linguistic, technical and cultural knowledge, for example about communication processes within the company, about hierarchical structures and about the availability of various knowledge resources (“knowing that”), and which communicative competences based on that knowledge (“knowing how”) are necessary? In other words, which communicative practices are to be acquired as routines?
- c. By combining both profiles, we arrive at a profile of professional communication that can serve as a guiding framework, both for academic research and for professional training and development.

The research challenge consists in identifying the whole range of prototypical – and definitely all institutionalized – communicative activities relating to the regularly recurring demands of a job and highlighting their systematic relations to other work domains. In methodological terms, the difficulty will be to identify those communicative practices that are less usual or may occur only in certain cases but are nonetheless highly significant (e.g., for communication processes that occur at times of mergers, company crises, etc.). Here, too, it is probably extremely difficult to capture systematically the all-important informal communication that takes place, as it were, “between” the official texts and conversations (Kleinberger and Thimm 2000; also various contributions in Coupland 2014).

The key point, however, is to identify professional requirements, less as instances of individual genres than as communicative practices in the sense of dynamically interconnected texts and conversations, that is, in a process-oriented way. The complexity of a professional communication profile can only be demonstrated by taking account of the process-related and dynamic aspects of communicative practices, thus taking the analysis beyond the simple use of text and/or conversation linguistic tools to identify individual genres of business communication.

Thus a competence profile derived from professional requirements would, as a matter of necessity, have to comprise procedural knowledge in addition to declarative knowledge:

- a. What job-specific linguistic (declarative) knowledge, based on everyday linguistic knowledge, is needed (e.g., specialist vocabulary; knowledge about text comprehension; pragmatic knowledge about forms of address; stylistic knowledge)?
- b. What cultural knowledge (e.g., in relation to discursive traditions and styles) and technical knowledge (e.g., in relation to the use of media) is needed in addition to linguistic knowledge? How explicit (and explicable) must this knowledge be?
- c. What specific types of professional communicative competences (procedural knowledge/“prowess”) are needed in the light of a. and b., and which media competences?

In this context, Zerfaß (2004: 190–191) proposes a distinction between active communicative competence (i.e. speaking/writing), perceptual competence (i.e. the ability to listen – or read – attentively) and cooperation competence (i.e. the ability to establish shared communication), thereby also taking account of the hierarchical set of conditions in which communication occurs in a company.

Finally, one function of a competence profile should be to relate knowledge and competences to the norms and communicative maxims of business communication, or of individual companies, that are relevant for actual communication, such as those that are found in company mission statements, codes of conduct and style sheets. Individuals who work in professional or business contexts always act as members of an institution, and of a specialized and job-specific communication community. Only when they have knowledge of the organization-specific appropriateness of certain styles and habits of communication will they be able to communicate competently and effectively.

5 Conclusion

The present contribution has shown that business communication is a complex phenomenon in every respect. This complexity manifests itself not only in a wide variety of target groups, frames of action and communicative goals, but also in a dense network of genres, both oral and written. In addition to showing how these genres may be described and systematized, the contribution also set out to highlight the fact that texts are embedded in genre interconnections and complex communicative practices. This change of perspective from the single genre to communicative activity in its entirety implies that deeper insights into job-based communication profiles can be gained only by detailed analysis of texts and conversations, and of

their interconnections in business settings. On the other hand, profiles constructed on the basis of such insights would enable applied linguistics – *applied* in the true sense – to develop curricula and training material for different fields of business communication on solid linguistic foundations, and to submit them for discussion.

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Peter Handler

4 Business presentations

1. Introduction
2. Fundamentals
3. A complex praxis
4. Informatization and multimodal media usage
5. Interaction rhetoric
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1 Introduction

Presentations play an important, even dominant role in corporate communication. They constitute an extremely common (semi-)formal communication activity. For a top executive, rare is the working day without some form of presentation (cf. Barabel and Meier 2006: 237–238). Presentations are an integral part of numerous business tasks, including day-to-day management, organising institutional change, describing technical processes and even crisis management.

Nowadays, large-scale use is made of presentation software, predominantly PowerPoint® (ppt), which is (also in this contribution) representative of comparable slide presentation tools provided by other software producers. The connection between the labour-saving features of such tools and the presentation boom is obvious; ppt presentations held daily world-wide are thought to number in the 50 million range. Such figures are based on frequency estimates, themselves based on sales figures for Office programmes, and are clearly impossible to verify (cf. Morton 2014: 20). Nonetheless, we can definitely speak of a modern mass phenomenon.

Many people regularly find themselves playing two different roles relative to presentations: as recipients of those given by others and as producers of their own. This may be why the issue of quality is discussed more intensively and more publicly in the case of presentations than with regard to other forms of corporate communication. More pointedly one may say that anyone who has themselves experienced “presentation boredom” (Potter 2013) will soon start to wonder what it is like to sit and listen to one of their own presentations.

As a result, innumerable advice manuals and the like have been published, making the literature on presentations extremely heterogeneous. Yet a general, *a priori* rejection of such works based on preconceived academic concerns is, in my view,

unjustified. The more sophisticated guides are often based on the rich practical experience of specialist business communication consultants and can definitely serve to indicate relevant problem areas, even if their conclusions could sometimes be more nuanced. A clearly scholarly interest in presentations grew, above all, out of the debate about PowerPoint (see Section 4). Of interest here are the pioneering omnibus volumes by Schnettler and Knoblauch (2007) and by Coy and Pias (2009), discussed in Sections 2.2, 3.4 and 4.1.

As the motivation to acquire specialist literature continues to be clearly driven by the needs of praxis, these two strands have become intertwined. While scholars produce works that translate their insights into works of guidance (see, e.g., Lobin 2012), the authors of traditional manuals seek to put their advice on a sound academic footing (see, e.g., Morton 2014). This chapter, too, will take practical considerations strongly into account, while striving to integrate relevant elements from both worlds.

2 Fundamentals

2.1 What is a presentation?

Lobin (2012: 9) traces presentations as we know them today to settings in which visual aids (maps, tables and the like) are displayed, interpreted and perhaps discussed in a group. Since presentations began to make use of computers and video projectors (their predecessors, slide and overhead projectors, are now almost forgotten), the opportunities for visualisation have increased immeasurably. Admittedly, a presentation is essentially a “speech” (in the broadest sense, as a form of oral communication). However, as Lobin stresses, hardly anybody who presents under present-day conditions, where it is a matter of explaining, interpreting and assessing information, often in the form of figures or charts (cf. 2012: 9), has ever made a “speech” in the traditional sense. The dominant role of visual elements implies the use of deictic means. Thus the presenter can point at an actual object (rather a special case) or at pictorial representations of different kinds and with different levels of abstraction (see Section 3.5).

Howell and Bormann (1971: 7–10) date the change of paradigms at around the middle of the 20th century, when “presentations”, or, even more generally, “presentational speaking”, became a tool used in management decision-making processes in (US) companies – just as the requisite presentation media became available. These authors include various photos of “historic” exhibits such as the “flannel board”, the “filmstrip projector” or the “overhead transparency making machine” (pp. 248–255).

2.2 Types of presentation

A review of the practice-oriented literature provides a basis for classifying presentations into categories based on self-descriptions (see the approach adopted by Degenhardt and Mackert 2007). Anthony and Boyd (2014: 7–9) offer a compact overview – albeit merely in list form – under the heading of “Understanding the Different Types of Business Presentations”. Applying tried and tested criteria used for the systematisation of communication in general, and adding contributions from other sources, their types can be classified as follows.

In terms of formality, presentations range from “formal” to “informal”, in those of speaker intention from “informational” – the more or less neutral communication of information – through “motivational” to “persuasive”, that is, the explicitly intended attempt to influence (on sub-categories, see Garten 2004: 19). Somewhat outside this second range are “entertaining” presentations; these “are designed to keep the audience amused. They include after-dinner speeches, and they have little purpose beyond entertainment” (Khan-Panni 2012: 44). In a wider context they may, however, also serve persuasive goals, and the – well-judged – use of entertaining elements is indeed an integral element of many successful presentations. As regards their subjects or domains, presentations are classified as “technical”, “financial/operational”, “commercial”, etc. Projects tend to be divided up into “conceptual”, “planning” and “project updates” stages – with the “solution” emerging at the end. Finally, many business presentations claim to offer “problem solving”. As Anthony and Boyd observe: “When you sell a product or service, what you really sell is a solution to a problem the audience, customer, or client is experiencing” (2014: 9).

2.3 Genres

Applied to presentations, the concept of genre, that is, “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (Miller 1984: 159), allows us to identify some frequently occurring types, each named after the dominant aspect of the situation concerned. Among the most prominent are “company presentations”, “product presentations” and “business-result presentations”, the (self-)representation of a company, the results of production activity and overall success being important elements of information to be transmitted in business life. In the case of “boardroom presentations”, the setting and/or the venue and participants provide the name.

As a presenter “you come face-to-face with the executive staff of your company or of a (potential) client” (Anthony and Boyd 2014: 8), and this scenario sets the special requirements to be met with respect to preparation and level of professionalism of the presentation process. Also context-determined is the so-called “elevator pitch”, which specifies a concise presentation style focused on the essentials. The underlying idea here is the ability to present one’s concern so concisely and convincingly to a decision-maker met by chance in the elevator that this brief presentation triggers a positive reaction.

“Bid presentations” and “sales presentations” refer to specific communicative relationships, respectively contractor-client and seller-buyer. A very typical form here is the “campaign pitch presentation” used in the advertising industry with a view to being granted a communications budget. “Internal presentations” (as opposed to “external” ones) include the entire range of those used daily as management tools. The more important the topic (for instance, getting staff to buy in to a new strategy), the more formal the style of delivery.

Occasionally, a “conference presentation” will have to be given, for instance a “keynote”. Special appearances by CEOs or top product managers, particularly those of firms from the IT sector and the new media (Apple, Microsoft, Facebook, etc.), fall into this “top league” of presentations. The keynotes given by Steve Jobs have acquired cult status; he is credited with the “*invention de la grand-messe médiatique*” [invention of the mediatic high mass] (Poncet 2011) with many a book title referencing his guiding principles (e.g., Gallo 2009).

A very special variant, originally devised as art, is “Pecha Kucha” (a Japanese term for “chit-chat”, cf. Diamond 2010: 226). It aims to stimulate creativity through formal restrictions: a presentation consists of exactly 20 slides and each slide is shown for precisely 20 seconds. “Pecha-Kucha” is now used even in business communication, where it can, for instance, introduce some variety and/or emphasis in the context of larger events (such as during the annual *eDay* organised by the *Wirtschaftskammer Österreich* [Austrian Chamber of Commerce]).

2.4 Formats

The term *format* essentially reflects the dominant medium used for a presentation. Carter (2013: 15–18), for instance, differentiates four formats (admittedly for “science presentations”, but the differences in format options are only minor). These are “the written presentation” (which runs into the academic paper), “the slide presentation”, “the oral presentation (without slides)” and “the poster presentation”. Although slides are ruled out in “oral presentations”, the same does not apply to other information supports, so that variants such as the “flip chart presentation” or the “chalk talk” also fall into this category. The most elaborate development of the latter, that is, the use of interactive whiteboards, may actually include slides in the context of integrated visualisations. And the overhead projector lives on – albeit in a modest role – in the form of the document projector.

3 A complex praxis

3.1 Elements and phases

In order to take account of all its constituent factors, presentation must be seen as praxis, “[t]he Greek word for “action” [...] meaning ‘doing’ rather than ‘making’

[something]” (De George 2005: 751). As such, it is characterized by complex procedural phases and processes, while today “the performatives of praxis are seen to be more directly associated with the entwined phenomena of discourse, communication, and social practices” (Schrug 1995: 639) (see Section 4.3). Although a presentation is not a classical speech and most presenters have no previous training as speakers (see Section 2.1), there are several points of contact with rhetorical traditions. The reason is less that these have been directly passed down, but that they contain, in codified form, certain cognitive principles which time and again have proved both meaningful and useful for communication.

The Aristotelian triad of introduction, body and conclusion (cf. Liebert 2005: 36–37) can be regarded as the core structure for many linguistic interactions. It thus comes as no surprise that “business presentations” can also be divided into “introduction”, “body” and “close” (Lehman and DuFrene 2011: 425–430). They are indeed similar to speeches in the sense that the content to be presented generally requires several levels of preparation. Thus the sequence *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio* (cf. Kirchner 2007: 1), although not directly transferable, may at least serve as a guide for presentations too.

The crucial element in presenting is the communicative event itself, which should be actively driven and shaped by the presenter. The keys to its success are prior phases of anticipation, operationalisation and preparation (see below). After – if not during – the presentation opportunity must be provided for interaction and discussion, as well as any necessary documentation. A follow-up reflection on the event may also be appropriate.

3.2 Anticipation

The quality of a presentation can be markedly influenced by profound anticipation, focused chiefly on the various aspects of its setting: who are the participants, what prior knowledge do they have, what are they expecting? Hierhold (2005: 52–67) proposes some detailed questions designed to ascertain such characteristics, while Duarte (2008: 16–17) suggests constructing fictitious, representative “audience personas”. Hermann-Ruess and Ott (2014: 208–209) give examples of “rewarding dramaturgical elements” – grouped according to audience type – that could serve as a source of inspiration. If the target audience is highly heterogeneous, then the presenter faces the issue of multi-addressing. In other words, their message must be so couched that it is interpreted similarly by different audience groups; alternatively, different groups must be appropriately addressed in succession (cf. Kühn 1995: 37, 51). This is a particular challenge if members of different groups have different cultural backgrounds.

Another question to bear in mind is whether the presentation is a unique element in a very wide range of management activities or is surrounded by other communicative acts that may be similar (e.g., at a conference) or different (e.g., in a meeting). What sort of room or space will the presentation be held in? What audio-visual media

will be available, or must be organised or provided? What data resources are required, and how are they to be accessed?

Core considerations are the presentation's purpose, the desired effect and how this can be made most lasting for the audience in question. Should one use primarily strategies that are based on argumentation (Greek *logos*) or rather on emotion (Greek *pathos*)? (cf. Mayer 2007: 83–134, 135–226) Presentations are generally not emotional occasions. But in some cases – key corporate events, calls for donations and the like – emotions do indeed play an important relevant role. Besides, the emotionality implicit even in routine acts of communication should never be underestimated.

Also to be considered is the expected procedure. This ranges from the overall time frame, and the way it is to be divided up, through the evaluation of one's own mental and physical state disposition, to reflection on the audience's reaction. Dall (2009: 375–377) lists frequently asked questions to be prepared for. Wallwork (2014: 174) gives some stimuli for audience questions, for instance a “summary slide”, and points out that the concluding phase can be used to make a powerful closing point (p. 46).

Finally, the presenter must decide which materials – if any – are to be handed out to participants before, during or after the presentation. Different media's strengths may be used to complement each other, for instance by adopting a “two-pronged approach in terms of presentation materials”, a mix of an “extremely visual PowerPoint presentation” and a “more factual hard copy document” (Morton 2014: 214). In-house conventions or institutionalised practices will dictate, for instance, the form of product folders or, in the case of conferences, the collected abstracts. If a more sustainable presence is to be achieved, information may also be shared in standardised formats on Intranet(s) or the Internet.

3.3 Operationalisation

The next phase involves giving concrete form to the ideas derived from anticipation. With regard to structure, advice manuals offer a range of models, often expressed in formulae. One example is Dall's refinement of the “ARGU-Strukt” scheme developed by Hierhold (e.g., 2005), the pioneer of presentation training in the German-speaking world. Dall's model (2009: 63–110) proceeds from an introduction based on intention, relevance and agenda to a close that incorporates essence and an appeal or action. For the argumentative body he offers numerous “building plans” [*Baupläne*], ranging from “problem – solution”, through “opportunities – benefits” to the classical five-stage dialectic. Content-related pre-structuring is also possible in ppt templates, which are made available for, *inter alia*, various business situations and needs on the Microsoft Office site and other slide creation and distribution sites (see Sections 4.1 and 7.2).

Such templates may offer inspiration but require flexible adaptation to the particular situation – should they be an option at all. The most reliable approach is to develop an individual design based on the specific requirements of intention, content and communicative setting. The approach is comparable to the hermeneutic circle (actually a spiral) of text interpretation, which regards context and background knowledge as drivers of the comprehension process (cf. Teichert 2005: 1339–1344); in this case, though, it is to be applied to the process of production.

Presentation software provides for a working area (known as a “slide sorter”, “light table” or similar) where content elements can be assembled without pre-determining their sequencing, thus allowing a structure to “emerge“. The decision on the mix of tools or materials (in particular: paper vs. electronic platforms) depends largely on individual tastes and preferences.

Furthermore, the sequential structure of contents must also allow for a factor of the utmost importance: the audience’s ability to concentrate, which will diminish gradually over the period of the presentation. This effect can be counteracted by providing for dramatic effects to be employed if and when the audience shows signs of losing attention. Hierhold calls these “attention getters” (2005: 375), while Hermann-Ruess and Ott have even developed a “highlights rhetoric” (2014: 126) strategically sprinkled with them. Alternatively, the presenter can react to waning audience interest by spontaneously modulating his/her voice (on this and further activation strategies, see Dall 2009: 354–363).

Also to be operationalized are the relative weightings of spoken elements with visual ones (mainly in the form of slides) and, as necessary, other material. These will be discussed in detail in Section 6. Yet, however important visual aspects may be, the crucial element of a presentation remains the presenter’s own style of delivery. That too will therefore be the subject of a separate section, in this case Section 5.

It is particularly vital at this stage to clarify what reserves of knowledge will be required when speaking live. Is it a question of routine, retrievable from memory at any time, which can be spontaneously cast into linguistic form – if necessary by using a mnemonic? Or is special care needed because every word counts and the content is complex enough to require frequent reference to notes? And on what medium are such aids to be provided (e.g., note pad, cards, computer screen, in special cases teleprompter or headset)?

Should it be planned to distribute supplementary material, the moment of distribution must be decided, bearing in mind the risk of distraction. Will it be helpful to make the presentation available in permanent form? If so, it is advisable to convert its content from a linear sequence of slides and speech to a hierarchically-structured overview text.

3.4 Preparation

Preparation – in a strict sense – is the result of confronting oneself with the forthcoming exposure to a dynamic in which there is hardly any going back and limited room for manoeuvre. Given the ample opportunities to use notes, very few presenters these days attempt to memorise what they wish to say. The focus is thus on means of self-monitoring and confidence-boosting (rehearsals given to close confidants, video recordings, coaching). During this phase, lessons can be learnt about paraverbal aspects, such as voice, intonation and rhythm, and body language, problems in the dramatic structure identified and linguistic expression improved.

Thus preparation here involves making available everything needed for the presentation's practical implementation (media, aids, documents to be handed out, etc.), as well as testing equipment on site. It also means working out a plan B – perhaps even a plan C – to cope with problems, usually technical in nature. (On these, see the typology of such potential mishaps – glitches in the set-up, malfunctions, inconsistencies with the overall style of the event, or complete disasters – and ways of coping with them offered by Schnettler and Tuma (2007: 171–177).) Possible precautionary measures include designing handouts with such eventualities in mind or saving slides in a universal format such as PDF.

3.5 The event itself

The work undertaken in these prior phases comes together in the presentation event itself, when it should pay off. Two essentials for a successful presentation are the visibility of the material presented (an important prior consideration, especially for slide presentations) and the audibility (i.e. the acoustic clarity) of what is said. This may sound trivial. Yet surprisingly often ignoring these aspects leads to absurd situations in practice, as described in the chapter entitled “*L'usage répandu et persistant de transparents illisibles*” [The widespread and persistent use of illegible slides] in Morel (2004: 39–41).

During this implementation phase, the presenter's expressive abilities, including body language, are constantly challenged. Their use will vary with the speaker's temperament and the presentation context, in which the media used assume a very specific role. Especially in the case of ppt presentations, a typical phenomenon is the “decentring of the speaker” (Knoblauch 2012: 230), with the slide becoming the audience's interaction partner. To avoid this, the speaker must coordinate their flow of speech, by its nature continuous (at least in principle), with the sequence of slides on which information is visualised in blocks – all that while establishing and maintaining a connection with the audience (cf. Beaudouin 2008: 7).

Lobin (2012: 26–27) differentiates six ways in which speech and images may be linked:

- commenting (paraphrasing, for instance of bullet point texts);
- orienting (projecting of key concepts to support speech);
- integrating (ideal intertwining of speech and visuals);
- describing (explaining visualisations);
- illustrating (supplementing speech with visuals); and
- associating (leaving the connection open, intentionally or by mistake).

It is crucial that visuals do not take on a life of their own; Dall (2009: 238) uses the drastic expression “blood suckers” to describe images that are badly synchronised with the flow of speech and divert the audience’s attention. Referencing becomes verbal-deictic, as in “[S]o let’s look at . . .” or “This should give you a clearer picture of . . .” (Wallwork 2014: 86, 215), and pointing gestures are used. The latter are merely referential, in contrast to gestures which imitate contents or accompany them in a mimetic manner (cf. Knoblauch 2012: 224).

Hand gestures serve a range of purposes for the speaker, including “facilitation”. More importantly still, they have “conversational functions”; “the rhetorical one enriches the content, the discursive one marks the syntactic structure [. . .], the interactive one allows conversation management, the persuasive one convinces and influences the interlocutors” (Maricchiolo et al. 2014: 1461–1462). A special case of indicating is the use of a laser pointer, which enables drawing-like movements; the speaker may, for instance, circle, underline, connect or sequence sections (cf. Knoblauch 2012: 226–227). With the emergence of touch screens and especially tablets, the speaker may now perform all these activities directly on the screen with a stylus, thus enabling better maintenance of eye contact with the audience.

Contact in general involves far more than merely facing the audience. It means truly connecting with those present, which is a complex endeavour conditioned by social, emotional, pragmatic-contextual and many other factors. Interests often differ, and bad news must sometimes be imparted. Ideally, speakers will seek to cement the allegiance of an audience already well-disposed to them or their concern(s) or to successfully convince a critical one. In real-life, however, they must frequently content themselves with not antagonising the essentially disinterested, or merely with surviving in the face of opposition. The practice-based work of Dall (2009: 382–392) goes into great detail about hecklers and lists the following counter-measures: ignoring them, acknowledging them (e.g., by eye contact), addressing them briefly and returning immediately to the topic, and promising to address their concerns later.

3.6 Discussion

During this phase, provided for in most cases, the main issue is to manage and guide the intended audience interaction. If no one else has been given the task of

moderating the discussion, the speaker will assume that role and continue to use the authority accorded by their function. The simplest type of discussion is back-and-forth between presenter and individual participants. If direct reference is made to other contributions, turn-taking may be negotiated. Sometimes, though, events may acquire a turbulent dynamic of their own that can only be managed by resolute interference. Where presentations are part of management routine, an executive present may act as moderator by authority of their status. In asymmetrical communicative constellations, as when a new concept is presented to senior management, probing questions are to be expected, not to mention some cross-fire.

The use of new media means audience reactions may be accessible to web communities in real time. How awful if, for instance, Twitter messages on a feedback channel read: “I’m bored already and it’s just the first slide” or “What the hell does this mean?!” (Morton 2014: 174). Duarte (2012: 215) points out that such problems can be anticipated: “Have a moderator keep an eye on social media and send text messages to your cell phone if he/she thinks you should address any criticisms in a Q&A at the end of your talk.” Frequently, the outcome of presentation and discussion requires further action on the part of the speaker (e.g., sending detailed additional information) and of the participants (e.g., if the presentation served a management purpose).

3.7 Documentation

Here, current developments must be considered carefully. Using their tablets and smart phones, participants increasingly take photos of slides, whiteboards and flip-charts. The latest equipment enables printing of smart-board content (sometimes produced interactively) in hard copy. Presenters need to be ready for spontaneous requests from audience members to “have the slides” – immediately and in electronic form. In this event, they must consider the concerns expressed in Section 4.1, as well as copyright and other issues related to, say, publication. If they nevertheless decide to provide slides, presenters will still need to check whether these include any confidential background elements, such as comments or metadata, which are definitely not to be handed over.

3.8 Reflexion and optimisation

After the presentation is over, it is time for self-critical review. How far has the goal been achieved? What lessons can be drawn, for instance from the presentation’s course, audience reaction or the response to programme features, or with respect to time management? A video recording of the presentation provides reliable feedback.

From the economic perspective, there are valid arguments for not seeking perfection at all times, but to allow occasional imperfection – in line with the “Pareto

principle”, according to which “most of the results (of a life, of a program, of a financial campaign) come from a minority of effort (or people, or input)” (Mathison 2005: 290). In routine situations, for instance, cost considerations may accord a low priority to sophisticated design. However, such problems as spelling mistakes or general sloppiness will definitely lead to a loss of reputation.

With a view to “live” integration of participants’ reactions, one may “[w]rite new slides just before the presentation begins or during a break” (Wallwork 2014: 207). Yet the (time) pressures inherent to business life today often mean that the presentation itself is completed at the very last minute – with aid of a computer or smart-phone. The speaker may then be forced into “copying and pasting some slides together (also known as a Frankenstein-presentation)” (Morton 2014: 18), which gives rise to a paradoxical disproportionality between the (lack of) care taken and the importance of the communicative activity (e.g., in the case of sales presentations).

4 Informatization and multimodal media usage

4.1 The rise of software-based presentations and their critics

During the 1990s the widespread availability of hardware (PC and laptop), new software concepts (“de-materialisation” of projection slides) and the affordability of video projectors triggered the well-known boom in software-based presentations. Their initial rapid spread, during which this convenient tool was embraced naively and thoughtlessly, was soon followed – as was only logical – by considerable criticism, often trenchant, such as: “Ban it now! Friends don’t let friends use PowerPoint” (Stewart 2001); “PowerPoint is evil” (Tufte 2003); or “Think of it as technological cocaine” (Keller 2003). (For further examples and commentary, see Mertens 2004). Bieber (2009: 134–135) even ranks such comments on a “maliciousness scale” [*Bösartigkeitsskala*]. These contributions, however, also include some perfectly rational arguments, of which a brief summary, based on Handler (2006: 222; 2013: 33–34), is given below.

The main focus of criticism was that the ppt format requirements forced contents into an inappropriate form: “it edits ideas” (Parker 2001); “it squeezes ideas into a preconceived format” (Keller 2003); “[it] elevates format over content” (Tufte 2003). One reason for PowerPoint’s success was seen to be its effect on the speaker as an “impressive antidote to fear” (Parker 2001), as the speaker may to some extent “cling” to their set of slides. The flip side is, however, the development of a “pushy style” (Tufte 2003). The dominant sequentiality makes it harder to show how ideas are connected: “When information is stacked in time, it is difficult to understand context and evaluate relationships” (Tufte 2003). Moreover, the audience is subjected to visual overkill; images acquire a significance of their own instead of illuminating

and supplementing what is being said (cf. Tufte 2003). A particular ppt problem that seems almost ineradicable is summed up as “the sin of triple delivery” (Parker 2001, with reference to Simons). In its most extreme form, this means that the audience is presented with the same content three times: first visually, on slides; second aurally, as the presenter reads out their content; and third textually, as a print-out of the slides.

One ppt functionality has come under particularly fierce attack. Essentially a selection of pre-produced slide templates designed for particular communicative settings, such as staff meetings, training courses for new hires or project reports, this is known as “Autocontent wizard”. Presumably it was this name, actually intended as a joke by the software designers (cf. Bieber 2009: 132), that caused all the fuss. Linking “content”, which communicates “meaning” and is thus the sphere of the thinking human, with automatism, indeed even magic, was considered intolerable sacrilege. The name has disappeared, even if “wizard” itself lives on in the OpenOffice world. Yet templates and model slide sets for almost any situation in life, personal or corporate, are available on Office and other servers. Both PowerPoint and its users seem to have reached a certain level of maturity. More recent programme developments have focused on establishing a certain kind of unobtrusive aesthetics based on colour combination schemes, on facilitating routine processes (e.g., image processing in the programme itself), on cloud connection and seamless switching between the various platforms.

Nevertheless, one problem regarding slide usage remains widespread; indeed it has given rise to a new portmanteau coinage: “slideument” (Duarte 2008: 7). This refers to the use of slide sets as documentation for later referencing and/or as a source of information for those not present during the presentation itself. In companies they are even requested in advance – in order to decide whether to attend the presentation (cf. Beaudouin 2008: 384). But here lies a fundamental contradiction. In a ppt presentation that is appropriate to its situation, the slides do not display the full content but serve to structure, supplement and clarify what is said. Video analyses of the “orchestration” of lists on slides, which mainly consists of explaining and managing audience attention, show how details and supplementary material which do not appear in the projected text are commonly placed (cf. Schnettler 2007: 151, 155).

If slides alone are to render all the information, they must inevitably be designed in such a (detailed) manner that the presenter is demoted to a mere reader/paraphraser – indeed becomes superfluous. The different tasks of “presentation” and “documentation” can be properly accomplished only by using different forms of communication and the textuality characteristic of each. In practice, though, compromises are common. Financial pressures demand quick solutions and thus ppt sets are produced for two functions – neither of which they fulfil satisfactorily.

4.2 Orientation

The recognition that not everything can be delegated to software acts as a spur to seek guidance for the original, and essentially personal contributions. The impatient may turn to “Successful presenting in a week” (Brown 2012); those who prefer lists may choose “100 things every presenter needs to know about people” (Weinschenk 2012) – ambitious titles both! But over and above that, strong, striking statements in general – a metaphor perhaps, or a colourful idea – have more chance of being noticed. The authors concerned are usually specialists who can draw on rich practical experience in presentation consulting and design. In a competitive market, a distinctive profile is essential; the ambition to make an impact with a characteristic style probably also plays a role. Thus individual experts tend to have their own “doctrines” as presented below. However, blindly imitating them is unlikely to prove beneficial. Rather, one needs to review which arguments are used to support particular design decisions and the extent to which they may – or may not – be useful for one’s own purposes.

The following is a brief review of some well-known experts and their doctrines. Kawasaki (2005) uses a number scheme, namely 10-20-30, as the basis for his concept. Ten stands for the ideal number of presentation slides, twenty for the optimal length of the presentation in minutes, and thirty refers to the font size to be employed. Atkinson (2011) puts forward the notion of presenting “[b]eyond bullet points”, which, he claims, “turns the conventional thinking about PowerPoint presentations upside-down” (p. xvi) and is based on a “Story Template” (p. 49). This is a hybrid of ppt and “storytelling” which has already been hyped as a management principle in the business world and in institutions (for a critique of this approach, see Salmon (2007), who especially denounces its creation of artificial and manipulative realities). Reynolds (2012), for his part, compares a successful presentation with a Japanese Bento Box because it “contains appropriate content arranged in the most efficient, graceful manner” (p. 6). Inspired by the Zen approach, he gives as the three pillars of a good presentation: “Restraint in preparation. Simplicity in design. Naturalness in delivery.” (p. 7). The “New Slide Ideology” postulated by Duarte (2008: 1) regards “[s]lides [...] as a visual aid to reinforce the presenter’s message” (p. 7). This puts the focus back on the speaker, but with a specific mission: “To succeed as a presenter, you must think as a designer” (p. 83). On the basis of case studies, she offers a tour through slide-related design issues, from colour schemes to layouting and animation. Finally, Morton (2014) offers the reader a “presentation lab” in which presentation skills are brought together and the appropriate presentation for a given situation is created “by using a variety of different options and solutions, mixing them up and testing them in as open and engaging [a] way as you can” (p. 8). The result is “blended presenting”, that is, a flexible approach combining several communication media (slides, printed copies, whiteboard, specimens, etc.).

As well as writing books, these authors use websites (some with blogs) in order to communicate with interested parties and (potential) clients (*guykawasaki.com*, *beyondbulletpoints.com*, *presentationzen.com*, *duarte.com*, *eyefulpresentations.co.uk*). They can thus be included among the internet sources that form a rich source of materials on all aspects of presenting. Thematically structured website collections are to be found both in the literature (e.g., Lobin 2012: 192–197) and on the Internet itself (e.g., Prezi Top 100).

4.3 Is there a “PowerPoint Culture”?

So deeply has ppt penetrated so many areas of our lives that there has even been talk of a “PowerPoint culture”, especially in the French-speaking world, where the question has arisen: “*Qu’est-ce que signifie cette culture PowerPoint?*” [What does this PowerPoint culture mean?] (Politi 2010). The concept is certainly in line with current definitions of culture, such as: “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; [...]” (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1963: 357). For a set of actions carried out millions of times every day forms a sufficiently coherent pattern in this sense. However, it is clearly not culture in the sense of a collection of outstanding achievements (German: *Hochkultur*), but rather in much the same sense as is found in the concept of “corporate culture”.

In fact, as a specific form of communication, a “ppt culture” corresponds very well with the idea that “culture is communication and communication is culture” (Hall 1990: 186). Sociologists emphasise: “Culture [...] is deeply ideological. Power relations are infused throughout the products and practices of a group and between groups.” (Faulkner et al. 2006: 48). They also stress that: “The focus here is on meanings, on institutions, and on the ‘concrete practices’ [Fiske] of media and everyday speech.” (p. 50). But, of course, the concept of “ppt culture” can have different connotations, and when problems arise the term acquires a negative charge (see Section 4.1).

4.4 Alternative ways of presenting

Today, PowerPoint fatigue has become a topos that can be exploited in numerous ways (e.g., satirical PowerPoint cartoons, for instance on *www.cartoonstock.com*). The Austrian daily *Der Standard* mockingly greeted the launch of the Microsoft presentation programme Sway with the line “*Microsoft hat auch genug von PowerPoint*” [Microsoft is tired of PowerPoint too] (Schmid 2014). The new software can be considered as, above all, a reaction to rapidly growing competitor Prezi, whose

presentation logic it partly resembles while also seeking to interlink more effectively with online forms of communication.

Strictly speaking, Prezi is a special form of “click- & zoomable infographics” (see Section 6.3) and is controlled by the presenter. Its innovative aspect consists of a radically new design (and technological) approach. The medium used is an almost infinitely expandable canvas on which information is placed. From there, the individual stages of the presentation are zoomed towards the audience in an order that has been previously defined but may be changed spontaneously. Information may be displayed in various “containers” such as brackets, boxes and circles. These can be nested within each other, enabling an impression to be given of a topic’s depth. Furthermore, lines and arrows can be used to illustrate more clearly the linkages between individual elements.

Too many links may, however, result in loss of orientation and zooming is criticised for triggering “motion sickness”. What is more, Prezi is “so whizzy and capable of tricks and flashy moves, that sometimes people become lost in the technology and the medium becomes (or obscures) the message” (Potter 2013). This is the same criticism that was directed at animation techniques used in ppt (swivel, bounce, grow & turn and so on), excessive use of which is now very rare. Prezi’s designers retort that their programme removes presenters’ dependence on standard-sized slide “chunks”. They also claim that it allows logically connected elements to be kept together more easily, as well as better visualisation of hierarchies, for instance by enlarging higher-order concepts on the “screen”.

5 Interaction rhetoric

5.1 Language use

Business presentations’ strong focus on “persuading” the audience of something (to buy, to commission, to implement a strategy, etc.) means that the language employed must be persuasive in nature. Rhetoric, the oldest discipline that considers language as a means of speaking effectively, thus remains as relevant as ever as a source of linguistic devices designed to achieve a particular effect. The role of scholars in this context is dialectic. On the one hand, they pass on and disseminate the ideas underlying such devices. On the other, academics provide the basis for challenging them, one example being the Frankfurt school’s “ideal of a communication which involves all rational subjects and is entirely free of domination and error-inducing interest” (Inwood 2005: 312).

The first choice to be made by a presenter is that of style. Their decision will be guided by a number of considerations, among them: established conventions in the particular subject area or discipline (finance, human relations, marketing, etc.), even perhaps in a particular corporate culture; the talk’s primary intention (e.g., to report, to convince, to sell); and the appropriate level of formality. Presenters may decide to

comply as strongly as possible with standard linguistic practice (opting in), thus signalling, for instance, a common bond or affiliation. Alternatively, they may prefer to distance themselves from such norms (opting out) in an attempt to suggest originality, the break-up of inflexible structures and innovation (cf. Assmann 1986: 127).

Furthermore, certain linguistic characteristics promise better results with a view to understandability, attention, connection with the audience and the like. Recommendations common in style guides can also be found in advice manuals. They, too, plead for concision, both for individual expressions (preferring, say, “usually” to “more often than not” (Carter 2013: 71) and as regards sentence length. They also stress the antithesis between active and passive verb forms. Carter also provides a scale of verbs that express different degrees of evidential force, as well as special advice on handling figures in presentations (pp. 80–84). However, advice such as “Use verbs not nouns” or “Avoid vague expressions or highly subjective adjectives” (Wallwork 2014: 47, 48) tends towards over-generalization (see the discussion of linguistic qualification in Chapter 9, Section 3.6).

The particular requirements associated with giving presentations in a foreign language are the subject of specialist didactic literature, which aims to develop the linguistic resources necessary for “process management” (giving an overview, moving from one slide to the next, transitions between different sections, etc.) and for achieving the overall communicative goal (choosing the most appropriate style, idiomatic means of argumentation and achieving rhetorical effect, explaining visualisations, etc.: see Sections 3.5, 5 and 6). In line with demand, the range of literature is widest for English, and also displays some differentiation. While Grussendorf (2007) remains rather general, Powell (2010) and Wallwork (2014) specifically target the business world. Klarer (2003) also includes a wealth of information on US corporate culture, while Baud and Hillion (2008) focus on scientific presentations.

5.2 Rhetorical effects

Some linguistic tools derive their effect from rational elements, and/or they may trigger subliminal reflexes because of their particular features, be these logical, semantic, (morpho)syntactic or phon(aesth)etic in nature. Such tools, which aim more directly at achieving a certain impact, include:

- general rhetorical devices, e.g., the rhetorical question (which implies its own answer), exaggeration (hyperbole), the stringing together (perhaps incrementally) of three elements, etc.;
- devices based on one of the four change categories of classical rhetoric (*adiectio* (addition), *detractio* (omission), *immutatio* (permutation) and *transmutatio* (transposition), which are possible on different linguistic levels; a permutation, for instance, functions both morphologically and syntactically;
- tropes, especially metaphors and metonymy (see Chapter 18 in this volume).

The most immediate support in this area comes in the form of sets of text modules, marketed under catchy titles such as “Perfect phrases for executive presentations” (Perlman 2006: other volumes in the same series cover subjects or groups from “fundraising” to “landlords and property managers”). However, it is questionable how far unwieldy text blocs are helpful in dealing with situations that demand spontaneity and quick reactions, although they may have some utility in the context of foreign language didactics.

6 Visualisation

6.1 Text

The many popular ways now available of turning almost everything into an image have opened up major opportunities, but have also given rise to many problems. One of the simplest functions of “ppt & Co” is that of filling slides with text. And as language plays an important role in presenting, language material is almost “dragged” onto slides, part of a trend towards “graphicisation” [*Graphisierung*] of language (Knoblauch 2012: 219). Its justification, however, remains dubious; only in special cases (e.g., when the exact wording is important) does it make sense to project lengthy text passages. Used more sparingly, text can serve, for instance, to communicate the structure of the presentation (and to “navigate” through it) or to highlight guiding principles.

Apart from the fact that the font size must be large enough to ensure readability, several other factors influence the reception of written texts. These include the choice of an appropriate background colour for the projection conditions (structure of the projection area, brightness of the room), the degree of contrast and the interplay of colours. This last is not just a question of visibility; it is important not “to communicate with colours in a way that makes [...] slides and posters look like a trip to the circus.” (Carter 2013: 39). In selecting a typeface, one should bear in mind that some authors have attributed “personalities” to particular fonts, for example, “Garamond – classic, refined; Calibri – formal, neutral; Courier – retro, nerdy” (Carter 2013: 58–59). Of course, such lists are intended only as rough guides.

The use of typefaces that are more strongly charged in semiotic terms (Adventure, Gumbo, Parisienne, etc.) may be considered for selectively highlighting, for instance of titles. Rarely justifiable, however, is an entire presentation in, say, “Comic sans” – which has, incidentally, been dubbed the “most hated” typeface ever (Bachfischer and Bachfischer 2014). In general, the use of standard typefaces (so called for good reason) is regarded as a sensible approach. Serif fonts are a special case. Useful as they may be in facilitating reading of printed texts (newspapers, books, etc.) – “the little feet at the bottom of the letters [...] help create an almost continual line [...], smoothing the reading process” (Evergreen 2014: 63) – they often prove problematic in projections. The visual effects can be compared by

changing the parameters on a test slide one by one. More detailed analysis can be found in publications on typography which include comparisons based on sample texts, for instance Willberg and Forssman (2010: 74–75). Visual material on forms of typographical emphasis, character spacing, the use of different font sizes and so on can be found in Carter (2013: 53–67) among others. Distortions and similar effects that can be achieved with the Word function “Word Art” tend to fall into the “circus” category mentioned above.

6.2 Tables and charts

In business, a key type of visualisation is the depiction of figures and changes in them. The use of tables makes sense when interpreting them in front of the audience has been planned as a dramaturgical element of the presentation. Yet the limits of the possible are soon reached because the space available on a ppt slide allows only a few cells at a time to be displayed clearly. Generally, though, it is the evaluation of data that is of interest. Hence the popularity of charts, which can be created or automatically generated from figures using functions available in common Microsoft Office programmes, although specialist use requires some expert knowledge. This can be found, for example, in Quirk (2015) or Stein-Fairhurst (2015).

Sufficient experience has been gathered in using the most elementary forms of representation – dots, lines, columns, bars, circles and pie charts – to allow some lessons to be learned. They point towards a stronger focus on the essentials – 3-D, for instance, should be used only if the topic demands it – and a closer connection between graphic elements and their text explanations (e.g., a circle segment should be explained by text placed in or adjacent to it instead of by reference to a colour code set out in the key). Frequently encountered are comparisons, such as that in Figure 1, intended to show how slides can be improved, the current focus being on “slim” slide design; see Hermann-Ruess and Ott (2014: 97, 142–143), Carter (2013: 353 – especially from the perspective of scholars’ self-marketing).

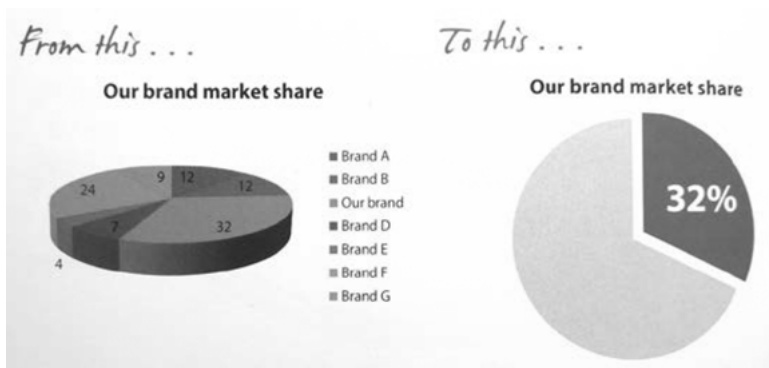


Figure 1: Example of a comparative graphic from an advice manual (Morton 2014: 154)

For more sophisticated or less common visualisations, special programmes are used; on this, see Stacey, Salvatore, and Jorgensen (2013), who make use of such tools as “visual analytics” and other technique (e.g., “scatter plots”, “radar charts”, “matrices”). For stock exchange developments, in particular, graphics-based analyses have become routine (“candlesticks”, “equivolume boxes”, “relative rotation graphs”, etc.). When viewing charts, audiences must beware of the “fraudulent dimensions” [*Dimensionenschwindel*] (Dall 2009: 152) that can be created by disproportional representations of small parts. For presenters, the injunction is: “Tell the truth. [...] Don’t alter the proportion of your axes.” (Duarte 2012: 138–139).

6.3 Illustrations

In a further step, graphics become illustrative. In this area, a pioneering role was played by the *Wiener Methode der Bildstatistik* [Vienna Method of Pictorial Statistics], created in the 1920s by Otto Neurath. It developed “*hochinformative, [...] leicht erkennbare, lesbare Mengendiagramme*” [highly informative, [...] easily recognisable, readable set diagrams] (Müller 1991: 38; original bold print). Expressing quantities, or comparisons between them, by organising representative figures on a canvas is also effective on slides. By using different symbols, it is possible to present several parameters in the same graphic, as in Figure 2 (Müller 1991: 42, following Neurath).



Figure 2: Neurath’s representation of home and factory weaving in England

Legend: 1 bale of material = 50m pounds total production

1 dark figure = 10,000 home weavers

1 light figure = 10,000 factory weavers

Such configurations have become the *sine qua non* of modern graphical representations. Another form is based on semantic analogies. Business makes large-scale use of metaphors from sports, architecture, health, travel and many other fields (see Chapter 18), which lend themselves very well to visualisation. For example, the language of weather forecasts can illustrate the economic situation, or “climate”: “*eine Sonne, eine hinter Wolken versteckte Sonne, eine Wolke mit Regen etc. – rein bildliche, allerdings für diesen Zweck kodifizierte Metaphern*” [a sun, a sun hidden

behind clouds, a raincloud, etc. – purely figurative metaphors, although codified for this purpose] (Stegu 1996: 72).

More complex infographics represent several aspects of a single topic and relate them to one another. They “convey complex information [...] in a manner that can be quickly consumed and easily understood.” (Morton 2014: 148). Yet, for that very reason, they rapidly become too large to be shown on slides. Consequently, infographics are rather more suited to poster presentations. And there is another problem to consider: “By their very nature, good infographics tell their audience pretty much *the whole story*.” (Morton 2014: 148; original italics), especially if they are not just “static”, “zooming” and “clickable” but become “animated infographics” (Krum 2014: 42). The speaker’s job is thus subsumed into the slide presentation itself, in line with the trend towards autonomous sharing of knowledge on the web (see Section 7.2). A special form of graphic, cartoons, may create a surprise effect when used at the appropriate moment during a presentation, but they must be employed sensitively and with restraint.

6.4 Photos

The use of photos and the type of photos used depends on the role assigned to them in the display of content and the dramatic flow. Their functions can range between such contrasting poles as creating atmosphere and documentary photography. Photographic representation is informed by aesthetic principles from the fine arts – which, as in the case of linguistic style, can be observed or deliberately broken. The most important example is the “Golden Ratio”: “The proportion has been known since antiquity [...] and has been said to possess inherent aesthetic value.” (Chilvers and Osborne 1997: 234).

In the field of photo editing it is applied in the simplified form known as the ‘rule of thirds’. This involves dividing the photo into 3×3 equally large segments and placing its key compositional element at one of the points where the dividing lines intersect (cf. Garten 2011: 123), thus creating visual tension. Indeed, producing pictorial tension (pp. 122–127) – through contrast with the presentation environment or use of an unusual perspective – is one of the main strategies employed when working with photos.

6.5 Videos

A video film used as part of a presentation essentially competes with the presentation itself, in the sense that, as soon as moving pictures or sound come from another source, the presenter is pushed into the background. The risk of cannibalisation is reduced if videos are limited to short clips and strictly embedded in the dramaturgy. Dall (2009: 268–269) asserts that film material can help to make presentations’ credibility.

If they are sufficiently elaborate and intensively prepared, videos may take over the role of slides, in which case the presenter must assert their presence in order not to be sidelined. Such a configuration may develop into what might be termed a “utility performance” [*Gebrauchperformance*]. A special application is the use of video technology to project enlarged images of the presenter live on a screen.

6.6 Structure & navigation

The majority of presentations are enhanced by providing the audience with meta-level information. An “agenda slide” removes any uncertainty about what is to be expected and prepares the audience for what is coming up. Alternatively, the presentation may begin with a “hook” and the structure elucidated in a later slide.

Visual means, such as a bar showing the presentation’s various sections, with the one currently under discussion highlighted, also enable the viewer to be kept constantly (meta) informed. The usefulness of this approach must be decided for each talk individually; it can be unnecessarily distracting. Another option would be to provide more concise navigation information in the form of slides introducing each section or by making low-key use of a colour coding.

A further type of meta-information, this time to establish identification with the company, consists in recurring elements of a standardised slide design that forms part of corporate identity. Bayers refers to the counterproductive nature of such repetitive slides – which usually boast a dominating logo (“*Avait-on peur que le personnel oublie subitement où il travaille?*” [Is one afraid that staff may suddenly forget where they work?] 2014: 96). Such a design, however, does make sense if a set of slides (in the sense described in Section 4.1) takes the form of a “slidecast” and is abandoned to its uncertain fate (in the web) since the source of individual slides remains clear even if they become detached from the set.

7 Temporal and spatial dissociation

7.1 Re-use

People have always sought to preserve contents originally presented orally or theatrically, be it by merely retelling them (as in oral literature traditions), by “re-coding” them into written (perhaps illustrated) forms or by using electronic storage devices. The same applies to presentations. However, the fact they are nowadays conceived from the outset as mixed-media events, to take place under what are often very particular audience conditions, makes their case more complex.

Thus it is insufficient merely to film a ppt presentation because on a TV or computer screen the slide content will be too small to read. By contrast, “slidecasts” produced using specific technical editing processes place the slides centre-stage and

the speaker's presence is reduced to a small window or to a voice in off. Pointing gestures must therefore be replaced with adequate visual means to guide the audience's gaze.

7.2 Autonomisation

Slidecasts are sometimes produced as such without the slides having been presented to an audience. Sequenced slides may also be used as an independent format for the dissemination of content, provided they focus on specific reception situations and are optimised towards this end or automatically adapted (as with Sway: see Section 4.4). The user of a computer, tablet or smartphone screen usually has some basic tools at their disposal (forward/rewind, pause, etc.) and can thus design their media consumption as they wish.

Provision and dissemination is enabled by special portals where topics are grouped into thematic categories (e.g., Data & Analytics, Economy & Finance, Marketing, Recruiting & Human Resources, etc.) to facilitate orientation. Such portals also combine the social-media principle with "slidecasting"; it is no coincidence that *slideshare.net* is a division of LinkedIn. Another example is *slideboom.com*; here the focus is on providing a full range of services to companies, including design tools, administration of access rights and analysis tools for site visit statistics. *Slideworld.com* considers itself primarily a "PowerPoint search engine" (portal heading) and also accesses Google results. Moreover, for web-based presentation software services (such as Prezi or Sway) it has become standard practice to provide a home for the presentations prepared using them, in order to build-up a community and/or facilitate a user-friendly connection to large social networks.

On the other hand, video clips specifically intended for internet distribution feature a human presenter as well as slides. But large video platforms (YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion, etc.) continue to be focused mainly on entertainment, so that business presentations do not play a significant role there – at least not yet. Only in niche areas are presentation videos used, for instance to advertise and/or "review" ("hands-on", in its recently acquired meaning) a product that lends itself to presentation, for corporate training purposes or to give instructions – not least on presentation technique, something that also features in numerous slidecasts).

One special case is the renowned online portal *ted.com*, which gives access to the talks given at conferences organised by the non-profit foundation TED. In its own words, these offer: "Ideas worth spreading. Knowledge in dangerously addictive short doses." (portal heading). The portal derives its name from the three topics – technology, entertainment and design – it originally dealt with. Numerous others, such as business and economics, have now been added. The talks which last a little less than 20 minutes, often take the form of presentations and are – both in the live situation and as a web variant – intended for a large audience (one top business-related presentation has so far been viewed nine million times). Examination of

the publication dates of different offerings shows how their format has changed; originally films of large screen ppt presentations, they have evolved into carefully edited slidecasts.

8 Conclusion

Today, presentations of widely diverse types, genres and formats are a defining feature both of the workplace and of companies' external relations. They owe this prominent role in large measure to the development of electronic devices for the visualisation of information and to the popularisation of presentation software. Certainly, slide presentations are by no means always the best way of meeting communication needs. But, as Beaudouin (2008: 12) also emphasises, they provide a reasonable solution in a number of situations, such as customer contact and project-oriented work – especially in view of the intensified work patterns and ever-growing distractions that increasingly divide employees' attention. As a result, the boom will probably continue, while also following general tendencies in the field of media and their usage. It is thus not surprising that all well-known software producers are working on ways to facilitate the collaborative preparation of presentations, in line with the trend towards participation in social media.

Digital nomadism, together with increasing bandwidths for video transmissions and the availability of special software, finds its expression in webinars where participants are linked only virtually. Here, too, recipes for success are propagated (cf. Hermann-Ruess and Ott 2014). As regards hardware-software integration, the current trend is towards seamless transitions between different devices (ranging from smartphones to tablets, notebooks and PCs, possibly running on different operating systems). This applies to both production and reception of presentations that were recorded or are being held at a particular moment in another location. This translates into yet more distinct forms, for instance iPad presentations (cf. Flume: 2013). One possible technical development that could further transform presentations is the popularisation of 3-D printers, which enable the use of objects to enhance understanding. This would, in a sense, establish a link to those original forms of presentations which relied mainly on showing objects. To do justice to all these forms under ever-changing conditions, the “praxis” described at the beginning of this contribution will undoubtedly have to evolve further.

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5 Business negotiations

1. Introduction
2. Some terminological notes
3. The linguistic aspects of business negotiation
4. Training business negotiation
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Negotiation, according to Bülow (2009: 142), is a process of communicative interaction through which two or more parties aim to solve their conflicting interests in a way that all parties regard as preferable to any alternative. Negotiation has also been described as an “activity of social decision making” (Firth 1995c: 6) or as “collaborative decision making” (Raiffa, Richardson, and Metcalfe 2002: title and *passim*). It occurs in a variety of contexts ranging from family disputes to conflicts concerning the daily distribution of labor at work, the discussion of contractual details, and controversies concerning the use of natural resources or standards of environmental protection, etc. (Mulholland 1991: 1; Raiffa 2002: 11). In the specific case of business negotiations, the range of activities and domains covered includes, among others, buying and selling, the transfer of know-how, the establishment of agency, distributorship or franchising contracts, cooperation agreements, mergers and acquisitions, and joint ventures. Evidently, the primary goal of business negotiations is to attain economic benefits via agreements (Dupont 2002: 375). According to Lampi (1986: 42), what distinguishes business negotiations from other types is their corporate role, the fact that negotiators act on behalf of their principals (see Nickerson 2000: 54–55 and references therein).

Due to its necessarily cross-disciplinary character, the topic of negotiation has been studied by students from different backgrounds, most prominently by sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and political scientists. In the wake of globalization and the rise of free trade, the transformation of the general context in which negotiations take place has increasingly shifted the focus of research to the cross-cultural aspects of business communication, and business negotiation in particular. Researchers have shown that four elements of culture – behavior, attitudes, norms and values – may impact negotiating practice and, based on this insight, have set up catalogues of factors and variables to which negotiators should pay attention in intercultural settings (see, e.g., Salacuse 1999; Planken 2005). Although research on negotiation is thriving and “[n]egotiations represent one of the central research areas

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-005

of Applied Linguistics” (Osterkamp, Kindts, and Albers 2000: 3), their linguistic aspects have been relatively neglected in the literature. Linguists’ interest has largely been confined to a few specific issues, such as (a) the study of cultural aspects of business negotiations (e.g., Usunier 2003; Gelfand & Brett 2004), including value systems, time orientation, and mindsets; (b) issues of pragmatics, such as the role of politeness (e.g., Thomsen 2000; Spencer-Oatey 2008); and (c) rather superficial analyses of communication styles, such as the question of direct vs. indirect style (e.g., Salacuse 1999).

There is also an astonishing scarcity of serious research on the specific vocabulary of business negotiation. By contrast, sweeping claims, for example, that “a basic function of language is to structure reality and organize experience” (Faure 2002: 396), with the inevitable, prosaic reference to the Inuits’ supposed 20 different lexemes for ‘snow’, are popular in the negotiation literature, and rather impressionistic “how to...” guidebooks proliferate. Moreover, despite the growing attention to the pedagogy of international business negotiation (e.g., Kirgis 2012), there is a remarkable dearth of publications that focus on training students and practitioners to negotiate in a second or third language other than English.

The aim of the present chapter is to offer a succinct overview of the scholarly production about business negotiation, focusing on linguistic and language-related aspects. The chapter is structured accordingly. After this brief introduction, Section 2 provides the reader with some reflections on the origin and semantics of the term *negotiation* and of neighboring terms. The core of the chapter is constituted by Section 3. It outlines the most relevant approaches to negotiation, which range from prescriptive to discourse-based, and is mainly concerned with the linguistic aspects of the sub-genre of business negotiation. Section 4 is a survey of a pedagogical perspective on linguistic training for international business negotiations and the role of English as lingua franca. Short conclusions close the chapter.

2 Some terminological notes

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides four readings of the noun *negotiation* (OED Online 2014: s.v.): 1a. ‘an act of dealing with another person; a private or business transaction (also in extended use)’; 1b. ‘trading, commerce’; 1c. ‘occupation, exercise’; 2. ‘a discussion or process of treaty with another (or others) aimed at reaching an agreement about a particular issue, problem, etc., esp. in affairs of state; an instance of negotiating’; 3. ‘the action, activity, or process of negotiating with another or others’; 4. ‘the action of crossing or getting over, round or through some obstacle by skilful manoeuvring; manipulation’. All meanings under 1 are flagged as obsolete. The earliest attestation of the noun *negotiation* in an English text (cf. example 1) is from 1425, in *Speculum Sacerdotale* 67/20 (Kurath, Lewis, and Kuhn 2001: 788),

with the meaning of ‘an act of dealing with another person; a private or business transaction’.

- (1) “*And this wittnessiþ the sawes of holy fadres, þe whiche sawes we moste kepe perfiteliche in alle oure dedis and negociaciones.*”
 ‘And this witnesses to the songs of the holy fathers, to which we must perfectly keep in our deeds and acts.’

The English *negotiation* is a loan from the Middle French *negotiation*. In Middle French, the earliest attestation of *negotiation[s]* dates from 9 December 1323 (Fagniez 1900: 49) with the meaning of ‘commercial activity’; the generic meaning of ‘activity, occupation’ is attested in a document from ca. 1330, *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* (v. 11934), by Guillaume de Digulleville (ed. Stumpf). The etymon of Middle French *negotiation* is classical Latin *negōtiātio -ōnis* ‘business, trade, a commercial transaction’, from the verb *negōtior* ‘to do business, to act as a banker, to trade’, itself formed from *negotium* meaning ‘affair’ or ‘the state of no (*nec*) leisure (*otium*)’. In Latin, the noun has the readings of ‘banking business’, as in (2), and ‘(any kind of) business’, as in (3). The latter meaning is recorded also in the Middle Ages (4):

- (2) (Valerius Maximus)
nam qui nunc praecipue negotiatione delectantur
 ‘people who nowadays delight in money business’
- (3) (Seneca)
constat negotiatio omnis ex empto et vendito
 ‘business consists of buying and selling’
- (4) (Bernardinus Senensis Sanctus, 1380–1444 [Sermo 46, art. 3, cap. 1])
Negotians nuncupatur, qui quod vilis emit, carius diftrahit
 ‘*Negotians* is the name given to one who buys more cheaply than he sells’
 (de La Haye 1636: 280)

The turning point in the semantics of *negotiation* comes in the middle of the 16th century. In a French document from 27 February 1544 (Weiss 1842: 64), we find the meaning of ‘discussion aimed at reaching mutual agreement about a particular issue, especially in affairs of state’. Shortly afterwards, the same meaning is attested in the following passage of an English text from June 1563 (Bain 1900: 66).

- (5) *or that which I most feare, that God by the ingratitude off both the nations, being provoked to anger, will not suffer ws to attayne so greate worldly felicity as the succes off that negotiation must bring with it*

By that step, the semantics of negotiation had extended from ‘doing business’ to ‘achieving an agreement about business’ (corresponding to reading 2 in the OED).

The latter meaning applies to the current use of ‘business negotiation’ and is the one we are concerned with in this paper.

Many languages distinguish ‘negotiation’ from ‘bargaining’, though the details of the distinction may vary. Most European languages distinguish between ‘negotiating’, an “interaction involving complex social units (unions, nations, companies)”, and ‘bargaining’, an “interaction between individuals over a sale or purchase” (Lampi 1986: 15). This conceptual difference is mirrored in the terms used to express the two types of activity: German *verhandeln* vs. *feilschen*; Italian *negoziare* vs. *mercanteggiare*; French *négociier* vs. *marchander*; Russian *vesti* (*peregovory*) vs. *torgovat’sya*, etc. In other cultures and languages, the distinction is even neater in terms of connotation. For example, Arabic strictly differentiates between *mufawadat*, a term used for formal settings such as political negotiations, and *musawama*, bargaining over the price of goods. Persian and Turkish behave similarly. Here, the loan nouns Farsi *mozákereh* and Turkish *müzakere* (both derived from an Arabic root meaning ‘to mention, recite, praise’) refer to negotiation in the sense of courtly discussions conducted in a sociable atmosphere, whereas bargaining is rendered by words relating to the bazaar, connoting low status and with implications of petty haggling: Farsi *čāne zadan* (literally ‘chin strike’) and Turkish *pazarlık* (from Persian *bazaar*) (Cohen 2001: 80).

Even so, earlier studies use *negotiation* and *bargaining* as synonyms or even interchangeably (e.g., in Schelling 1960; Rubin & Brown 1975; Lim & Benbasat 1992; Putnam & Roloff 1992). However, the phenomena they denote are not perfectly co-extensive. Ontogenetically, bargaining is the basis of negotiation and in fact constitutes its very core; buyers aim to buy at the lowest price, while sellers hope to sell at the highest price. As Stevens (1958: 78–79) argues, there are good reasons to distinguish between the terms *negotiation* and *bargaining*. In exchange transactions, parties may be said to negotiate if they must settle a conflict by reaching a compromise and if the information communicated goes beyond that relating to the terms of exchange themselves (i.e. bargaining). According to Gulliver (1979: 71), bargaining is a sub-process of negotiation and consists of “the presentation and exchange of more or less specific proposals for the terms of agreement on particular issues”. In similar terms, Lampi (1986: 16) suggests that *bargaining* be limited to either a negotiation involving a single issue in which a conflict is prominent, or to that phase of a negotiation characterized by a conflict that needs to be resolved. The centrality of the idea of conflict borne by the concept of negotiation is attested by the Chinese word for it. In Mandarin Chinese, *tanpan* ‘negotiation’ is made up of a first syllable, *tan*, meaning ‘to talk, chat, discuss’ (or the respective *nomina actionis*), and a second syllable, *pan*, meaning ‘to distinguish, discriminate’ or ‘to sentence, condemn’. Thus *tanpan* implies the resolution of matters involving two conflicting parties, by means of a communicative process (Wilhelm 1994: 7). A simple but convincing distinction between bargaining and negotiation is drawn by Winkler (2006: 8) in the following observation: “a bargain describes the formation

of demand, whereas negotiation describes the whole process of trading (i.e. also the necessary communication between the actors), including the bargain". Both the ontogenetic primacy of bargaining over negotiation and its centrality for business negotiation are reflected in the fact that the first language-related discussions of the topic were focused not on negotiation but on bargaining, for example, Zeuthen (1930), Nash (1950), Angelmar and Stern (1978), Roth (1979), Putnam and Jones (1982), Roth (1985).

3 The linguistic aspects of business negotiation

Negotiation is more often discussed in the non-linguistic than in the linguistic or language-related literature. Five different approaches to negotiations have been identified by Firth (1995b: 11–26, see also Koeszegi and Vetschera 2010, for a synopsis of theoretical frameworks):

- (a) prescriptive works (e.g., Fisher, Ury, and Patton 1991), generally written by practitioners and targeting a managerial readership;
- (b) abstract, theory-oriented works, for example based on game theory (e.g., Zeuthen 1930; Nash 1950; Nash 1953; Roth 1979; the papers in Roth 1985; Yong and Saeidi 2012; see Chatterjee 2010 and Kibris 2010, for useful overviews);
- (c) ethnographic works concerned with the description of real-life negotiations (e.g., Gulliver 1979; Garcez 1993; Friedman 2004);
- (d) experimentally oriented studies investigating simulated negotiations and aiming to identify and catalogue cause-and-effect relationships among variables (e.g., Graham 1983; Tripp and Sondak 1992);
- (e) discourse-based approaches focussing on discourse processes in negotiations (e.g., Firth 1995a; Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2007).

In addition, business negotiations have been studied from the perspective of genre theory (e.g., Orr 2007) and of support systems, that is, computer techniques which support the social or analytical aspects of the negotiation process (e.g., Robinson and Volkov 1998; Moor and Weigand 2004; Schoop 2010). Furthermore, and as already mentioned, by transforming the general context of negotiation globalization has increasingly shifted the focus of research into business negotiation towards intercultural communication (e.g., Garcez 1993; Marriott 1995; Salacuse 1999; Gimenez 2001; Grindsted 2009; Zhu 2011; Yoon and Yang 2012). Technological progress and the consequent growing interest in automation processes is mirrored in studies on e-negotiations that focus on machine learning, in which we also find applications of the principles of pragmatics (e.g., Zeng and Sycara 1998; Su et al. 2001; Li et al. 2002).

In the research landscape of the 1980s, very few studies on bargaining and negotiation were concerned with the role of communication and of language (among the few exceptions are Putnam and Jones 1982 and Donohue and Diez 1985). However, Lampi's (1986) study of the linguistic components of strategy in business negotiations marked a turn towards a language-focused approach. Since then, linguistically oriented work has flourished, as testified in particular by publications such as Mulholland (1991), Ehlich and Wagner (1995), Firth (1995c), Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997), Poncini (2002), McCarthy and Handford (2004), Handford (2010).

Applied linguists have approached business negotiation mostly from two lines of research: conversation analysis and discourse analysis. Francis (1986) and Firth (1990; 1995c) are examples of analyses based on the former approach, Vuorela (2005) of work conducted within a discourse analysis framework. Others have combined the tradition of discourse analysis with the framework of conversation analysis. Among these, Lampi (1986) figures most prominently. She reviews a number of preexisting linguistic concepts and looks at their possible application to the study of negotiations; she also warns that "the categories of non-linguistic communicative studies cannot be applied to a detailed study of verbal interaction unless the terminology and findings are translated into linguistic concepts and defined accordingly" (Lampi 1986: 41–42). In this vein, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) analyze the functions of pronouns, discourse markers, metaphors, and thematic progression; McCarthy and Handford (2004) combine quantitative corpus data of frequency, keyword, and cluster lists with the qualitative analysis of lexicogrammatical types, such as pronouns, modal expressions, and discourse markers. Spencer-Oatey (2008: 21) proposes studying the management of social relations ("rapport management") in negotiations, on the basis of five interrelated domains: (a) illocution (speech acts, such as offers, requests, apologies); (b) discourse (topic choice and topic management, sequencing of information); (c) participation (turn taking, inclusion/exclusion of people present, use or non-use of listener verbal and non-verbal responses); (d) style (choice of tone, choice of appropriate lexis, choice of terms of address or honorifics); and (e) nonverbal communication (gestures, eye contact, proxemics).

The question that naturally arises at this point is whether business negotiation constitutes a genre in its own right. Genres are structured communicative practices made up of conventionalized features (Bhatia 1993: 13), and "serve as mental models for members of a community that both enable and constrain their discourse production and interpretation" (Orr 2007: 99). Thus, assigning genre to a text is a way of classifying it on the basis of its own properties and of the text-external context (e.g., purposes) in which it is embedded. The following sub-sections will review the study of linguistic elements occurring in business negotiation in order to understand whether business negotiation is a genre of its own or, rather, a sub-genre of business language.

3.1 Speech acts

The language of negotiation is the natural field of pragmatics (Neumann 1995: 32). Both conversation analysis and discourse analysis are rooted in pragmatics, mainly in the form of speech act theory (Searle 1969; Austin 1975). In functional terms, every kind of utterance made within a negotiation, be it oral or written, is an act which can impact the outcome of the negotiation encounter. Thus, for negotiators it is essential to understand the performative power of language as an instrument of negotiating (Gibbons, Bradac, and Busch 1992: 156). Business negotiations, like communication about buying and selling in general, are structured in phases (Holmes 1992). Typically, they are made up of three main phases, viz. 1, information exchange; 2, bargaining (which, as we have already seen, is the core of the activity); 3, agreement (Koester 2014: 37). These phases may overlap and, if the parties do not reach an agreement, they may recur. Their nature is reflected in the communicative patterns obeyed in business negotiations (Rehbein 1995: 68).

Such negotiations involve a large number of speech act types (Lampi 1986: 107–121). While they are not unique in that regard, the variety of types they display is remarkable. This is due to the fact that business negotiations comprise two sets of complex activities, namely, communication and decision making. It is thus no surprise that all five macro-types of speech acts, those covered by Searle's (1969) hyperonymic taxonomy, occur in business negotiations: *assertives* are used to state something about some state of affairs (e.g., informing, insisting); *directives* are used to cause the hearer to engage in some action or bring about some state of affairs (e.g., advising, requesting, commanding); *commissives* are used to commit to carrying out some action (e.g., promising, offering); *expressives* are used to express one's attitude with respect to the context (e.g., greeting, thanking, apologizing); and *declaratives/performatives* are used to perform an act (e.g., opening the meeting).

Below this level, there are myriads of related speech acts, such as greeting, introducing oneself, complimenting, presenting, offering, interpreting, commenting, promising, threatening, warning, recommending, rewarding, punishing, requesting, questioning, ordering, bidding, counter-bidding, correcting, (dis)agreeing, making, criticizing, accepting, modifying or rejecting proposals, making counter-proposals, naming, committing oneself, disclosing oneself, responding to the buyer's bid, summarizing the results, negotiating the specific terms and the written contract, and so forth (Angelmar and Stern 1978: 95; Rehbein 1995: 97). All of these acts have been widely covered in the literature; see, to mention but a few, Garcez (1993) and Charles and Charles (1999) on tactical summaries, Asmuß (2002) on dissenting (cf. also Chapter 6 on business meetings), and Pohle (2009: 44–50) on offers. A study of a concrete application of speech act theory to the development of automated devices to conduct business negotiations can be found in Li et al. (2002). They envision eight types of “negotiation primitives”: Call For Proposal, Propose Proposal,

Reject Proposal, Withdraw Proposal, Accept Proposal, Modify Proposal, Acknowledge Message, and Terminate Negotiation.

Particular interest has been attracted by the study of directives, that is, acts of requesting information (e.g., Ervin-Tripp 1976; Donohue and Diez 1985; Neumann 1995). Donohue and Diez (1985) found that the use of directives in negotiation is largely dependent on contextual parameters, such as the degree of cooperation between the negotiation parties or the rigidity of procedures for conducting the negotiation. They observed, for example, that more face-threatening directives are used if the context is less cooperative and the content of the negotiation is more personal. In her analysis of audio-recorded British negotiations, Charles (1996) also studied how the discourse strategies of a buyer and a seller involved in a negotiation can be influenced by the degree of trust in their business relationship. To do so, she related the language used to extra-linguistic factors such as status-behavior and used the time depth of a relationship as a proxy for status. Her findings identified a dichotomy between well-established and new business relationships, and that this dichotomy is reflected in discourse in terms of “the kind of topics initiated, the rhetorical moves produced, and above all, in the face saving strategies used” (Charles 1996: 33; see also Jensen 2009).

In sum, from the point of view of linguistic pragmatics, business negotiation seems to constitute a genre in its own right. In the remainder of this section, I will present several aspects of language use which have been reviewed and investigated in the literature. While discourse structuring devices, such as backchannels, are not statistically significant (i.e., they are negative keywords) in the language of business (see Handford 2010: 159), other linguistic elements have been identified as statistically significant (i.e., they are positive keywords) in business negotiations. I shall now examine some linguistic aspects of these claimed to be of relevance for this text type and assess whether or not they really are constitutive of a genre. These include pronouns (Section 3.2), specialized lexis (Section 3.3), hedges and vague language (Section 3.4) and direct reported speech (Section 3.5).

3.2 Pronoun choice

In the context of business discourse, pronouns flag social relationships and can thus contribute to building group identity and cohesion; in other words, they reinforce the relational context (Donohue and Diez 1985; Poncini 2002; Planken 2005: 384; Handford 2010: 155). In particular, studies have focused on the discursive role of the first person plural personal pronoun *we*, its allomorph *us* and the corresponding adjective *our*. According to Handford (2010: 156), comparison of the language of business meetings with other kinds of discourse shows that *we* is a positive key item, as it occurs twice as frequently in business meetings as in everyday conversation, whereas *you*, *I*, *she* and *he* are negative key items. Handford (2010: 157) finds

that *we* is “the top keyword” in both internal and external meetings, and that it (or clusters including *we*, such as *we’ve* and *we’re*) occurs most often in external meetings, to which business negotiations belong. The pronoun *we* can fulfill four different functions (Handford 2010: 156): (a) inclusive personal *we*, referring to all those present at the conversation; (b) exclusive personal *we*, referring to one in-group present; (c) inclusive corporate *we*, referring to both (or more) parties (e.g., companies); and (d) exclusive corporate *we*, referring only to the speaker’s company or department. At times it is hard not only to identify the exact referent of *we* but also to understand whether it is used inclusively or exclusively (Poncini 2002: 356–357). Certainly, the inclusive use of *we* impacts on the power stance taken by negotiators. But it is the exclusive corporate *we* that is peculiar to business negotiations as its use is aimed at excluding those representatives of the other company present (Handford 2010: 108–109). As such, it impacts on the negotiation’s climate, and Neu and Graham (1995: 264) note that when sellers make abundant use of exclusive *we*, buyers feel less satisfied. Interestingly, exclusive *we* mainly occurs in the “claiming” phase, whereas the use of inclusive *we* increases towards the end of the negotiation, the phase in which problems have already been solved (Bülow 2009: 146).

In a corpus-based analysis of pronoun use in business negotiations, Planken (2005) compares experienced negotiators to inexperienced ones and finds a considerable degree of variation between the two groups. Both use the inclusive *we*, but it occurs to a greater extent in the speech of the professionals than in that of the novice negotiators. In the same study, Planken shows that the pronoun *you*, as an indicator of other-orientedness, is used to a significantly higher rate by the professionals, and that the novice negotiators use it in discourse contexts in which the professionals would not, for example in potentially face-threatening contexts.

3.3 Specialized lexis

In general terms, specialized lexis is used to signal group identity and group knowledge (Handford 2010: 151). Because of the difference in the topics discussed, some keywords occur much more often in internal than in external meetings (e.g., business negotiations); examples are *sales*, *mail*, *business*, *information*, and *client*. Capitalizing on Nelson’s (2000) distinction between *doing business* and *talking about business*, Handford (2010: 118) maintains that, in the language of business meetings (thus, not specifically business negotiations), specialized lexemes, such as *profit*, *merger* and *shareholder*, do not occur as frequently as one would expect, whereas these terms are frequent when talking (and reading) about business. In fact, business negotiators often perform rather than discuss: they do not talk about sales, they sell; they do not talk about how to engage in a relationship with others, they establish relationships, and so on (Handford 2010: 109). As a result, the language of business consists, just as everyday language does, of a series of lexical clusters,

fixed and semi-fixed phrases (i.e. collocations), which “fulfill specialized discursive roles” (Handford 2010: 109), aimed at solving problems, making decisions, passing on information or reaching a deal. Commonly, these are two-word chunks, such as, in English, *I think, sort of, kind of, a bit* (Handford 2010: 167) (on hedges, see below).

Lexical or lexico-grammatical clusters have been discussed in different languages, for example, in French by Mercelot (2006: 158–171) and in English by Handford (2007). Yet, while Mercelot (2006) simply lists clusters occurring in French business negotiations, Handford (2007) is concerned with the statistical relevance of clusters in the language of business, compared to the everyday variety. For example, a two-word chunk with a very high relative frequency in external business meetings is *if you* (Handford 2010: 198). Two-word chunks can combine with other elements into poly-lexemic colligational patterns, such as *if you say, “Well... – a pattern that can be used to create an imagined scenario of cooperation, from which both companies could benefit* (Handford 2010: 199). For French, Mercelot (2006: 163–164) notes a frequent use of elliptic compounds, that is, N-preposition-N constructs with ellipsis of the preposition, such as *constat [de] problème* ‘ascertainment of a problem’, *coût [de] matière* ‘material costs’, *information [sur la] qualité* ‘information on quality’, etc. However, Mercelot (2006) does not compare his findings on business negotiations with other contexts of oral communication. The observed frequency must therefore remain a merely impressionistic claim, all the more so when contemporary French in general is experiencing a trend towards the [NN]_N pattern (Arnaud 2015: 682).

3.4 Hedges and vague language

In business language, there are two common ways to perform understatements: hedges (or mitigators) and vague language. Hedges, such as the English *sort of, kind of, somehow, you know*, help to moderate the directness of an utterance and are tactically deployed in order to mitigate the face-threatening potential of business meetings (Martin 2005: 249; Handford 2010: 151). In particular, they serve to soften the illocutionary forces of requests or direct questions, in that they reduce the precision of an utterance (Alemi and Razzaghi 2013: 118). For example, a hedge like *I think* can serve different aims, such as summarizing, clarifying, responding, disagreeing etc. (Handford 2010: 168). By comparing negotiations among Swedes and among Spaniards, Fant (1992: 143–144) found out that the latter scarcely resort to hedges, while Swedes make ample use of them. In the Spanish dialogues, the use of mitigating expressions, such as *por ejemplo* ‘for instance’, was concentrated in face-threatening speech-acts, such as requests, proposals, and criticisms. Hedges thus belong to the strategies of politeness.

In English, vague language includes vague nouns, such as *thing(s), stuff*; approximators such as *about*; and clause-final markers, such as *or whatever*, and *so forth*. In the expression *maybe he [the seller] can do something*, the words *maybe*

and *something* convey an understating of the buyer's expectations more effectively than the corresponding non-vague expression *give me a good offer* would do (Charles 1996: 26). Vagueness markers are used with particular frequency in non-contractually bound external meetings, probably as a tactic to create an impression of convergence between company representatives (Handford 2010: 179). This would also explain why hedges can cluster with vague language, especially towards the end of negotiations, thus reflecting “a practice of finishing such meetings on a collaborative note, through convergence and the downplaying of any impositions and evaluations” (Handford 2010: 170).

3.5 Direct reported speech

A frequently recurring discursive device in business interactions involving negotiations is imaginary or “hypothetical” direct reported speech (Koester 2014). Consider the example in (6), from Koester (2014: 35), in which the speaker hypothesizes what the customer might say.

- (6) *Erm but you know we're prepared to do something like if you say "Well look I'm pretty sure that we're gonna be up to sixteen by Christmas time."*

According to Koester (2014: 44), “hypothetical” direct reported speech occurs at key stages of negotiation, mainly the bargaining phase (see Section 3.1 above), and is a negotiating tactic deployed strategically to move negotiation in a certain direction in order to achieve the negotiators' goals. “Hypothetical” direct reported speech occurs in both proposal and response acts. As part of a proposal act, it can be used to detail an offer or request, to show flexibility, to argue in favor of a proposal, or to point out an issue that needs to be raised. As part of a response act, it can be used to refuse an offer or request, to make a counterproposal, to elicit clarification, to acknowledge the other party's position, and to express conditional agreement. Outside the bargaining phase, “hypothetical” direct reported speech is found in the initial phase of a negotiation (i.e. information exchange) to elicit clarification, and in the agreement phase, to finalize agreement.

We may now try to understand whether business negotiations constitute a distinct genre. As defined by Bhatia (1993), a genre is a structured, conventionalized, communicative practice. Following the same author (Bhatia 2002: 23), genres are identifiable on the basis of seven criteria.

- (1) Genres are reflections of disciplinary cultures.
- (2) Genres focus on conventionalized, communicative events embedded within a discipline of professional practices.

- (3) Disciplinary or professional genres display a certain degree of homogeneity in terms of textual and discursive (text-internal) factors, or contextual and disciplinary (text-external) factors.
- (4) Genres are communication events characterized by a set of communicative goals mutually recognized by a professional or academic community in which they regularly occur.
- (5) Genres are highly structured and conventionalized constructs, with constraints on the intentions that can be expressed and on the co-grammatical resources that can be employed.
- (6) Established members of a particular professional community will have a much greater knowledge and understanding of genre-related practices than those who are apprentices, new members, or outsiders.
- (7) Although genres are viewed as conventionalized constructs, expert members of a community are often in a position to exploit such conventions to express private intentions, within the structures of socially acceptable communicative norms.

If we assess business negotiation against these criteria, we must conclude that it satisfies numbers 1, 2, 4 and 6. (I am not in a position to evaluate criterion 7 on the basis of the analyses presented in the present paper.) However, business negotiation is a weak genre. The survey of the statistically significant linguistic features made in the previous sub-sections shows that, in terms of text-internal factors (criteria 3 and 5), conventionalized genre-specific linguistic traits exist in business negotiations only to a limited extent. Our conclusion must therefore be that business negotiation is a sub-variety of professional business communication, with which it shares many conventions and from which it differs because of the narrower procedural rules that apply.

4 Training business negotiation

As a practical skill, business negotiation is predestined for pedagogical approaches. The title of an article by Loewenstein and Thompson (2006), “Learning to negotiate: Novice and experienced negotiators”, is symptomatic of the great interest in learning and teaching how to negotiate in business that has emerged in the last few decades. Negotiation skills are a popular topic not only in business English textbooks (Gimenez 2001: 169); much of the specialized literature is also concerned with how to teach businesspeople to negotiate successfully (examples are Mulholland 1991; Neu and Graham 1995; Rehbein 1995; Rathmayr, Fellerer, and Klingseis 1998). This trend is the result of a long tradition, which derives from the need to instruct merchants on how to bargain, especially in foreign languages, as is evident from

the great relevance that merchant phrasebooks have had in the course of history (see also Chapter 2 of this handbook). Some titles include the German *Das älteste italienisch-deutsche Sprachbuch* from 1424 (Pausch 1972), the Middle Low German phrasebook by Tönnies Fenne from 1607 (Gernentz 1988), the Italian-Dutch phrasebook *Een koopman in Venetië* from the late Middle Ages (van der Helm et al. 2001), or the *Vocabularium Latinis, Gallicis et Theuthonicis verbis scriptum* (n.n. 1514), in which a German merchant could learn how to bargain about accommodation and supper in a harborage in French (Kaltz 2010: 123) (see also Messner 2000, for Spanish-German instructions from the 17th century).

Most authors stress that courses in business negotiation should be aimed at increasing not just students' negotiating skills but also their analytical abilities and knowledge of business in general (Salacuse 2010: 217). Others, like Neumann (1995: 36), focus on the professional, pragmatic, and linguistic relevance of certain speech-acts, such as formulating requests, and plead (e.g., Trosborg 1989: 216; Trosborg 1995) for greater attention to socio-pragmatic aspects and discourse competence in language teaching. Other authors again warn that different cultures have different degrees of communicative complexity, for example, in terms of possible language variants. Classic examples are the Greek diglossia, comprising modern vernacular *dimotiki* vs. the artificially archaic *katharevousa*, and the Arabic triglossia, which includes a number of spoken regional (and supra-regional, e.g. Egyptian) varieties vs. classical Arabic, the language of the sacred texts, vs. Modern Standard Arabic, a standard predominantly used in the media. Mulholland (1991: 82–83) suggests that this issue must be taken seriously since it may have consequences for the negotiation process. A potentially dangerous scenario would be misinterpreting a switch between one variety (e.g., *katharevousa*) and another (e.g., *dimotiki*) in intercultural business negotiations. Such a switch, intended by the speaker as a move from formal to friendly, might be interpreted by a fellow negotiator not acquainted with the socio-cultural value of the two varieties as a move from serious to trivial. Specifically, an English-speaking negotiator might then feel free to switch to casual uses of colloquial English, which the other party could perceive as inappropriate.

A hotly debated topic in the context of business negotiation training is the use of a lingua franca in intercultural settings (see Firth 1990; Stalpers 1993; Rehbein 1995; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Nickerson 2005; Planken 2005). Originally, “lingua franca” referred to a Romance-based pidgin (mostly made up by varieties of Italo-Romance, but also including elements from Spanish, French, Portuguese, as well as Arabic, Turkish, Greek and Persian; Wansbrough 1996: 137) used for purposes of trade along the south-eastern Mediterranean between the 15th and the 19th century (Meierkord and Knapp 2002: 9). Nowadays, the object of research on lingua franca is almost exclusively English (e.g., Seidlhofer 2011) because it has become the language of trade, business and international financial transactions. Nevertheless, most authors concur in warning that English is not adequate as the generalized language of commerce, and especially in business negotiations. For example, Rehbein

(1995: 98) stresses that the buyer's native language is fundamental, and claims that its use is preferable. Some authors (e.g., Frade 2005: 155) take a practical stance and propose offering specialist courses in English for international business, in order to reduce any kind of asymmetry due to different levels of language proficiency. Planken (2005) has tested two groups of negotiators, all of them lingua-franca speakers of English for specific business purposes, one being composed of professional negotiators, the other of novices. She observes that both groups have access to a similarly limited linguistic repertoire, in terms of vocabulary, ungrammaticality, etc., but that the professionals nevertheless do better in terms of tactical effect. Her conclusion is that the main differences in verbal behavior between the groups studied derive from pragmatic and strategic competence rather than language proficiency (Planken 2005: 398). Yet, although the current trends outlined so far show a growing attention to the teaching of courses in international business negotiation (Salacuse 2010; Kirgis 2012), there is still a remarkable lack of publications in languages other than English on the need to train students to negotiate in a second or third language, and on how to do that. They are urgently needed.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of linguistically inspired research on business negotiation and shown how this is necessarily cross-disciplinary in nature. Those aspects of business negotiation found to be linguistically relevant include: pragmatics, particularly in the form of speech act theory; pronoun choice; the use of specialized lexis; vague language; and hypothetical direct reported speech. The discussion has revealed a general interest in the topic, but also, and most strikingly, a dearth of serious work on (i) the specific vocabulary of business negotiation and (ii) linguistic training for negotiators in a second or third language other than English.

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6 Business meetings

1. Introduction: Conceptualization and classification of meetings
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1 Introduction: Conceptualization and classification of meetings

Meetings are highly intricate social interactions involving complex linguistic activities in the smallest spaces, and this complexity is one of the reasons why they have a bad reputation. They are often regarded as tedious, boring, and sometimes even as superfluous and a waste of time. On the other hand, it is well-nigh impossible to imagine companies without them. In fact, meetings are among the key defining elements of any corporation. From its discourse-analytical perspective, the present chapter will argue that it is precisely this Janus-faced character that is constitutive of well-functioning organizations (cf. Section 5 and Menz 2000).

The so-called self-help literature defines meetings above all as goal-oriented exploratory encounters of three or more persons who pursue a common aim (e.g., Henkel 2007; Liraz 2013). This definition may sound sensible enough; however, it is inadequate and reflects a very limited understanding of communication. Indeed, such simplistic conceptualizations contribute to the negative evaluation of meetings mentioned above. In contrast, a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytical perspective, as adopted in this overview, can help to question how individuals ascribe stereotypes to people and processes (e.g., to chairpersons, to participants' supposedly gendered behaviour, and to meetings as a genre) and, by adding a critical eye, assist in avoiding reifying and disguising assumptions.

A sociolinguistic, discourse-analytical point of view conceptualizes meetings as being extremely complex, involving a high number of tasks and goals that have to be taken into consideration. In most cases, meetings belong to forms of internal corporate communication (unlike most negotiations; see Chapter 5) and have all of the following characteristics (Domke 2008), among others:

- They are to be understood as a work-oriented form of oral interaction – in contrast with mainly relationship-oriented forms such as small talk during coffee breaks, etc.
- They are bounded in time and place, which distinguishes them from random exchanges;
- They have a structure and a sequential procedure, which is generally taken for granted by the participants;
- They are based on the physical presence of people and consequently on face-to-face interaction (in contrast to, for example, video conferencing; cf. Meier 1997);
- They are characterized by an interactively co-constructed beginning (which need not necessarily coincide with the date of the actual meeting) and an interactively displayed end;
- Their participants are ascribed different function and position roles, familiar to all. Those roles are constructed and/or challenged interactively (cf. Section 3 and Schmitt and Heidtmann 2002, among others);
- Linguistic actions characteristic of them are therefore informing, discussing, planning and assigning work, but also showing dissent (Dannerer 1999).

The number of striking similarities that can be identified among meetings across all organizations (companies, universities, NGOs, etc.) seem to outweigh perceived differences. Hence, from a discourse-analytical perspective it makes sense to speak of meetings as a separate genre within spoken linguistic activities in business (Angouri and Marra 2010).

The rest of the chapter examines various key concepts for business meetings and is structured as follows. Section 2 describes consensus-based strategies of leadership and decision-making that may not conform to the stereotypical expectations of business communication. In contrast, Section 3 will discuss research that focuses on conflict and disagreement. Section 4 is devoted to the important question of how gendered (and, in some ways, also ethnicized) workplaces are increasingly becoming the focus of attention in existing research. Section 5 turns to the concept of efficiency, which, from a managerial perspective, lies at the core of any activity. In meetings, however, it must be seen as a double-edged sword since apparent *inefficiency* may turn out to be of great value in other respects. The chapter will end by highlighting some research gaps that are of interest for future (interdisciplinary) research (Section 6). As the role of the chairperson is a defining feature of meetings, it will be examined in all sections.

As a simple search in the research database *Scopus* yields an astounding 111,000 hits for the keyword *business meetings*, the focus of the present chapter must be narrowed. It is therefore limited to research concerned with the analysis of naturally-occurring speech events, and excludes studies relying solely on self-reporting techniques like questionnaires and interviews. Moreover, all the literature discussed here involves at least some close micro-analysis of spoken discourse and references to discourse-analytic approaches. A further, necessary restriction excluded studies on

intercultural meetings, despite the fact that they represent a key area of research into business meetings (e.g., Angouri 2010; Bilbow 2002, 2007; Kell et al. 2007; Louhiala-Salminen and Charles 2008; Poncini 2002, 2004; Rogerson-Revell 2007; Ronkainen 2009; Spencer-Oatey 2010; Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2005; Zhu 2011). However, this topic will be discussed in Chapter 11.

2 Leadership, decision-making, and consensus

In addition to sharing information and assigning work and tasks, decision-making is a central function of meetings. A substantial part of the relevant literature is therefore concerned with the function of leadership in meetings, and in particular with the role of the chairperson. This role is usually associated with certain rights and powers. As a rule, it is up to the chair not just to open and close meetings, but also to introduce new agenda items, to change the topic and to sanction inappropriate conduct.

Because of their function, chairs have powerful linguistic resources at their disposal to control the course of a meeting. Their rights to set the agenda or to change topic and focus are all realized through specific communicative activity types. Additionally, chairs have preferential rights to establish “sequential conditioning” [*sequentielle Konditionierung*] (Müller 1997: 165; author’s translation), which allows them to allocate tasks and assign work. They can also position themselves as a superior through *communicative voluntarism*, that is, by taking the power to act largely of one’s own volition (Schmitt and Heidtmann 2002: 184–185), and so create a hierarchy. This can be realized in several different ways (e.g., by defining and organizing the work to be done, designing the relationship level, constructing facticity even when a statement contradicts the facts, and organizing the communicative space).

However, the chair’s actions are inconceivable without corresponding interactive activities on the part of the other participants. Communicative voluntarism from the chair has its counterpart in *communicative self-restraint* (Schmitt and Heidtmann 2002: 185) from the other participants, that is, refraining voluntarily from possible communicative activities, thus accepting the existence of a hierarchy. Motivations for communicative self-restraint may be self-defense (i.e., not compromising one’s own position by dissenting), protection of one’s superior (e.g., preserving her/his face in public) or the integration of recent recruits. Showing a readiness to agree, passing up opportunities to speak, and silence are among the techniques used to enact self-restraint (Nielsen 2013).

The communicative practices of both chairs/leaders and participants/subordinates may be regarded as constitutive of meetings or, rather, meetings are enacted and co-constructed through these interactional activities. In the majority of cases, face-threatening acts are avoided, as a basic ability to cooperate must be preserved

(Holmes and Stubbe 2003; but cf. Section 3). Despite the chair's communicative power, consensual decisions and consensus-building activities seem to be the preferred form of interaction in meetings.

Wodak, Kwon, and Clarke (2011) describe five discursive strategies which facilitate consensus building. The first is termed *bonding* (Wodak, Kwon, and Clarke 2011: 603) and is aimed at increasing group identity. Among the typical linguistic resources used in this context are personal pronouns (e.g., "I"/"we"). The second strategy is summarized under the label of *encouraging*. It is characterized by various linguistic-pragmatic means, such as soliciting opinions, supporting existing opinions, offering positive feedback, back-channelling, using questions rather than orders (Wodak, Kwon, and Clarke 2011: 604), and silence from leaders (cf. also Menz 1999). The third strategy is called *directing* and can be understood as the opposite of "encouraging". It is characterized by closed questions, interruptions, and the direct speech acts of request and clear expression of the chair's own position without inviting more discussion. Interestingly, within a critical discourse-analytic frame, Wodak, Kwon, and Clarke interpret formulations (Heritage and Watson 1980) (such as summaries and reformulations by the chairs) as directive strategies, in contrast to Barnes (2007), who operates within a conversation-analytic framework and views them as "facilitative". This discrepancy can be seen as a telling example of how utterances are bound by context and of the interpretative power of the theoretical framework used. Wodak, Kwon, and Clarke's fourth strategy, *modulating*, is used to build or increase a commitment to consensus, and draws mainly on the linguistic device of argumentation by invoking the *topos* of threat (e.g., a need for an urgent decision in order to avoid negative consequences) (Wodak, Kwon, and Clarke 2011: 605). The fifth strategy, *re/committing*, consists of moving from discursive consensus to (joint) action. With this strategy, leaders tend to refer to organizational values and obligations. Owing to its linking function, it is seen by the authors as the crucial strategy for consensus building.

These overall strategies are supported and realized by specific linguistic means at the moment of transition from one topic to the next in order to achieve agreement. Research in Conversation Analysis has identified strategies such as the commonly used formulations referred to earlier (Heritage and Watson 1980), especially the so-called "candidate pre-closings" in the form of "gists" and "upshots", in order to facilitate the move to the next topic (Barnes 2007). These establish or record the shared understanding of a topic and are a preparatory step to decision-making. Resistance, on the other hand, causes new discussions to be opened and decisions postponed (Kwon, Clarke and Wodak 2009: 293).

The preference for consensual decisions and consensus-building activities may reflect the fact that a more egalitarian leadership style potentially leads to more durable consensus than a hierarchical, authoritarian one (Wodak, Kwon and Clarke 2011: 607–611). The same applies to the area of problem solving. Although this shows

many interactive features of competitive linguistic behaviour (interruptions, overlappings, frequent turn-taking), problem solving – perhaps surprisingly – mostly proceeds in a semantically congruent, that is, facilitative way (Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini 2011: 218). Three distinct steps can be observed in this process: the definition of the problem (“what is the problem?”), the allocation of the problem to a specific person (“whose problem is it?”), and the solution to the problem. Contrary to what might be expected, not only the last, but all three steps can be interactively negotiated (rather than just assigned or defined by the chair). Hence, expertise and status may play a decisive role in meetings (though not necessarily in the organization as a whole). Collective humour is frequently observed at the end of each step and can be seen as an action that reinforces team-building (Dannerer 2002b; Holmes 2000b).

Finally, a considerable amount of linguistic work on leadership has been conducted from the perspective of gender studies (Bakar 2005; Baxter 2012; Holmes and Marra 2011; Mullany 2007, 2011; Schnurr and Mak 2011). However, to avoid redundancy, it will be discussed in Section 4.

3 Conflict, power, and politeness

Although businesses are, as a rule, hierarchically structured organizations, a variety of studies show that consensus, and face-saving verbal activities, are generally preferred to the authoritarian implementation of decisions from the top down (cf. Section 2). This means that conflicts, dissent, and/or disagreements do emerge in meetings and need to be dealt with interactively. Yet conflicts need not be judged negatively *per se*, as they often help to develop and clarify problems.

Indeed, along with informing participants and assigning tasks, Dannerer (1999: 106-145) identifies disagreement as an essential part of internal meetings. Again, the chair plays a significant role. Holmes and Marra (2004) identify four strategies used by chairs in dealing with potential conflicts. They also show that these strategies are interactively co-constructed and that they are used with sensitivity to the context of the respective community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), the type of meeting and the relative seriousness of the issue(s) involved. Furthermore, they emphasize that the “hero manager”, which is the most widely propagated model of leadership in the business management literature (Holmes and Marra 2004: 440), does not appear in the analysis of authentic meetings.

The four strategies found can be placed along a continuum from the least to the most confrontational as follows: conflict avoidance, conflict diversion, conflict resolution through negotiation, and conflict resolution through authority. The first strategy is closely connected to agenda issues. Competent leaders can use formal or organizational reasons (“we have to get on”) to move onto the next item on the agenda and thus create some distance from a conflict or pre-emptively evade it. The

second, very effective, strategy is to divert the potential dissent or conflict to another forum outside the ongoing meeting (Holmes & Marra 2004: 445–447). This strategy is used in two specific contexts: (a) when further preparatory action by one or more team members is needed and (b) when disagreement arises between experts about issues that were not part of the meeting's agenda (cf. also Dannerer 1999). Overt disagreement can thus be kept away from the rest of the group. The third strategy – working through conflict – was only identified by the authors in connection with serious problems. It includes the negotiation of consensus among participants, which can then serve as a basis for further decisions. Here, the authors observed two phases: first, the identification and exact formulation of the area of disagreement, a task that is usually achieved by joint interaction and not unilaterally; and second, “negotiating the discussion through a group consensus” (Holmes and Marra 2004: 448), which tends to be a cyclical process. The fourth strategy – imposing a decision – is rather uncommon (Holmes & Marra 2004: 454) and was observed only in less serious contexts.

Given the need for further cooperation, continuing the meeting and managing dissent are of particular importance (cf. also Meier 1997: 267–268). Linguistic discourse analysis has paid special attention to dissent, which is a highly complex concept, as it can take very different forms. One is a process of escalation characterized by systematic patterns (Dannerer 1999). At the beginning of a dissent sequence, disagreement is usually presented in a mitigated manner, but modal expressions such as “may”, “could”, tag questions, and so on are frequently lost during the negotiation process, giving fresh momentum to the conflict. As the disagreement intensifies, linguistic features of conflict such as overlaps, interruptions, rapid turn-taking, high volume and long monologic phases of argumentation become more frequent, and coalitions may form among participants, further exacerbating these features (cf. Müller 1997: 197–230). In contrast, another form of dissent takes a much more constructive approach, such as the one Wasson (2000) noted in her study of American business meetings. She found that sequences of mild disagreement often show face-saving strategies, with the interlocutors exercising caution in order to achieve and maintain consensus. In this case, disagreement is most often expressed through mitigation, for instance by downplaying knowledge and certainty; incorporating components signifying agreement into disagreement; joking; and allusion (Wasson 2000: 471).

Signaling a willingness to compromise (possibly to the extreme of adopting the opponent's position) is another activity that fulfills an essential function. Formulating reversals of opinion and helping others to articulate their own reversals can be seen as consensus-fostering turn patterns specifically designed to accommodate dissent (Wasson 2000: 469–470). Should the meeting not be chaired, a participant who has little involvement in the dispute often assumes agency and continues the meeting once the conflict has been settled or discussion of the issue postponed. Topic transition is also relatively common. However, it is difficult for outsiders to

determine whether such developments mean that conflicts are actually resolved or merely constitute strategic speech acts (like temporary self-restraint) (Dannerer 1999: 146).

Further conflict-management mechanisms are joking and humour, which have an almost paradoxical function in this context. On the one hand, laughter can be used by superiors as “repressive humor” (Holmes 2000b; Mullany 2004) to mitigate requests and thereby gain their subordinates’ co-operation and compliance. This activity type occurs especially frequently in the course of assigning work (Dannerer 2002b). Expressing a proposal humorously allows a manager to make it, while retaining the option of retracting it on the grounds that the proposal was not meant seriously, thus saving face (Dannerer 2002b: 111). On the other hand, a subordinate who laughs when no joke has been made may be expressing resistance to a specific work assignment. This type of laughter is often ignored by superiors or chairs.

Despite their frequency and apparent utility, though, face-saving strategies and consensus seeking are not always the dominant activity types. Especially in blue-collar environments, severely face-threatening control procedures are used by chairs if their interests or interaction goals are at risk. While hierarchical structures are generally present only latently (cf. Section 2, as well as Schmitt and Heidtmann 2002), they can be pushed into the interactive foreground when needed. Such linguistic practices, systematically described by Müller (1997: 185–289), include emphasizing the organizational structure (e.g., references to one’s own status and the hierarchical conditions). They may also explicitly address the negative side of the relationship between superiors and subordinates. Among these, Müller counts belittling others and/or excluding, denigrating, degrading or downgrading them, as well as emphasizing knowledge differences/asymmetries. Furthermore, leaders may downgrade the relevance of others’ contributions, question the validity of their perspectives, or even try to reinterpret their contributions to serve the leaders’ own interests. In addition, managers can turn potentially controversial new topics into “known” ones by using specific categorization strategies. In this way, the new topics are incorporated into the company’s routines and can then be delegated to the persons responsible (Nielsen 2009: 26–31). A similar goal is achieved by euphemisms, the use of which, as a rule, is initiated and established by the chair (Nielsen 2009: 35).

The strategies described above all have high face-threatening potential and are therefore a particularly clear expression of power asymmetries in business contexts. Employees have access to considerably fewer means of conflict resolution. Among them, humour and laughter are repeatedly described as a viable response (Dannerer 2002a, b; Rogerson-Revell 2007). However, as emphasized in Section 2, consensual agreements are more robust and sustainable, as they encounter less passive resistance.

The high face-threatening potential of specific activities is also an expression of asymmetric politeness requirements. Schnurr, Marra, and Holmes (2007) rightly point out that standards of politeness depend not only on position and status, but

are also “ethnized” and, depending on the context, adapted and reshaped by members of a community of practice. This adaptation itself also seems to be ethnically asymmetrical. For example, Maori New Zealanders are frequently bi-cultural, and are therefore familiar with non-Maori standards of politeness, and can adapt to these accordingly. In contrast, non-Maori New Zealanders may not be equally aware of the differences in politeness norms, and may thus unintentionally offend their Maori colleagues more frequently by not adapting to Maori concepts of face-saving activities (Holmes, Marra, and Schnurr 2008).

Other studies suggest that cultural differences in terms of indirectness and politeness in disagreeing are largely stereotypical constructions as they can hardly ever be directly observed. For instance, disagreeing, even with superiors, is as frequent in Chinese companies, which are perceived as belonging to a particularly “indirect” culture, as in Western ones. In fact, depending on the context, disagreement may be uttered even more bluntly than in comparable Australian companies (Yeung 2000). These two brief examples indicate how cultural factors add to the complexity of analyzing communication in business meetings. For reasons of space, these factors cannot be examined in detail here, but will be dealt with in Chapter 11.

4 Gender issues in business meetings

In recent years, the number of studies on gender issues at the workplace has increased rapidly. This is doubtless largely due to the increase in the number of women in the working world. In particular, the systematic discrimination against women in business organizations has long been a topic of discussion and has been described using the metaphor of the glass ceiling (first mentioned by Morrison, White, and van Velsor 1987). Even today, only 25% of all management positions around the world are held by women, and women are still paid significantly less than men for the same work (Mills and Mullany 2011). This discrimination is often explained by the dominance of masculine norms that make male behaviour the default in organizations and categorize other behaviour as deviant and therefore inappropriate. Consequently, it can be argued that all organizations are engaged in gendered work processes (Kanter [1977] 1995).

In linguistics and discourse analysis, similar questions have been examined in terms of (perceived) gender-specific language behaviour. The general paradigm observed in gender studies and outlined above can also be found in the field of business communication (for an overview that retains its excellence, cf. Talbot 1998). In early research on gender, male and female linguistic behaviour was studied primarily in terms of male dominance in society. It was claimed that women were interrupted more often than men, that women were less successful in their own attempts to interrupt others, that they used less humour in conversation and generally talked less in gender-mixed groups (cf. Fishman 1978; Talbot 1998).

Table 6.1: Widely used stereotypes describing interactional styles

“Feminine”	“Masculine”
indirect	direct
facilitative	competitive
collaborative	autonomous
listening	lecturing
rapport	report

In addition, certain interactional styles have been described as either “feminine” or “masculine”, that is, as being typical of one gender (Tannen 1990). Overviews can be found in Talbot (1998: 91–95) as well as Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 574). Some of the most widely used stereotypical features are displayed in Table 6.1. Of course, such dichotomizing lists ignore other factors such as ethnicity, age, and class that also have an impact on interactional styles, as well as the varying contexts and purposes of interactions. Nevertheless, while they are obviously simplistic and over-generalizing, they do describe the stereotypes and images that many people have in mind when talking about “men and women at work”. Such images and expectations are rather influential (Thimm, Koch, and Schey 2003). In fact, one of the most successful and widely used theories about gender and leadership was proposed by Kanter ([1977] 1995), who claimed that women in male-dominated organizations are subject to the four “role traps” of “mother”, “seductress”, “pet” and “iron maiden”. According to Kanter, all of these reproduce historically developed archetypal patterns that reinforce male dominance and strongly affect how women’s communication is perceived. The notion that such stereotypical images influence people’s perceptions of communication has been supported to some degree by empirical evidence (for a summary, cf. Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 575).

Many of the quantitative results of these early studies were re-examined in a large New Zealand workplace study (Holmes 2000a; Holmes and Stubbe 2003), which confirmed some widespread stereotypes while refuting a significantly larger number. Firstly, the authors could not confirm that women are more off-topic than men; rather, digressions depend much more on the purpose of a meeting than on the gender of the participants. Secondly, in early studies, it was repeatedly claimed that men would speak more in public contexts than women (Gräbel 1991; James and Drakich 1993); again, however, the reality is more complex. The length and number of contributions to a conversation depend much more on the status and position of the speaker than on his or her gender. In fact, those with a chairing role talk most throughout meetings, regardless of gender (Holmes 2000a; Menz and Al-Roubaie 2008; Yieke 2002). Additionally, the stereotype that women, especially in leadership positions, use less humour than men in order not to jeopardize their reputation and authority proved to be inaccurate in the New Zealand workplace studies. On the contrary, women in leadership positions used humour more often than men. A more

serious difference, however, was found in the type of humour. While the humour of women served more collaborative purposes, men pursued more competitive goals. Only the amount of small talk was confirmed as being more extensive and of a more personal nature in “feminine” workplaces than in “masculine” ones, although some of the early studies on this question have to be classified as biased towards the stereotype.

The main conclusion drawn by Holmes and Stubbe, however, concerns a point of methodology. They argued convincingly for a qualitative approach as the only way to take account of meetings’ complexity, as well as to move away from essentialist conceptualizations that ascribe gender to a person or role, and towards a more constructivist perspective based on communities of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). This approach argues that gender is not associated with externally attributed categorizations, but instead is derived from interactional practice, and has therefore sometimes been described as “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987).

These theoretical considerations play an important role in the analysis of leadership styles. Previous studies stereotypically ascribed to women leadership styles that were more normatively “female”, i.e., supportive, relational, facilitative and cooperative, and primarily characterized by linguistic strategies of mitigation, indirect request, etc. It was concluded that women would end in a classic double-bind situation (Grabe and Hyde 2006), as normative female roles did not correspond to normative leadership roles.

Recent studies show, however, that such dichotomies are not productive, and that both men and women draw on a wide repertoire of linguistic practices, which they use in a targeted and context-sensitive manner. In workplaces perceived as “feminine”, digressions are used to build relationships, and small talk at the beginning of meetings plays an important role (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 588). Nevertheless, direct requests and instructions are also found in these “feminine” contexts as expressions of leadership. Moreover, women participate very successfully in more “masculine” contexts, which are characterized by the discourse practice of so-called “contestive” (i.e. face-threatening) humour, and use this to achieve their leadership goals (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 589–593). In this way, a “masculine” orientation can be observed in a woman’s interactions as a leader (Schnurr and Mak 2011), although this is highly dependent on the specific context of the interactions. At the same time, Baxter (2012) argues that women in leadership positions proactively use a broad range of interactive resources to communicate with their predominantly male colleagues, including the *strategic* (i.e., not inescapable or “naturalized”) use of Kanter’s ([1977] 1995) four stereotyped female roles mentioned above. Baxter thus concludes that women are most successful as leaders if they achieve a balance between “doing authority”, “doing politeness”, and “doing humor” (Baxter 2010: 148–152). Similar results are obtained by a case study conducted by Holmes and Marra

(2011), who describe the complexity of “doing leadership” in gendered and ethnified workplaces and show how women cope successfully with this complexity by performing hybridized identities (cf. also Bakar 2005).

On the other hand, men also use both mitigated and authoritative strategies depending on the context, as shown by Chan’s (2007) case study. Furthermore, Baxter (2010) shows that women and men use similar linguistic choices and strategies when “doing leadership” effectively, with both genders putting relational as well as more authoritarian styles of leadership to use in order to achieve their goals. In short, it has been shown that leadership is constructed through the involved parties’ linguistic choices rather than their genders (Mullany 2011). Thus, although stereotypically “masculine” and “feminine” workplaces can be found, the discursive practices of leaders of either gender do not necessarily coincide with the stereotypes expected. Only the degree of reflection differs; in interviews, women present themselves as much more aware of the strategic role of these practices.

In summary, there is no clear relationship between gender and linguistic practices or styles. Consequently, certain styles can be de-gendered because those stereotyped as “masculine” are simply re-constructed as leadership styles *per se* (Holmes 2006). At the same time, gender is always only one factor among many to be correlated with discursive practices. However, it is often given high priority in interaction and thus many individuals tend to examine interactions with such a strong focus on gender that they miss practices and styles that do not fit into the pre-conceived gender patterns. In fact, on closer examination both men and women use a variety of strategies, depending on the context, to achieve their goals; in so doing they sometimes correspond more, but often less, to the stereotypical image, depending on the norms developed in their communities of practice. For this reason, more recent theories tend to speak of (temporary) identity constructions rather than social roles and role functions (Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Angouri 2011; Mullany 2011; Baxter 2012; Baxter and Al-A’ali 2014).

5 Efficiency and structure vs. emergence and perceived chaos

The most frequently cited reasons for the bad reputation of meetings are their inefficiency, their tedious structure and their long duration. Much of the self-help literature is therefore concerned with organizing them efficiently (cf. Section 1). Indeed, efficiency, including communicative efficiency, is one of the central concepts of management studies (Kleinberger Günther 2003). Measuring it is, however, seen as challenging. Efficiency is most often conceived of as the ratio of result to effort. High efficiency therefore means operating with a minimum of effort to achieve a specific goal (cf. also Stahl and Menz 2014: 8–27). Recently, Dannerer (2005, 2008) has also reflected

on communicative efficiency from a linguistic perspective. On the basis of authentic meetings, she has created a list of eleven characteristics of efficient communication. She includes the amount of time spent, the establishment of joint action goals, consistent processing, and the completion of action patterns, as well as factors such as the readiness to listen and the appropriate social and institutional conditions (e.g., the definition of roles and functions) (Dannerer 2008). The advantage of this approach is obvious. The criteria are empirically verifiable, as they are based on the analysis of authentic interaction data. Nevertheless, there are important reasons to further argue that ostensible efficiency (i.e., low resource costs) may not always be effective in the sense of optimal output, and that apparent inefficiency may have important advantages.

As early as 1999, Menz showed that, under certain circumstances, seemingly chaotic and unpredictable developments during a meeting can be to the company's advantage because they allow problems to emerge which would otherwise remain undiscussed, and would certainly require more effort to resolve at a later stage (cf. also Menz 2011). Digressions may also be functional in the sense of building or maintaining relationships (Holmes and Stubbe 2003). Similarly, unplanned activities such as short pauses, which may emerge in the course of the interaction even when the participants have agreed to continue, need not inhibit the workflow because the participants continue to display their orientation to the agenda of the meeting despite the break (Deppermann, Schmitt, and Mondada 2010). This mutual orientation is not only displayed verbally, but also through other modes such as gaze direction, eye contact, and body signals.

Moreover, decision-making in meetings need not proceed in a structured and linear way, but can also be emergent and mundane, and so pass almost unnoticed. Indeed, highly structured decisions tend to be less durable than those reached through discussions that may be spiral and sometimes messy (Kwon, Clarke, and Wodak 2009; cf. also Section 3). Consequently, aiming for communicative efficiency and insisting on a strict structure is not always the best strategy in the long run.

Another reason why it may be important to embrace apparent inefficiency in communication is that companies have undergone greater transformations in the last 20 years than in many decades previously (Vachek 2008, 2009). These changes coincide with the emergence of post-bureaucratic organizations. These are characterized by the re-introduction of spontaneity (instead of routines), complexity (instead of disambiguation), and individuality (instead of strict compliance with rules). They are also marked by an increasing need for communication (Donnelon and Heckscher 1994; Iedema 2003: 15–19). In contrast to the strict compliance with rules, acceptance of hierarchy, and rationality, which are dominant in strictly structured organizations, post-bureaucratic organizations expect their members to have qualities such as spontaneity, initiative, commitment, enthusiasm, and pragmatic decision-making. Yet it is precisely these qualities that make meetings apparently messy and inefficient. A certain amount of vagueness, uncertainty, and underdetermination are thus

prerequisites for the effective performance of such an organization. Consequently, as well as being structured, meetings need some apparent inefficiency, albeit at different stages in the communicative process (Menz 2011 and Section 6 below).

6 Further research: Self-organization and ambiguity as resilient resources in meetings

Meetings are at the core of business: there is no business without meetings. As a consequence, they are the subject of many academic disciplines, including management and organizational theory. It is, therefore, all the more surprising that linguists and discourse analysts, on the one hand, and organizational theorists on the other have so far hardly taken notice of each other. In fact, it would be highly desirable, firstly, to relate the close analyses of text and talk prevailing in linguistics and discourse analysis to a broader context of organizational theory and social-science approaches (Habscheid 2000; Mautner 2016), and, secondly, to put the large theoretical frameworks predominant in organizational theory to the (empirical) test. On the discourse-analysis side, this lack of integration reflects the fact that a good portion of linguistically-oriented analysis is committed to the ethnomethodologically informed theory of conversation analysis, which systematically and strictly rejects any attempt to link findings with a broader context beyond what can be determined from the data at hand. However, integration is also so rare because the findings of organizational theory are rarely, if ever, adopted in linguistic research in general. The few notable exceptions include recent publications by Wodak, Kwon and their collaborators, who position a detailed linguistic analysis of meetings in the larger contexts of historical approaches and organizational theory, and emphasize that the stability of an organization can only be maintained by interactive work (cf. also Menz 2000).

Another approach that may help to bridge the gap between linguistics and organizational theory is Iedema's (1997) concept of morphogenesis. This attempts to trace the means by which broader institutional processes are instantiated in local interaction. In the context of meetings, minutes play a crucial role. The preparation of such minutes is interpreted as *textualization* (Iedema 2003: 144). The process of transforming a spoken discussion into written drafts and, finally, a formal and official text results in an increasing temporal and spatial distance – time-space distancing according to Giddens (1984: 171) – from the original point of departure (i.e., the meeting). The crucial consequence is that the text becomes increasingly rigid. At the grammatical level, textualization (i.e., the reformulation of talk and earlier drafts) is associated with grammatical metaphorization (Halliday 1994), resulting in the drafts and texts being formulated ever more abstractly (through processes such as passivization, nominalization, etc.). This, in turn, makes the text increasingly authoritative and even coercive. In the present context, the question of unalterability

(i.e., resistance to change) is of primary interest, as this process of textualizing and transforming a lively discussion among people into a formal written text also reduces ambiguity (cf. also Karlsson 2009).

The process of morphogenesis can therefore be described as an ongoing, step-by-step process of disambiguation, reducing uncertainties, ambiguities and vagueness. It can be seen as a way to connect discourse practices with concepts from organization theory such as March and Simon's model of "bounded rationality" (March 1994; Simon 1959). This argues that the essential task of an organization is to reduce complexity in order to enable decisions to be made.

However, an approach focusing on bounded rationality captures only one side of the problem. As argued above, apparent inefficiency and "messy" discussions can lead to unexpected but positive results. The temporary retention of complexity is therefore just as important as reducing it through disambiguation (Weick 1979). Menz (1999, 2000, 2011) proposes a model of a balancing act which companies must master in order to meet these diverging and sometimes contradictory requirements. This balancing act of allowing flexibility while maintaining stability is essentially a discursive practice performed by all participants in business communication, including meetings (cf. also Sections 2 and 3). It cannot be imposed or decreed by superiors but emerges through the interaction of participants committed to negotiating meaning in a community of practice, and is enacted in the self-organizational and fine-grained processes of joint interaction (Boden 1994; Menz 1999, 2002).

The field of business communication, in which meetings are an integral if not the central part, provides an ideal arena for the integration, indeed the synthesis, of organizational theories and discourse-analytical approaches. The field is currently dominated by approaches related to management and organizational theory, which strongly emphasize structure, order and efficiency as the target criteria – sometimes too strongly. It is therefore highly desirable to supplement these approaches with discourse-analytical studies, which, by definition, analyze (naturally-occurring) language in use.

7 Conclusion

Meetings constitute one of the key genres encountered in organizations generally and in business organizations specifically. Numerous discourse-analytic studies have shown that participants in meetings strive for consensus, even in taking decisions, and use discursive strategies designed to achieve it. If conflicts arise, they resort to different strategies that will make future cooperation among them possible, in particular face-saving ones such as topic transition, conflict negotiation and, perhaps surprisingly, humour.

With respect to the issue of gender-specific differences in leadership, it has been shown that stereotypes and prejudice continue to play an important role. However, empirical studies have proved that leaders' discursive practices do not normally

correspond directly to the stereotypes associated with their gender. Rather, leaders of both genders use discursive strategies traditionally considered typically “male” or “female” in a context-sensitive way according to their needs.

Discourse-analytic investigations have also yielded surprising results concerning the efficiency of meetings. Management scholars view the frequent (apparent) inefficiency of meetings as one of the principal reasons for their bad reputation and recommend striving for maximum efficiency. By contrast, discourse-analytic studies have shown that unplanned and even unforeseen developments in meetings, which at first sight might seem to reduce efficiency, can actually lead to improved results – and indeed may even be a precondition for them.

In the light of these inter-disciplinary differences, the present contribution ends with a plea to combine or, even better, synthesize the approaches that at present dominate in management studies and in discourse analysis. Future research on meetings, and on business communication in general, should aim to reconcile these different perspectives and integrate their respective strengths. For if perceived chaos and ambiguity were recognized as an integral part of meetings, participants would view them in a more relaxed manner, and meetings might eventually shed their undeservedly bad reputation.

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Ruth Albert

7 Sales talk and sales training

1. Introduction
2. Types of sales conversations
3. Process
4. Sales-advisor and practical-rhetoric training
5. Recommendations for training based on discourse analysis
6. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Sales talk is understood here as conversation intended (by at least one party) to lead to the exchange of money for goods or services. Ideally the interests of the partners in these conversations will coincide, at least to some extent. Salespeople can achieve their goal of selling something if and only if customers achieve their goal of buying something. Nonetheless, the goals are often not entirely complementary. For example, there may be different interests regarding the price to be paid. Alternatively, considerable relationship work might be necessary in order for the customer to trust the salesperson sufficiently to decide on buying goods whose quality and value for money they cannot judge themselves. The salesperson's communicative task in such conversations is to guide the customer towards making a definitive decision to buy.

This article is a conversation-analytical paper which, for the most part, is based on my own post-doctoral research conducted between from 1982 and 1995. In the process, I visited several sales training events in the German-speaking world and transcribed three of them in full according to the HIAT conventions, including the trainer's sections and all of the participants' role-playing games. Both training events to be discussed in this article were sales training courses lasting two days with roughly six hours of training on each day. In order to investigate the effects on sales talk practice, I used an inconspicuous recording device to make audio recordings of the sales conversations of two participants over several months before and after the respective course. I then transcribed the recordings. Altogether the transcripts reached around 900 pages, of which sections are published in Brons-Albert (1991, 1995a,b) and Bliesener and Brons-Albert (1994). I interviewed the sales-training participants directly after the training and around 14 days later using a questionnaire asking for their assessment of the training and the perceived effects on their conversational behaviour. The response from the second survey varied, but it was at least 80% for two-day training events. This reflects the fact that I largely behaved as a normal

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-007

participant, taking part in group work and role-playing games, and therefore established a good personal relationship with the participants despite my visible recording devices, which clearly displayed my special position.

Having addressed completely different topics during my research, I subsequently read conversation-analytical papers on the topic of “sales talk”. This article draws in particular on Brünner (2000, especially Chapter 4, 2009, 2014) and, concerning the problems of training, on Fiehler and Schmitt (2004). I gathered my data on conversation-analytical training, not from sales conversations, but from training in giving counselling interviews on the topic of AIDS, which I conducted together with Thomas Bliesener. This article’s aim is to draw attention to the fact that training in conducting sales conversations could make significantly more use of data regarding real sales conversations. This would increase its efficiency and cause the participants less confusion.

2 Types of sales conversations

It is certainly not reasonable to expect the same processes and felicity conditions for all types of sales conversations, as these can vary greatly. In essence, they can be differentiated, first, by the initial situation. Thus some such conversations are based on the salesperson’s initiative and are almost forced on the potential buyer. As a consequence, the latter often refuses to participate and, virtually always attempts to end the conversation from the outset. Such conversations may take place at the target’s front door as personal conversations (“door-to-door”). They may involve direct sales pitches for goods and services (for example, frozen food or magazine subscriptions), or less direct ones, as when roofing company employees canvass residential areas, tell residents that their house roofs need repairing and offer to quote for the repair of the alleged defects. However, the majority of conversations initiated by the salesperson take place on the phone. Self-employed people are, for example, often called by representatives of health-insurance companies trying to convince them to switch their private health insurance, while larger companies may be offered temporary staff on the phone. This type of sales talk is normally trained with a “script”, that is, during training the salesperson is taught specific procedures for starting the conversation, for reacting to the potential buyer’s attempts to end the conversation and for all subsequent steps. Furthermore, these formulations are normally set out in writing.

In conversations initiated by the potential customer, salespeople are much freer in the way they shape the talk. Such conversations often take place in a shop, but can also be carried out over the phone (e.g., in the mail-order business) or in an open space, for instance in second-hand car sales, where interest in a purchase cannot be implied simply by entering a showroom. In customer-initiated conversations, the salesperson can assume there is actual interest in a purchase, and rarely

will they attempt to fend off attempts by the customer to end the conversation. Indeed, quite often salespeople in shops make the offer of a conversation by saying “Can I help you?” or “Please let me know when I can help you” and customers respond with “Thanks, I’m just looking” or something similar. However, this is a different situation from repelling an unwanted conversation with a door-to-door salesperson or phone salesperson.

Some customer-initiated sales conversations run quite smoothly, somewhat like so-called “hand-over sales”. In these, the customer expresses a particular desire to buy and the salesperson is able to fulfil this desire problem-free without having to negotiate details regarding the price or delivery or explain anything more about the product. This type of conversation will therefore not be included in what follows. In fact, it does not fall under our definition of sales conversation at all because the decision to buy has already been made before the conversation starts. If, on the other hand, the salesperson must first identify a product which suits the customer’s needs, or must persuade a customer whose interest in the product is a general one to purchase it on specific conditions, then their task is clearly much more difficult.

3 Process

What laypeople and sales-training literature commonly regard as the desirable course of sales conversations often fails to describe their individual phases, far less their individual conversational turns and the sequencing of these. Instead, such descriptions concentrate mainly on the individual goals to be attained before and during the conversation, as in the well-known AIDA formula¹, now more than 100 years old. This formula is based on certain customer reactions which the seller aims to achieve: customers should direct their attention to the product being sold (*attention*), they should be interested in it (*interest*), want to have it (*desire*) and complete the purchase (*action*). This manifestly does not describe the course of a real sales conversation. However, even more recent sales-rhetoric formulas (e.g., BEDAZA, Kirchhoff 1968; DIBABA, Goldmann and Kouba 1969: 255–268) do not give enough consideration to the fact that a sales conversation constitutes an interaction, focusing as they do on the salesperson’s (desired) contributions. This maybe is understandable given that it is sales staff, not customers, who receive training; however, the salesperson must be aware of possible customer reactions and respond to them accordingly.

In reality there is no single sequence of phases which is valid for all sales conversations, the situations themselves being too varied. Rather, there are various possible sequences corresponding to the various types of conversation. Here the

¹ See <http://www.dragonsearchmarketing.com/who-created-aida/>

expected sequence of a conversation aimed at finding temporary employees will be reproduced as an example of a sales conversation initiated by a salesperson. It is based on recordings of role-plays at a two-day training event for newly employed telemarketing agents that a temp agency generously allowed me to make. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to record authentic conversations of this type, so I was unable to create a sequence of phases for such cases. Figure 7.1 represents the various possible sequences of these conversations as anticipated by the trainer concerned, and is based on their training materials.

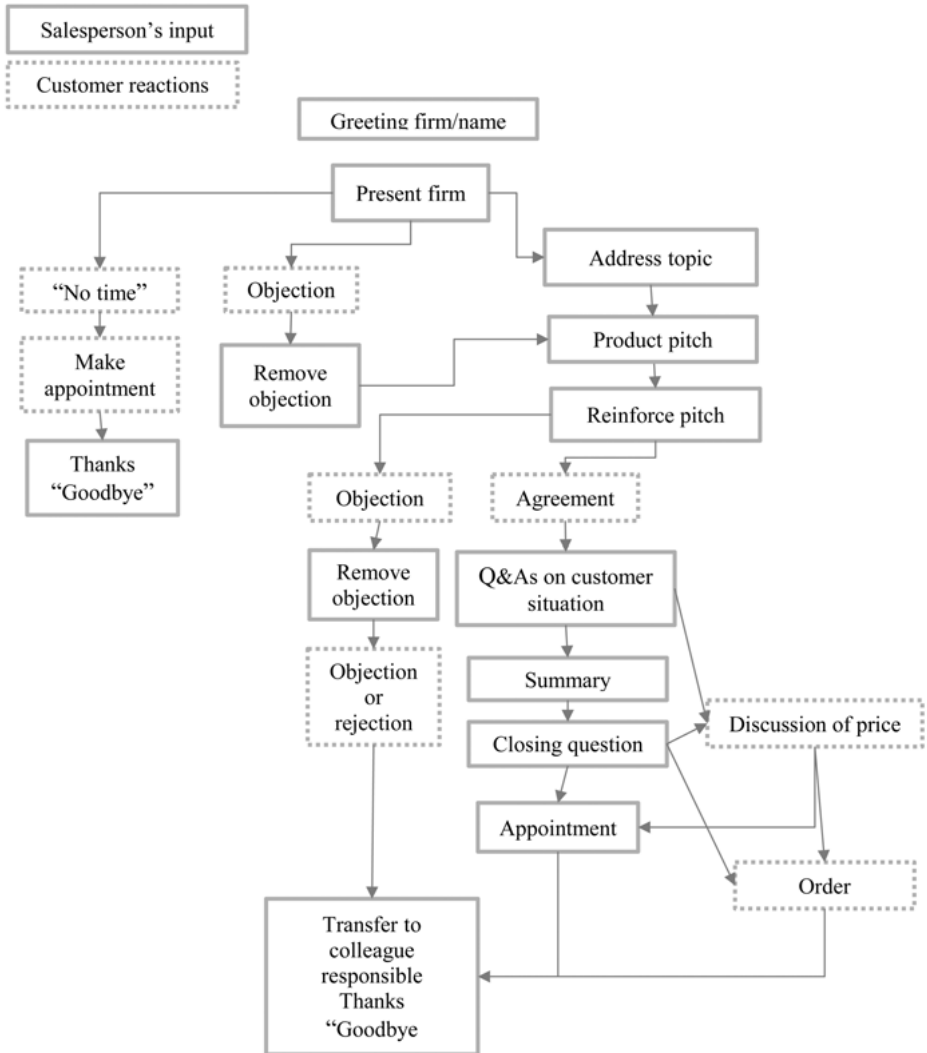


Figure 7.1: Possible sequences of a telemarketing conversation

The trainer's specification essentially envisages three possible sequences dependent on the customer's initial reaction: "the customer responds by saying they have no time", "the customer responds with an immediate objection" and "the customer allows a sales conversation". Presumably real conversations of this type do not run exactly as shown in Figure 7.1; there are surely various loops if the conversation even gets past the initial phase. Moreover, if the talk is successful, it will undoubtedly contain even more sections, which are used to build up a positive relationship between the salesperson and the potential customer. However, it would not be sensible to script these because jokes and small talk have to arise from the interaction between the salesperson and the potential customer. The specified conversation sequence allows for the fact that, as the trainer explained, not every conversation can be successful (in fact, this type of phone canvassing presumably has a very low chance of success). Likewise, salespersons should also try not to scare off potential customers by insisting on following the script up to and beyond the customer's third rejection since this could cause such a negative reaction that any future conversation would also be doomed to fail.

Customer-initiated sales conversations are certainly the more interesting variety as there are significantly more possibilities for shaping the conversation, and the range of topics is much larger. Figure 7.2 shows a sequence of phases for sales conversations in bookshops. It was developed by observing recordings of such conversations in one particular shop over a period of three months. It excludes pure "hand-over" sales, incidentally the most common form of sales conversation in the bookshop concerned. These recordings are, to some extent, typical of sales conversations in situations where the price is non-negotiable (in the book trade the price is controlled, and it is in any case unusual in the German-speaking world to discuss the price marked on everyday goods and clothes).

As Gisela Brünner illustrates in her analysis of second-hand car-sales conversations (Brünner 2009), sales conversations in which the salesperson's success depends heavily on the customer's trust may contain longer passages in which the former seeks to create the impression of trustworthiness. These may include jokes and remarks on everyday topics, as well as narratives in which salespersons present themselves as people for whom giving customers good advice is more important than achieving the highest possible price. Not surprisingly, the section of the conversation devoted to advice and explanation is significantly longer when the product does indeed require explanation than when it is more or less self-explanatory.

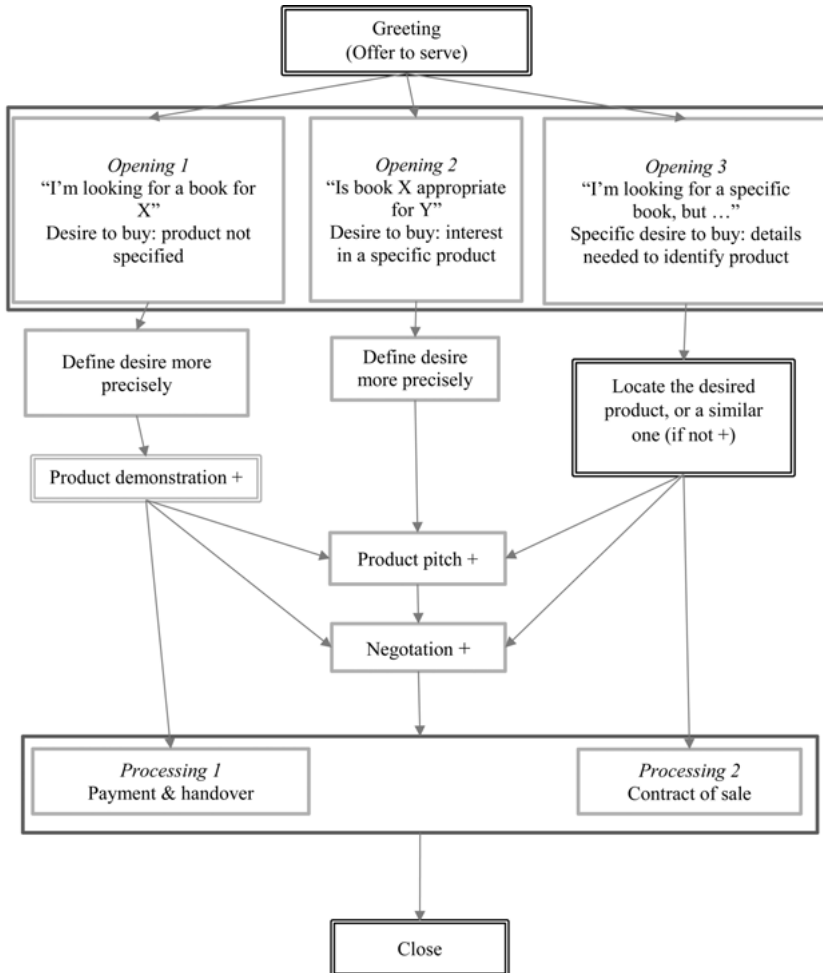


Figure 7.2: Conversation phases in bookshop sales

Legend: simple frame = optional phase; double frame = obligatory phase; more than one simple frame in a big frame = one of the options is obligatory; parenthesis = optional turn; + = the customer has the possibility to put an end to the sales talk

Source: Brons-Albert (1995: 19)

4 Sales-advisor and practical-rhetoric training

The fact that sales training going beyond product knowledge is offered at all reflects the assumption that some behavioural patterns bring the sales conversation to a successful conclusion more often than others, and that sales staff can learn to adopt these patterns. Good sales training, whether geared towards practical rhetoric or the analysis of real conversations, should, in my opinion, contain a section where the trainees reflect on the nature of their own profession. This was the case in one of

the two practical-rhetoric training courses I will report on here. In both, allusion was made to the fact that a desire to sell is obviously essential if you have chosen a career in sales.

The course for booksellers also discussed relevant relationship-level decisions that salespersons may make, such as whether to advise a customer against buying a product which they consider unsuitable. In the long term, this can pay off – for example, if a significantly cheaper product would also suit the customer's purpose – since the customer may be grateful for this piece of advice later. Similar issues arise in considering whether to palm off a slow seller to a casual customer. Is the short-term gain worth the risk of losing a potential regular customer?

The range of behavioural patterns discussed in sales training includes selecting the right clothing, the appropriate speech volume, gestures, facial expressions and other non-verbal aspects, for example, keeping the correct distance from your conversational partner. At the other extreme, it includes various “tactics” designed to ensure a successful sale. Practical rhetoric training normally consists of three sections: general information about sales conversations, including a description of the course; information about recommended behavioural patterns, with a large part devoted to tactics; and role-plays, in which trainees apply these recommendations.

In practical-rhetoric training the approach may vary widely, depending on whether it is concerned with conversations initiated by the salesperson or by the customer. In training for scripted telephone conversations, such as that offered to call-centre agents, attention is paid to strictly controlling the initial phase (which is often specified word for word and may not be formulated differently) and to specifying reactions to all types of objections, that is, customer explanations of why they do not want the goods or services offered. Training material from the training event for telephone sales staff mentioned above covered a total of 32 possible customer objections against booking temporary staff, and specified reactions to all of them. The type of desired reaction was normally justified in detail by the trainer, who was also the participants' boss. Also mentioned were formulations for guiding the conversational partner towards making an order (compare this with scripts for telemarketing agents from Cameron 2000 and Hultgren and Cameron 2010). One example of a conversational turn specified in the training observed was: “Now, Mr X, we are agreed that the static lathe will cost you a lot of money. Additionally you said that a lathe operator could help you over the shortage and will save you a great deal of money. Should I send our lathe operator Mr Y over this week on Thursday or would next Monday be better for you?” This pattern is known in sales rhetoric as the “sham alternative”. The customer is offered two alternatives or products to choose between, but not the option of accepting neither.

The reason given by the trainer for scripted turns was that they free telemarketing agents from the need to formulate the ideas themselves, and thus allow them to direct more attention to the conversational partner. Having learnt the ideal formulations by heart, the would-be call-centre agents practised using them the next day in role-plays.

I could not ascertain the extent to which the trainees concerned adhered to these specifications in their subsequent careers, but I was able to witness that strict scripting could lead to problems in role-play situations. Although the partner in these was always the trainer, who would presumably have known his own scripts, he sometimes reacted in a way to which there was no scripted response. In real conversations, customer reactions are likely to be significantly different from what was taught, meaning that agents will be placed in situations hard to tackle by using the specified formulations. Even in the role-plays there were significant gaps between the freely formulated text passages and the scripted ones, often clearly marked by filled pauses (“err”). Thus the two types of passage were not successfully connected in syntactic terms, and there were also clear differences in register between them.

Practical-rhetoric training is also provided for customer-initiated sales conversations. In this case, I observed and recorded not only a training event, but also the real sales conversations of two training participants before and after it, so that I could better report on the effects of the training.² At this event designed for booksellers, the trainer also specified a flowchart for sales conversations. This phase sequence is illustrated in Figure 7.3. It exhibits clear differences from that of real sales conversations in bookshops as depicted in Figure 7.2 above.

Here it appears that the trainer has absorbed and adopted sales-training literature from the field of salesperson-initiated conversations, such as Jennen (1977). The training material included suggested responses to bookshop customers who claim to have no need for books, despite the fact that they are very unlikely to react in this way if presented with a reasonably suitable book or books. On the other hand, it is likely that they will reject individual books during the presentation phase, in which case the appropriate response is not to attempt to deal with the objection, but rather to search for a more suitable book.

Interestingly the sales trainer’s diagram includes no phase for determining demand, that is, a phase in which the salesperson aims to identify the nature of a customer’s perceptions about a book they have been offered. In practice such a phase might well be appropriate. For during the observed conversations it became apparent that, after a rather imprecise exchange about the type of book sought, customers usually narrowed down their purchase choice on being presented with various offers. In other words, the choice was further delimited by customers’ acceptance or rejection of such offers. It is true that a phase of two or more questions and answers about the customer’s exact wishes without any goods being presented for examination usually leads to an explicit request to be shown one or more products (“So what products do you have?” or something similar). Nevertheless, it would be

² I would also like to thank the trainer for the possibility of recording his course and likewise other trainers from sales training events on which I have not reported in detail here. And special thanks go to both booksellers who allowed me to record them before, during and after the sales training.

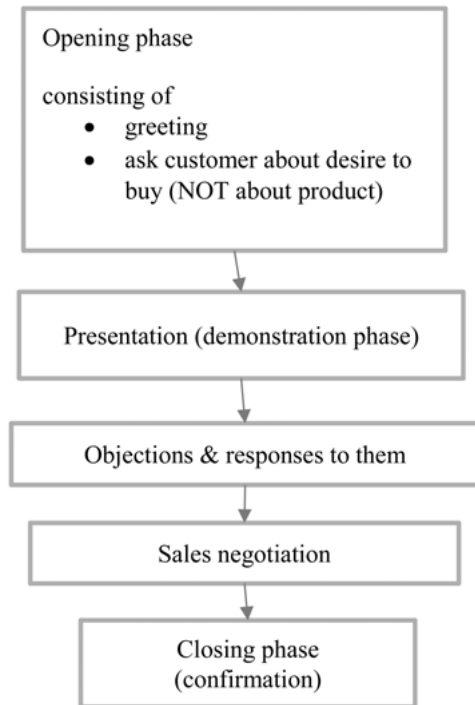


Figure 7.3: Trainer-specified phase sequence for book sales conversations
Source: Brons-Albert (1995: 41)

useful to include a demand-determination phase in the prescribed sequence, which is focused on the steps to be taken and the outcomes which are to be achieved by these steps.

The sequence of phases presented by the trainer corresponds best to the one on the left hand side of Figure 7.2. It does not differentiate between optional and obligatory elements, contains one phase that does not arise, and fails to take into account the fact that not every sales conversation leads to a purchase. The trainer did not comment on the sequence, nor did he explain to the training participants how to recognise phase boundaries. Of course, one could question whether such input is necessary and whether false input could cause harm.

Unfortunately, I could record the real sales conversations of only two training participants before and after this training event. Here it was discernible that the training had changed nothing about their behaviour regarding the conversation structure. One bookseller carried out her conversations before and after training purposefully, recognised phase boundaries intuitively and marked them frequently with structuring signals such as “so”. The other had problems in identifying phase boundaries, often continued presenting goods when there was already a commitment to buy, and could definitely have profited from help in recognising phase boundaries

and in moving on to the next phase. Nothing changed regarding this problem as a result of the training. There may even have been a negative influence from the non-applicable information about the “objection – responding to objections” phase of the sales conversations. Following training she contradicted a customer’s objection to a specific book instead of simply presenting a different one, a behaviour she had not displayed in her pre-training conversations.

As far as so-called “tactics” are concerned, a total of fifty were mentioned during the two-day training course. They were distributed to participants as a handout, and during the training they and the ideas behind them were explained. The complete list can be found in the transcript of the course documented in Brons-Albert (1995). Of these tactics, 24 could not be evaluated because the posited initial situation did not arise in any conversation (18), because they were not actually used or because video recordings would have been required to check them (6). Video recordings of the real sales conversations in the bookshop could not be made inconspicuously and would have had an observer bias. This left 26 tactics that could be evaluated; for two of them learning effects from the training were clearly apparent, for another three they seemed probable. This “success rate” of 10% or less may seem very low. Yet this was not remarked upon by either trainer or trainees since many of the suggested behavioural patterns reflected popular lay preconceptions about how communication works (cf. Antos 1996 on “lay linguistics”). The successful tactics were “say the price as late as possible in the conversation” and “ask opening questions with ‘wh’ question words”. Those with possible learning successes were “farewell sentences should refer to the content of the conversation”, “anticipate expectable objections” and “don’t ask for the price range at the beginning of the conversation”. The successful tactics are distinguished, amongst other things, by the fact that coherent arguments for their use were made and that they are actually applicable.

As observed above, many of the tactics that proved unsuccessful despite considerable role-play practice originate from lay-linguistic perceptions of “correct” formulations. Examples are:

- avoid using the passive voice (“the customer wants to do something, not have something done to them, so not ‘it will be shown to you over there’ but ‘go over there, Ms X will show it to you’”)
- avoid “hesitant” words, such as subjunctive forms and “maybe”, as they make you seem unsure;
- avoid “barrier words”, such as “no” and “not”, as they create an unfavourable relationship with the customer.

The most time of all was spent on this last recommendation. In several tasks and role-plays, participants practised how to formulate negative information “positively”. For example, they learnt to answer the question “Do you have this book?” with “We can have this book for you tomorrow.” In real sales conversations, customers’ reacted to

these formulations with “Eh, so you don’t have it then?”, to which the scripted response was “Yes, not at the moment, but you could collect it tomorrow.” As the trainees completely shared the trainer’s lay linguistic perceptions, there was no protest of any sort against this part of the course.

Other tactics to be found in sales-advisory literature derive, I assume, from the practical experience of experienced salespeople, for example emphasising quality to customers who try to beat down the price. Many of the tactics described in the advice literature have, in my view, not been assessed for their actual impact on the course of real conversations. Along with suggestive questions and the “yes, but” tactic, these include:

- the “sham alternative” (“Would you like to take both articles now or just the one?”, with no mention of the option to take neither);
- the “yes street” tactic, in which the salesperson asks a series of question likely to be answered with “yes”, thus creating a pattern, before posing the crucial one – “So will you buy the product then?”);
- the “salami tactic”, which involves eliciting the customer’s agreement with a number of minor propositions as steps on the road to making a large purchase; and
- the “boomerang technique” (“Books are becoming more and more expensive” – “Exactly, so you should take your chance now”).

I too was unable to assess their effectiveness because the booksellers observed used them neither before nor after training. The question is surely whether techniques that are clearly manipulative may not damage the mutual trust built up between bookseller and customer to such an extent that both observed booksellers were well-advised not to employ them.

The majority of training was taken up with role-plays, as is, according to my observations and experience, usual for communication-training events. My questionnaire-based surveys of booksellers participating in the sales-training events I observed show that respondents considered the role-plays to be the section of the course from which they had learnt most. However, their perception seems to have no basis in fact. Most changes towards desired behaviour occurred when training participants used those tactics which had been extensively and coherently explained, not those practised particularly intensively in role-plays. The participants’ view that the role-plays had been so informative could reflect the time spent on discussing them, a good deal of which was devoted to issues relating specifically to the role-play situation rather than to sales skills.

I also observed another training event for booksellers held, not – like the one reported above – in a bookshop, but in a training room without books, bibliography aids, computers, tills, etc. There it was above all the participants’ body language in the filmed role-plays that was criticised (“Where are their hands?”). Yet this was constrained by the fact that participants did not have available to them what they

would normally have in their hands in a sales conversation, namely books. The trainees explained to me in the subsequent survey that they did not know how awkward and unsure they seemed. They perceived the impression given by video recordings made in a completely unusual and atypical situation as their usual behaviour and believed they had much more to learn from such training events.

During longer training events every participant plays the roles of the salesperson and the customer several times in front of the camera. In the subsequent discussion, typically only the performance of the salesperson is considered. But, in fact, neither the salesperson nor the trainee playing the role of customer behaves as they would in reality. I was able to demonstrate this very clearly by comparing the real sales conversations I recorded with the conversations of the same booksellers in role-play situations. There, the “salespeople” were aware that their “customers” were actually other booksellers, who they could assume to have some specialised knowledge, while the “customers” had no real intention to buy and were unable to pretend that they had. Moreover, the participants were acting out a sales conversation for the first time in front of an audience and a camera, and mostly in somewhat atypical situations described on role cards, such as: “a married couple discussing what book to buy for the husband’s mother get into an argument about whether the wife shows adequate respect for her mother-in-law”. Under these circumstances, it was precisely the non-verbal behaviour of participants that displayed differences from real behaviour. As the participants got used to the situation of being filmed, such discrepancies decreased. This “improvement” was sold, and perceived, as a successful outcome of the training course.

5 Recommendations for training based on discourse analysis

In contrast to the practical-rhetoric training events described above, those led by trainers grounded in discourse analysis do not usually promise to explain “recipes”, “tactics” or the like. Rather, such courses aim to sensitise trainees to the typical sequences and potential problems of the conversation type concerned. They focus on observing recordings of real conversations, which are then analysed with the trainees. This approach can definitely help to avoid mistakes based on lay-linguistic perceptions of how verbal and non-verbal behavioural patterns work. Nonetheless, the benefits of basing sales training on the observation of real conversations remain questionable. The real conversations recorded and transcribed by linguists inevitably reflect individual behaviour as well as general patterns. In addition, the effort involved in recording and transcribing means that the database compiled is virtually always so small that it is barely representative of the conversation type observed. This

applies not only to my own papers on sales conversations (e.g., Brons-Albert 1991, 1995) but also to many others (e.g., Pothmann 1997; Dorfmueller 2006; Mercelot 2006; Weber 2009, 2011). Furthermore, the compiled transcripts rarely form complete conversations suitable for didactic purposes. Working with short extracts where specific phenomena can be clearly shown does not, however, show the whole context. Last but not least, trainees are not used to reading transcripts and often find standard features of spoken language, such as filled pauses and incomplete sentences, to be “incorrect” and “ugly”. As a result, more important issues are ignored.

Fiehler and Schmitt (2004) compare sales training courses based on the practical-rhetoric model with those based on discourse analysis. Even if some details of their observations can be attributed to the individual behaviour of the trainers observed, their account shows clearly that discourse-analysis-based training also has its problems. In practice, discourse-analysis trainers are generally linguists without sales experience. As a result, they may well have less experience than their trainees of the conversation type to be trained on the basis of authentic transcripts and of trainees’ interpretation of them. If now participants, citing their knowledge of the conversational situation, assert that certain parts of the transcripts are atypical and virtually never occur in real situations, the trainer is not really in a position to argue that this may only be trainees’ perception. Similar problems may also arise if the trainer wishes to suggest ways of coping better with certain phases in the conversation.

In short, the problem of discourse-analysis sales training lies very clearly in the fact that trainers relinquish part of their authority. They no longer act like omniscient experts who know the best way to conduct any conversation. Instead, they accord the status of experts in the conversation type concerned to course participants, with whom they jointly interpret the real conversations under consideration. Together with the trainees, trainers attempt to discover causes for communication crises and to develop ideas about how to conduct conversations better. In doing so, they surrender parts of their role as “the authority on conducting conversations” and make themselves vulnerable, thereby contravening participants’ expectations.

Linguistic laypeople often have very clear ideas about what communication training should achieve. They assume the existence of simple and learnable processes that will enable them to conduct conversations effectively, and they expect to be provided with such “recipes”. This expectation is fulfilled to a significantly greater extent by trainers who offer “practical rhetoric” than by those who use conversation analysis. These considerations should not, however, lead trainers schooled in conversation analysis to dispense with their knowledge and essentially adopt the same approach as those with a background in practical rhetoric. Instead, it should be recognised that the success of training programmes is heavily dependent on trainers’ ability to present themselves as experts, which may require a certain amount of stage-management.

What is more, a conversation-analysis-based trainer must include in their course plan some time to dispel common prejudices about factors that influence conversation success. Typical examples are the belief that filled pauses and the use of the subjunctive display uncertainty, or that “everything must be formulated positively”. By presenting reasoned arguments against these lay-linguistic perceptions, the trainer displays awareness of them, thus removing the danger of being perceived as incompetent.

Training based on conversation analysis is, overall, significantly more complicated than training based on practical rhetoric, for both trainers and participants. It is no longer a question of simply learning a single correct behavioural pattern. Instead, it involves discussion of a range of behavioural patterns, from which trainees should choose in order to find one which fits their personality and thus seem authentic. This process will involve addressing behavioural patterns which can have positive or negative effects on the customer-salesperson relationship, patterns that can steer the conversation to its end goal, and others that instead tend to prevent this. Other topics to be discussed are indications that phase boundaries have been reached, crisis situations, and potential reactions to these. A typical approach of conversation-analytical trainers is to have trainees analyse transcripts of failed conversations in order to identify the point at which the conversation begins to go astray, and the cause of this deviation (cf. Fiehler and Schmitt 2004; Bliesener and Brons-Albert 1994). This can then lead to speculation about how the problem could have been averted. Of course, some behavioural patterns that are likely to reduce the chances of achieving conversational goals are readily recognisable even to non-linguists. In many other cases, however, the indications are very subtle and pass unrecognised by course participants, in which case the trainer will have to point them out.

Transcripts contain a number of features which trainees will probably not have seen before, and with which they must be familiarised before any analysis can be attempted. First, the conversation is reproduced in a form like that of sheet music, to allow the portrayal of passages when both conversational partners speak simultaneously. Non-standard orthography is used so that any slurred pronunciations not completely normal in spoken language are reproduced in writing. Pauses are marked by dots or, if they are longer, by specifying their length. Stress is marked by underlining and incomplete utterances by slashes. Dialectal features, too, are reproduced in writing. All this seems odd at first and, given that course participants are usually unaware that their own speech patterns are fairly similar to those transcribed, they initially think that the conversational partners concerned must have spoken exceptionally badly. Only once these assumptions have been dispelled can the trainer begin to use the pauses, the phases of simultaneous speech and the strength of dialectal features to interpret the interaction.

Transcript 1 is a transcript of the kind that would be discussed in a typical conversation analysis training course.

Example transcript 1

(C = Customer, S = Shop assistant)

German original

C: *Guten Tag. Isch . such en . Kriegsroman oder son Kriegs-*

1

C: *buch, aber en etwas Neueres.*S: ((4s)) *Öh, Taschenbuch oder*

2

C: *Nee, gebunden.* *Hier*S: *gebunden? Gebunden, hmhm . ((8 s))*

3

C: *oben das, was ist das? Die Gef / Was heißt das? Die Ge-*

4

C: *fangenen.*S: *Ja, das is also / wann is das rausgekommen?*

5

S: *So . Anfang des Jahres, so im Frühjahr war das. Das is*

6

C: *Hm. ((3 s)) Und wie is*S: *also no nicht so sehr alt, ne.*

7

C: *das? Also so eher Berichte, oder?*S: *Keine Ahnung, da ich sowas*

8

C: *Also ich normalerweise au nicht.*S: *auch nich lese.* *(Ich*

9

English translation

C: Hello. I'm . looking for a . war novel or some sort of war

1

C: book, but a fairly new one.

S: ((4 secs)) Er, paperback or

2

C: No, hardback. That

S: hardback? Hardback, hmhm . ((8 secs))

3

C: up there, what's that? The pris / What does that mean? The pri-
4

C: soners.

S: Yes, so that's / when was it published?
5

S: Well . beginning of the year, sometime in spring. That's
6

C: Hm. ((3 secs)) And what's

S: still not so very old, no.
7

C: it like? More like reports, isn't it?

S: No idea, since I don't read
8

C: Well, I don't either, normally.

S: that sort of stuff. (I
9

In discussing this transcript, the conversation-analysis trainer would try to get the participants to identify the salesperson's unusual behaviour at the relationship level, not only in terms of content but also of the language used. Here the salesperson is initially passive and does not speak in a particularly high register. Then, with the use of the post-placed *since* clause [German *da*] in turn 8, she switches to a much higher register. Not only that, she virtually interrupts the customer's inquiry about the content of the war book and abruptly denies any knowledge of its content. The conversation is then repaired in relationship terms by the customer's remark that she does not normally read such books either. Otherwise, the salesperson's behaviour could have caused the conversation to fail, especially had the customer been an impassioned reader of "war books".

A second example is shown in Transcript 2. In this case, the salesperson jeopardises the success of the sales conversation by twice failing to initiate the purchase process after the customer had expressed their intent to make a purchase. The trainer's input here would thus deal primarily, not with the relationship level, but with the organisation of the conversation.

Example transcript 2

(C = Customer, S = Shop assistant)

German original

C: *Hmhm. ((4 s)) Isch glaub, ich nehm dat*S: *nich schlecht, ne.*

38

C: *ens mit, wanner dat liest. /_Un wanner /*
[sehr leise und schnell]S: *Den Kishon?*

39

C: *wenn er dat schon hat (kann isch saan,) dat der ganz neu*

40

C: *is. Dann könnt er den ja normaler-*S: *Ja, der is ganz neu.*

41

C: *weise no nit hann._/*S: *((2 s)) Und falls, könn Se'n ja um-*

42

C: *Könn mer auch umtauschen, ne? ((4 s)) /_(Neh-*
[leiser]S: *tauschen.*

43

C: *mer ma mit_/ ((Räuspfern)) Isch han sin Frau je-*S: *Hmhm*

44

C: *frach, un die meinte, er würde gern Satire lesen.*S: *Ja.*

45

C: *Hm.*S: *dann is dat doch genau richtig, ne? Soll ich Ihnen*

46

C: *Hmhm. (Da kommt nichts dran) isch*S: *ne Tüte dafür geben?*

47

English translation

C: Hmhm. ((4sec.)) I think, I'll take that

S: not bad, no.

38

C: one, if he reads it. /_And if he /

[very quiet and fast]

S: The Kishon?

39

C: if he's already got it (I can say.) that it's very

40

C: recent? Then he couldn't normal-

S: Yes, it's very recent.

41

C: ly have it yet. _/

S: ((2 secs)) And in the event that he has, you can ex-

42

C: We can exchange it, can't we? ((4 secs)) /_ (We'll

[quieter]

S: change it

43

C: take it)_/ ((Clears throat)) I asked his

S: Hmhm.

44

C: wife, and she thought he'd like to read some satire.

S: Yes,

45

C: Hm.

S: then that's just right, isn't it? Should I

46

C: Hmhm. (It won't go on top of there) I

S: give you a bag for it?

47

In terms of register, it is noteworthy that the salesperson – who in other exchanges spoke something close to dialect – here uses a significantly higher register than the customer; it is especially noticeable in turn 42 (German *falls*). Moreover, the purchase itself is only initiated when she comes down to a lower register in turn 46.

One unavoidable question is whether transcripts alone or a combination of transcripts and original recordings should be used in training. In many cases it will not be possible to use audio or video recordings, for privacy reasons. But even if those who appear in a recording agree to its being shown, there may be disadvantages to doing that. That is because trainees often make assumptions about people and their competence in sales conversations from their appearance and then pay less attention to what matters: their communicative behaviour.

In discussing transcribed sales conversations, trainers must be aware that the transcripts may reveal points which are not susceptible to conscious use by the course participants. I will give one example from my own training experience. During discussion of the transcript of a counselling interview, I pointed out that the counsellee gave virtually no listener signals for quite a long time and that, when they did, these came in the middle of the counsellor's utterances and not at the end of phrases or during pauses. From this, along with other listener reactions, one could conclude that the counsellor was failing to engage the counsellee's interest during lengthy parts of the conversation. In a role-play organised shortly afterwards, the counsellor seemed unusually lacking in concentration. On being asked why this was so, she answered that she was paying so much attention to giving sufficient listener signals at the appropriate points that she was unable to concentrate properly on the content of the conversation. Even without any instructions on how to "correctly" use listener signals, the trainee saw the explanation as a tip to follow, perhaps having expected to be given "recipes" for conducting conversations.

Similarly, when alerting course participants to certain issues, such as proxemics (i.e. maintaining the culturally appropriate distance from a conversational partner) or register-change (e.g., to a stronger dialect) during a conversation, trainers must make it clear that the intention is not that trainees consciously attempt to copy particular patterns. Of course if, in their role-plays, participants should display deviations from the norm in these regards, they can be discussed. But in most cases trainees intuitively adopt correct behaviour with regard to proxemics and in choosing the appropriate strength of dialect. Consciously trying to use such behavioural patterns can impinge on the conversation's success by distracting from the real issues.

Now that all these potential "traps" in conversation-analytical sales training have been discussed, the benefits should also be mentioned.

- Working with transcripts of conversation between non-participants in the training course concerned allows more open criticism than if participants were involved.

- The opportunity to cover authentic conversations in training reduces the danger of becoming preoccupied with the specific nature of the role-play situation. Additionally, lay-linguistic perceptions of how certain behavioural patterns work can be dispelled by observing the conversations in detail.
- Making transcripts of conversations allows them to be analysed very closely. Trainees have the entire conversation at their disposal and can individually study and compare passages from it, at their own pace. It is true that no transcript is completely unaffected by the interpretations of the person who created and edited it. However, this effect can be mitigated by going back to the original recording if this is permitted.
- Trainers guided by conversation-analysis can design their role-plays so as to minimise the danger that issues specific to role-play situations may arise, and they can also normally differentiate between such issues and those relating to the course topic.
- Training based on conversational analysis considers the roles of both salesperson and customer, and addresses how they mutually shape the conversation.
- Such training also offers help in controlling the conversation by indicating the phases that arise in practice and by showing how recognition of these allows the conversation to be managed with a view to achieving its goal.
- Conversational analysts' specialist knowledge of response patterns, the functions of register changes, methods of controlling the topic of a conversation, etc can, of course, be useful in analysing conversations. However, it can also help to alert trainees to unfavourable features of their own conversational behaviour. They can then experiment with different behaviours in role-plays, provided there are adequate indications that the undesirable behaviour is not a product of the role-play situation itself.

All in all, I would plead for training in conducting sales conversations to take into account the processes which actually occur in such conversations, and not lay-linguistic perceptions. This would significantly increase the benefits of such training.

6 Conclusion

Sales talks are more complex than the patent recipes of practical rhetoric would have us believe. Often their success will depend on building rapport, something that is impossible if sales people fail to behave naturally, instead slavishly following certain patterns they have been trained to use. Hence it is advisable to reinforce information about successful turns in sales talk by analysing authentic material, thereby promoting cognitive learning. Role plays should be used to give participants the opportunity to try out strategies that promise to enhance success in selling until

they feel comfortable with them. Overall, I would plead for training in sales talk to take into account the processes that actually occur in such conversations, and not lay-linguistic perceptions of them. In that way, the benefits of such training could be significantly increased.

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8 From business letters to email and mobile communication

1. Introduction
2. Definitions and statistics
3. Genre analysis
4. Orality vs. literacy
5. Degree of formality
6. Linguistic accuracy
7. Pros and cons of using email in business
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1 Introduction

The last few decades have seen a massive shift from paper-based communication to electronic mail and various related forms of communication. As a result, a sizable body of linguistic research on the peculiarities of such electronic communication has developed (Gains 1999; Gimenez 2005b; Frehner 2008; Gimenez 2009, among others), much of which focuses on the differences compared to written communication in its pure form (for the purpose of this article, business letters).

This article will first look at facts and figures with regard to (business) communication by letter and email in order to lay the groundwork for a more detailed investigation of the characteristics of these forms of communication, such as genre, formality and relevance. Next, the various advantages and disadvantages of the forms and the consequent choice of medium will be highlighted, with special consideration given to the pitfalls inherent to electronic communication, some of which have become especially apparent in recent years. Following a brief examination of new forms of communication, an attempt will be made to offer an outlook into what the future may hold in terms of channels of communication, and to suggest whether particular media (or genres) are destined to prevail or wither in the face of increasing competition. Given the American provenance of the internet and the fact that most electronic communication is arguably effected in English, this article will place a strong focus on the (Anglo-)American aspects of the issues at hand.

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-008

2 Definitions and statistics

For the sake of simple delineation, “business letters” and “business emails” will be taken to refer to letters or emails sent with a commercial purpose, be it B2B (business-to-business), B2C (business-to-consumer), or even C2C (customer-to-customer; e.g., via electronic auction platforms). A characteristic of such forms of communication is the intention to convey targeted information or trigger certain behavior (e.g., announce a change in store policy or cause a customer to make a purchase). With regard to business letters, LaDuc states that, among several other features, such a communication “is an important document that a writer uses to accomplish specific, measurable objectives in interaction with a specific audience” and, interestingly if rather narrowly, that it “is usually written in Business English”¹ (LaDuc 1996). The same descriptors can generally also be applied to business emails.

While most people would agree that business letters have been around for a very long time, not too many would be aware that what are considered by some to be the first examples – in a loose sense – are clay tablets dating back to 2,200 B.C. (Goddard 1933). They refer to trade conditions, and so satisfy the definition given above. With regard to the advent of business emails, it may not be possible to pinpoint the first of its kind as such. However, it may safely be assumed that it was sent very shortly after the first electronic message was supposedly transmitted in 1971, by Ray Tomlinson, considered the inventor of email.

Most people will also be aware that email communication has been gradually supplanting traditional letters in many contexts, but in order to provide some quantitative underpinning let us look at some figures regarding the use of so called snail mail. The United States Postal Service, “the largest postal service in the world” (USPS), handled about 97 billion pieces of mail per year in 1978. The number then rose constantly to reach a peak at roughly 212bn in 2007 before declining steadily to 158bn in 2013.² Similarly, while 82 million letters were sent per day in the UK in 2004, by 2013 that number had dropped sharply to 58m.³ In Australia, volume peaked in 2007-2008, reaching 4.6 billion items, but fell by more than a billion in the course of the following five years (as is explained in an article aptly, if maybe a bit ungrammatically, entitled “The beginning of the end for postage stamp”)

Much of this recent decline can doubtless be explained by the increasing use of email as a preferred means of communication. The number of electronic messages sent per year was a negligible 5,000 in 1978, the internet as such having only

¹ This would open the door for another quite hotly debated issue, viz. “What is Business English?”, but this would go far beyond the scope of this article.

² <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/cfo/media-call-131115.pdf>; <http://www.statisticbrain.com/number-of-letters-mailed-each-year>; Shiva (2012).

³ For sake of comparison, these numbers correspond to roughly 30 billion and 21 billion per year, respectively.

just been developed. Since then, however, use of email has grown exponentially. From roughly 50 billion messages sent in 1993, the number surged to the 1 trillion threshold within about 5 years, with about 70 trillion emails expected in 2014 (Shiva 2012; Radicati Group 2014: 4). To put this into perspective: As stated above, the annual letter volume handled by the USPS in 2013 stood at around 158 billion pieces – less than the number of electronic messages sent *per day* in the same period.

While there are no figures readily available concerning the actual business letter volume, there are statistics for the share of business emails in overall email traffic. They suggest that, of the 196 billion email messages expected to be sent and received per day in 2014, over 55% would come from the business world, with that proportion set to rise further in the next few years (Radicati Group 2014: 3–4). Consequently, it appears safe to conclude that electronic mail has already taken a large share of business communication away from snail mail and will take even more in the future.

3 Genre analysis

3.1 General attributes

To complement the quantitative analysis of the previous section, this one will focus on the linguistic nature of business communications. It will also deal with the question of what constitutes genre and how the concept applies in our context. A classification of forms of communication according to genre is useful in specifying what kind of language and setting is being described and examined. However, it is interesting to note that, while genre has been researched by, and in the context of a variety of fields, it is still defined somewhat differently by different authors.

When first introduced as a concept, genre was regarded as a “more or less standardized communicative event” (Swales 1981: 10). This perception was amended over time, with, for example, Yates and Orlikowski (1992) extending the above definition to include a “recurrent situation” to which the communicative event responds. For the purpose of defining genre in a setting of organizational communication, they state that “genres can be viewed as social institutions that both shape and are shaped by individuals’ communicative actions” (Yates and Orlikowski 1992: 300). In other words, it is the sociocultural environment which lends a genre its specificity and particular character. Moreover, genres also evolve as their contexts evolve: “Genres are categories established by consensus within a culture and hence subject to change as generic conventions are contested/challenged and revised, perceptibly or imperceptibly, over time” (Lee 2001: 46). Building on this assumption that conventions undergo change, letters and emails will now be examined with regard to their respective classifications in the context of genre research.

3.2 The genre of business letters

Nickerson and de Groot (2005) state that the concept of business letters as a separate genre was the focus of much of the relevant research in the 1980s and 1990s. They go on to say that, by the end of the century, many researchers were finding that it had essentially ceased to be of relevance owing to the emergence of new media (Nickerson and de Groot 2005: 325). Yet for all the doomsday prophecies business letters are still around, and Flowerdew and Wan (2006: 136), among several others, find that “posted letters still pay [sic] a very important role in certain forms of business communication”.

One form that appears to have survived the arrival of electronic communication is the sales promotion letter, with many companies continuing to pitch their products or services by traditional letter instead of, or possibly in addition to, email. In one of the early successful attempts to apply genre analysis to non-literary fields⁴ (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 120), Bhatia defined a sales promotion letter as “an unsolicited letter addressed to a selected group of prospective customers” (Bhatia 1993: 45). He characterized such letters as being obviously intended not only to persuade, and thus to elicit a response (ideally in the form of a purchase) from the recipient, but also to initiate follow-up communication. Furthermore, he identified several rhetorical moves within the letter, with some considered obligatory for this genre (e.g., establishing credentials or introducing the offer) and others regarded as optional (e.g., offering incentives or enclosing additional documents) (Bhatia 1993: 45–49). Placing this approach in the context of the general definition of genre above, we find all the elements stipulated for genre status. We are dealing with basically standardized communication (thanks to the moves referred to above), in a recurrent situation (companies sending out such letters on numerous occasions), and the relationship between seller and potential buyer represents a specific sociocultural environment. Another interesting example of business letters still widely used today can be found within the framework of companies’ annual reports, which generally include messages from the Board or its representatives to shareholders and other stakeholders. Along the lines of the moves discussed in connection with sales letters, Nickerson and de Groot (2005) find a similar spectrum in Statements from the CEO or Chairman, with these moves including context, financial performance, operations, strategy, and credentials (Nickerson and de Groot 2005: 332–334). Other instances in which business letters would be employed on a large scale even nowadays and are (or might be) considered genres of their own include, for example, letters of recommendation (e.g., Kaplan 2010: 131), letters of complaint (e.g., Coffin, Donohue, and North 2013: 271), or cover letters (e.g., Crossley 2007: 6), to name but a few of the most important ones.

⁴ While Swales (1990) had devised the concept of non-literary genres (Cortes 2010: 15) earlier than that, he did not consider business letters a separate genre at that point (Swales 1990: 61).

The case for genre analysis in general was made above in a general setting, so the discipline's merit need not be reiterated. Within the context of this article, however, it is applied genre analysis that is of greater interest. Jørgensen (2005), for example, argues for its relevance as follows: "Applied genre analysis is a versatile approach to examining or producing professional language [...]. Applied genre analysis thus provides students of business communication with a valuable framework for translating a business strategy [...] into resultant advertising material or promotional literature" (Jørgensen 2005: 172).

3.3 Email – a genre in its own right?

Even though email has become part and parcel of communication on all levels, any consensus on whether it constitutes a genre in its own right remains surprisingly elusive. While it appears that most scholars would have no problems in agreeing with the statement that "email is a variety of asynchronous virtual communication that helps people communicate quickly and cheaply" (Yus 2011: 221), there is far less clarity on the linguistic classification of email as a medium, a genre, or possibly a hybrid form. In what may be considered the rather early days of electronic mail, Yates and Orlikowski (1992) were among the first to conduct in-depth research into its peculiarities. They focused on the distinction between medium as "physical means by which communication is created" and genre as "typified communicative actions invoked in recurrent situations". Given that email had not yet come into its own at that time, they had little choice but to conclude that electronic mail was a medium rather than a genre (Yates and Orlikowski 1992: 319).

However, the proliferation of email over the following years and decades meant that this form of communication underwent numerous, sometimes drastic changes altering, among other things, its appearance, technological delivery, and, ultimately, its significance. Thus, it is not surprising that the perception of email also changed over time. Mulholland (1999: 59), for example, following an outline of the factors establishing genre, discusses "Context for the E-Mail Genre", thus making a clear statement of her position in the ongoing debate. The same can be argued for Gimenez (2005b), who writes that during "the last ten years the language of business email communication has been researched from several perspectives, providing different views on this new emerging communication genre".

Similarly, if not as unreservedly, Yus (2011) appears to subscribe to the same view when he states – on the basis of considerations put forward by Im, Yates, and Orlikowski (2009) – that "e-mails [...] seem to fit the conceptualization of a genre" (Yus 2011: 231). He does, though, argue that the decision as to whether or not "e-mail is already a truly conventionalized genre" (Yus 2011: 231) ultimately depends on where email would be classified on the spectrum ranging from oral to written communication. The next section will look at this issue in some detail as it may be

argued that such classification is, in the end, of greater relevance than the final determination of whether email is a genre per se or not. Having said that, I would follow Koester (2010) in concluding that email itself should most likely not be considered a separate genre, and that one should rather “speak of genres of e-mail” (Koester 2010: 36).

3.4 Remediation

The phenomenon of remediation (Bolter, Grusin, and Grusin 2000: 45) – whereby one medium is incorporated into another, often more recent one – can be observed in many contexts, for example, in photographs showing paintings, or digital versions of newspapers. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that letters and electronic communication not only coexist, but are often intertwined, with the (business) letter genre as outlined above finding its way into the digital world, most prominently within websites. Bargiela-Chiappini (2005) examines remediation in a very specific setting and found, among other discoveries, what was essentially a sales promotion letter embedded in a British online bank’s website. There are, of course, a few marked differences that may obscure the letter genre at first – largely due to the technology employed (most notably the application of hyperlinks to guide the reader to other sections of the website). Yet Bargiela-Chiappini (2005: 119) still argues that “the hypertextual version of the promotional letter has been [...] shown to contain at least some of the traditional moves.” As an interesting side note to further illustrate the sometimes hybrid perception of electronic mail’s character, it may be added that many company websites use the image of an envelope to serve as an icon for customers to click on to contact the business – even by email.

4 Orality vs. literacy

In former times, the line between written and spoken communication was a clear one, with letters and face-to-face conversations clear examples of so called literacy and orality, respectively. Literacy would generally assume a spatial and/or temporal distance between sender and recipient, with communication taking on some tangible form (such as a letter). Orality, in contrast, would imply closer proximity (at least in time, if not in space) and, usually, that the message communicated be of an ephemeral nature. Ong (2012: 32), for example, described oral messages as “evanescent”, meaning that no sooner is something uttered than it essentially vanishes into thin air again.

With the advent of computer-mediated forms of communication, however, this distinction started to become less marked, to the point where there may be differing views of the nature of such communication. This led Jacobsen (1999) to propose a

new type of communication: “Like orality and literacy, *cyberdiscursivity* exhibits peculiar textual characteristics which force us to rethink how we produce rhetorical products and develop rhetorical practices” (Jacobsen 1999: 2; emphasis added). Schmitz offered another possible description of electronic communication as “*nicht gedruckte schriftliche Kommunikation*” [non-printed written communication] (Schmitz 2004: 97), an interesting linguistic construction in itself. Thus we can reasonably conclude that, rather being exclusively written or oral in nature, email communication is best seen as having some features of both type.

Starting with literacy elements, intuitively the predominant features of email communication, it is obvious that – short of using voice recognition software or similar devices – typing is required to compose a message, an aspect that is clearly a marker of written communication. The spatial/temporal distance between sender and recipient is arguably another indicator of written communication. Another is the fact that “the internet never forgets” (Molenaar 2013: 105, among many others), so that emails cannot be considered ephemeral (a point to be taken up in Section 7.2.1, in the context of legal disputes).

In favor of the oral nature of email, it may increasingly be argued that the temporal distance between sender and recipient has become smaller and smaller over time. Since, if not before, the advent of BlackBerry phones and, above all, smartphones and other handheld devices capable of internet connection, email communication has come closer and closer to being synchronous. Similarly, the ability to quote all previous mails in an email conversation – appropriately termed “embedded emails” by Gimenez (2005a: 235) – has led to a situation where following the entire thread of correspondence may feel like reading the transcript of a dialog, further underscoring the point. Still, the parties to an email “conversation” do not actually communicate in person. As a result, there is greater potential than in true oral communication for misunderstanding; positive emotions may not come across to the degree intended (neutrality effect), while negative messages may be interpreted too harshly (negativity effect) (Yus 2011: 234).

Establishing the nature of not just email but various other forms of communication is further complicate by the increasing intertextuality apparent in business communication. Accompanying a manager for a full day, Louhiala-Salminen (2002) observed that phone calls were often referenced in emails, and face-to-face communication was constantly used to discuss what had been said via other channels. Consequently, “in this type of business discourse it is the ongoing and recurring interplay between spoken and written activity that characterizes the literacy events where the business professional utilizes his literacies both in speech and writing and in the media used – including intermingled usage – to achieve his purposes” (Louhiala-Salminen 2002: 217).

This blurred delineation was borne out by a survey (Beer 2004: 59–60) investigating how users perceive the nature of email communication. The results were mixed, with just below 49% of respondents considering it “definitely written” or “rather

written” communication, and close to 39% regarding it as falling “somewhere in between” written and oral communication. Those findings corroborated a previous study by Baron (1998: 164), in which users referred to emails as “letters by phone” or “speech by other means”, trying to find terms to adequately express the hybrid nature of email communication. A very recent follow-up study⁵ conducted by the author of this article suggests that electronic mail has established itself more firmly as a written medium, with 75% considering even personal emails to be “definitely written” or “mostly written”; not surprisingly, this number is even higher for business emails at more than 87%. It might be argued that this shift in perception is partly due to the emergence of even more synchronous forms of communication such as texting and instant messaging, making email communication appear “more written” by comparison. The fact that new media tend to complement rather than fully displace existing forms has certainly also played a role.

5 Degree of formality

While most observers would agree that business letters are still – and should continue to be – governed by the traditional rules regarding such features as salutation and complimentary close, opinion on electronic mail is far more divided. The fact that it is not necessarily considered a form of written communication has a bearing on the style employed by its users. It can also be argued that the circumstances under which communication takes place dictate the degree of formality to a larger extent than the choice of medium (e.g., a conversation dealing with serious matters would tend to be rather formal irrespective of whether it is conducted by letter, email, or orally). The point was underscored by Peterson, Hohensee, and Xia (2011), who found in their study of a massive corpus of emails sent by Enron employees over the course of several years that “an email tends to be more formal if it is about business matter, it is sent to someone with a higher rank, or it contains a request” (Peterson, Hohensee, and Xia 2011: 93).

However, the general feeling is undoubtedly that business emails are becoming, or have become, less formal than their physical counterparts, whether or not this is seen as a welcome development. A limited study conducted by Mackevic and Mamin (2010), for example, suggested that the specific features of business emails “include absence of the traditional elements of a formal letter, decreasing formality throughout the messages from greeting to closing phrases, and increasing similarity to speech” (Mackevic and Mamin 2010: 75), with the last item linking back to the

⁵ The survey was conducted online and can be found at https://www.surveymonkey.com/summary/M6WYLvvySnsiKZndU9PV9rPd_2FpFW8sfd6_2F3dJLs6vAl_3D. Results are based on replies from 56 respondents.

previous discussion of orality vs. literacy. Another study found “that one-to-one emails incorporate more informal, conversational features. This relative informality is expressed most clearly in the tone set by the greetings and sign-offs and in the inclusion of more topics related to phatic rather than merely ideational, communication. This informalization is not generally reflected in the formal features of the texts (contractions, misspellings, emoticons, etc.)” (Sabater, Turney, and Fleta 2008: 85). The suggestion that misspellings, and other formal errors, do not necessarily correlate with informality brings us to another question worth investigating, that is, the relevance of language accuracy in the email age.

6 Linguistic accuracy

In fact, surprisingly little research has actually investigated the common perception that language correctness has deteriorated with the advent of electronic mail or, maybe even more importantly, the question of whether the use of “proper” language is still as relevant as it once was in business communication. Yet literature of a more general kind, such as netiquette guides and similarly prescriptive sources, continue to urge email users to adhere to adequate linguistic standards. The following examples from a broad spectrum of such sources are intended to illustrate this seemingly uphill battle.

Warner (2011), for instance, demands that a sender should “[w]ord business emails like business letters. Just because you’re writing a message over email, this doesn’t mean you should skip formalities. Address the recipient as Mr., Ms. or Mrs., and use a proper introduction and salutation. Use complete sentences, proper grammar and avoid any Internet idioms.” Similarly, Schmidt (2013) urges email users to “[u]se a spelling and grammar checker; if one is not included in the email client, write the email in a word processing application, check it, and then paste the document into the email. Use proper grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.”

In the same vein, the following guideline is the first item on a list of policies and procedures regarding the proper use of electronic communication provided by Washington State University. “Email should be used in a professional and courteous manner. Proper grammar and professional conduct are expected” (Washington State University 2009). In its advice on effective email communication with American lawyers, the School of Law of Washington University in St Louis concedes that – as discussed in Section 4 – such communication “is less formal than the traditional written variety.” But it “still requires a level of formality and professional decorum”, so that it is essential to “[p]roofread and use proper grammar” (WashULaw 2012; emphasis removed). After bemoaning that linguistic accuracy has lost ground in the digital age, Tamburrino similarly recommends that corporate training sessions on the appropriate use of media should include input on “how to go ‘Old School’ and use proper grammar in all company communications, regardless of the medium

used” (Tamburrino 2012). Finally, the need for correct language use is borne out in a different way by a job advertisement for a “customer solutions employee”⁶ which, *inter alia*, specifically requires “[s]trong written (email) communication utilizing proper grammar and punctuation”.

As for research on this issue, Beer (2004: 196–205) found that linguistically incorrect and sloppy emails will in many cases not only reflect badly on their senders but may even have a negative impact on business. Job applicants may not get invited for interview, and companies may be perceived as unreliable and unprofessional if they are found to pay insufficient attention to their email communication. In fact, almost 75% of respondents stated that careless email communication might actually impact their decision on whether or not to do business with such companies.

About a decade later, a more narrowly designed follow-up study conducted by the author (see Section 4 above) found that this proportion had gone up even further to reach 89.3%, suggesting that email has come into its own as a traditional medium. However, these numbers need to be qualified. First, sloppy or erroneous emails take on less relevance if they occur at an advanced point in a business relationship, when customers may be more forgiving (about 85% of respondents agreed with this proposition). Second, there appear to be certain industries in which errors are less tolerated than in others, predominantly those in which accuracy and diligence are considered particularly essential, for example financial services. In such industries, if customers feel that the quality of communication is bad, they may tend to believe the same of the company’s products or services. To sum up, in spite of the general perception of declining attention to language in electronic communication, it still appears safe to say that the proper use of language is certainly an asset in business, if not downright essential.

7 Pros and cons of using email in business

For centuries, most business communication was effected in the form of letters. Even in the face of their declining popularity as outlined in Section 2, business letters are still far from extinct. One of the most pragmatic reasons for letters to be used today remains their legal relevance: while electronic communication has come to be regarded as equivalent to physical mail for legal purposes in many instances, the latter is still afforded more trust when correspondence is especially sensitive.

Moreover, writing a letter may well require the sender to organize their thoughts more clearly and communicate more effectively (Beer 2004: 89), aided in part by the fact that they are not subject to the limitations of electronic mail with regard to the

⁶ (with PayPal)

richness of the medium or technological restrictions. By using a special type or shape of paper (see, for example, Blundel 1998: 24), or an envelope that piques the attention of the recipient, the letter itself may become instrumental in conveying the intended message – something that is hardly possible when resorting to email communication. Having said that, electronic mail has obviously replaced physical letters in business communication in many areas, and its most important advantages and disadvantages are outlined in the following.

7.1 Benefits of email

Clearly, email would never have attained its present position in the business world did it not have a number of advantages over letters. First and foremost, the cost factor needs to be mentioned; for any communication that does not require, for whatever reasons, a different channel, email represents by far the most economical way of transporting messages. In many cases, an individual mail will have a marginal cost – in terms of connection charges – of zero since most companies nowadays use fixed lines or broadband connections. Of course, there are other cost aspects to be taken into consideration, such as the time required to set up the necessary IT infrastructure or to compose a message, but some of these factors apply to all other forms of communication as well.

Second, email is – in principle – an unobtrusive medium, allowing recipients to check and process the mails they receive at their own discretion and to set their own pace to the extent this is acceptable in a business context. In addition, the annoying phone tag phenomenon (i.e., two people unsuccessfully trying to contact each other on the phone over some period of time) is eliminated as email communication in real-time, and is thus not dependent on both or all participants being available simultaneously (Beer 2004: 96). What is more, it has been argued that, due to its supposedly more informal and spontaneous nature, email may be apt to foster creative and out-of-the box thinking, which can prove beneficial to the company as a whole. Using emails, such ideas and suggestions can be spread across the organization more easily and quickly, allowing a larger audience to mull over the proposals and add their own input, and thus multiplying the positive effect further (Munter 2000: 24).

The benefits of email become especially obvious when we look at large companies that have operations around the globe. Not only can messages be sent without the need to take different time zones into account, but it also becomes possible to communicate with a large number of people with a minimum degree of effort. The advantages listed are partly responsible for the fact that, according to a study undertaken by Meta Group in 2003, 80% of business-technology professionals prefer email to the phone for their daily communication in business (Nowak 2003). The tendency to resort to mail appears to be especially strong for Microsoft and its customers. According to Steve Ballmer, then the company's CEO, its former Chairman Bill Gates

used to receive about four million emails per year, most of them spam, requiring virtually a full department to deal with the enormous volume. Incidentally, in his original statement Ballmer gave four million as the per-day figure, but later retracted this claim (Chaffin 2004).

7.2 Downsides of electronic communication

For all the benefits of email presented in the previous section, this medium also has potential disadvantages and pitfalls – more than might meet the eye at first sight. A simple, yet possibly quite important one is the lack of visual impact of an email compared to the physical appearance of a letter, which may carry more (psychological) weight because of the implication that the sender went to the trouble of actually sitting down to write a letter and get it mailed. In addition, the stationery used and the overall design of the letter may create a favorable impression on the recipient in times when “snail mail” has become the exception rather than the norm. Thus, the perceived informal aspect of email may render this form of communication inappropriate when it comes to highly formal affairs, such as offers and initial contact with potential customers. To some extent, this may be likened to the difference in effect of a printed book compared to an e-book – both may offer the same information, but the physical volume may well be perceived to carry more weight (literally and figuratively speaking) than its electronic counterpart.

This perception is also caused by the proliferation of spam mail, which is making it more and more difficult to distinguish serious and important messages from yet another advertisement offering the recipient anything from medical breakthrough products to incredibly low mortgage rates. Although increasingly sophisticated spam filters are put on the market, creative spammers still manage to account for a major share of incoming email communication in organizations, which may lead to a loss in productivity and create security hazards.

On another level, face-to-face communication may often be preferable to electronic communication, especially when it comes to transmitting confidential or negative information. Furthermore, oral and real-time communication allows for immediate feedback and may reduce the risk of misunderstanding as well as ambiguities that can lead to email causing undesired results; this disadvantage of email is exacerbated by the lack of the medium to convey emotions and subtleties, even though some of this deficit can be made up by the inclusion of emoticons. However, such smileys still appear to be frowned upon in business communication and are often considered unprofessional in the pertinent how-to literature (e.g., Huling 2004: 53).

Another aspect to bear in mind is the time and effort involved for the sender and, maybe more importantly, the receiver, as “e-mail differs from face-to-face encounters where everyone’s time is equally taxed [...] If you take 15 minutes to compose a message and send it to 60 people – a common situation with preset

mailing lists – you will be taxing the recipients by two to three hours, while taxing yourself by fifteen minutes” (Dertouzos 2000: 1).

In contrast to face-to-face communication in particular, electronic communication may also sometimes prove unreliable for technical reasons; breakdowns of servers, delays in the transmission of messages, and possibly even hackers infiltrating the system could all render many of the potential benefits of email useless, leaving users in situations that may range from the embarrassing to the downright helpless. Furthermore, emails are not yet fully accepted as legally binding documents (partly because of their electronic nature, which makes manipulation easier), even though they are found ever more often as incriminating evidence in lawsuits.

The basic reason for that is yet again the perceived informality of the medium. Even though this feature can prove valuable in terms of inhibited and creative thinking as mentioned above, it is this very characteristic that causes users of email to be less cautious in composing and, more importantly, sending emails than they might be other forms of communication. Emails show a tendency to contain information that is personal and/or confidential, and senders all too often overlook the fact that emails are not the ephemeral form of communication they are generally thought to be. This is a particular consideration in what has long been a fundamental element of business life, and also one in which email has moved to the forefront in recent years: litigation.

7.2.1 Email in litigation

As has been established, email is still considered by many an informal and ephemeral medium, which causes many users to continue to treat it with less than the diligence it would require. Moreover, this sort of carelessness can be found even in the highest echelons of companies. A case in point: Former Boeing CEO Harry Stonecipher used the company’s internal email system to send romantic messages to a female executive, and those mails were ultimately forwarded to the board, resulting in his dismissal (Trachtman 2005). As a result, emails have become a bonanza of information that can be used in litigation, and computer-based data nowadays often outweighs paper-based evidence; what is more, forensic improvements have made it possible to unearth information that had been thought safely deleted and erased from memory (Benson 2004: 1–3). More and more companies are finding themselves faced with court orders subpoenaing not only physical documents, such as letters and memos, but any form of electronic communication that may be found within the company; according to Gartner Group, 75% of all subpoenaed electronic evidence is found in the email system (Intellireach 2004: s.p.).

It is evident that the more electronic communication a company produces, the more likely it is to be subject to litigation; it therefore comes as no surprise that Microsoft has been involved in a number of such cases. One of the most prominent

involved an electronic memo that was uncovered in the course of an antitrust suit brought by the US Justice Department on the grounds that the company had abused its quasi-monopolistic situation in various instances. In that email, Microsoft apparently threatened to discontinue producing software for Apple if the latter did not end its official support for Netscape (Stucker 1999: 17). On another occasion, emails played a major role in proving that Microsoft had exercised illegitimate strong-arm techniques to force Apple to assist Microsoft in undermining Sun Microsystems (Trachtman 2005).

However, there are many other, less publicized cases that underscore the significance of email in court. As early as 1996, Airborne Freight Corporation, a Seattle-based company, was sued for wrongful termination by a former employee who claimed that the company had unfairly discriminated against him on the basis of his age. The employee's attorney required Airborne to produce every form of document, and this process brought to light an email that had been forwarded to the company's Human Resources Department. In it, a senior executive warned that the supervisor of the employee in question "will be calling you for your help on this one. Hopefully, we have enough data to avoid a wrongful termination." That rather blunt mail apparently tipped the case in favor of the plaintiff, and the company was ordered to pay in excess of \$3m in fines (Sunoo 1998: 38–40).

Another case along the same lines, dating from 1999, was *Linnen v. A.H. Robbins*. It involved the massively popular fen-phen drug, an anti-obesity medication shown to cause pulmonary and heart problems. On this occasion, "an employee of the pharmaceutical company asked in an email message exchanged with a colleague, 'Do I have to look forward to spending my waning years writing checks to fat people with a silly lung problem?'" (Keena 2002). Soon after this mail was discovered during the trial, the company settled with users of the drug for a record amount.

Many companies have been trying to make sure that email is not stored longer than absolutely necessary, lest incriminating evidence be dug up at a later point and cause severe harm to the company. Still, this is not the easy way out it appears to be, as destroying or hiding email can constitute a criminal offence, and being ordered by a court to restore data that may have been (partially) deleted earlier can become very costly. More and more often, courts are issuing and enforcing orders for the production of massive quantities of a vast range of electronic documents stored anywhere in the company's records. This can lead to suspension or alteration of normal operating procedures, as regular archiving routines might result in the destruction of documents the court is trying to recover; using back-up tapes, for example, may result in the deletion of requested files, which in turn may lead to sanctions or other negative consequences (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2004).

Despite all the negative examples mentioned above, it is still true that email can actually benefit a company in the course of legal disputes. According to Garry Mathiason, a prominent U.S. lawyer, email is as likely to help a company in litigation as it is to harm it. He mentions a case of mediation in which a female employee

accused a male executive of sexual harassment. When the company produced evidence of lurid and offensive mails that the plaintiff had sent to the male executive in question, the woman's claim rapidly went down from \$1 million to \$10,000 (Varchaver 2003).

What all the cases have in common is the extent of the role played by electronic communication in business disputes. As a result, companies more than ever need to make sure they have proper (and legal) email policies in place that reduce their exposure to the potentially disastrous side effects of electronic mail. Such measures are described in some detail in the following section.

7.2.2 Email management

In earlier days, the definition of corporate communication policy was a matter for HR departments and, more recently, perhaps for specialized communications departments. With litigation involving all forms of correspondence now almost routine for business organizations across the board, it has become virtually unavoidable to consult legal experts in establishing specific email policies, given the high-risk stakes of electronic communication gone wrong. The situation has been exacerbated for organizations by an ever-growing number of rules and regulations that govern all possible (and some impossible) aspects of email management, which means that the storage of huge amounts of email is an asset and a liability at the same time. In addition, government agencies must comply with additional regulations of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or the Patriot Act, to name but two (Roberto 2004).

What, then, is an email policy? In simple terms, it is a written code of conduct to which employees have to adhere in dealing with electronic mail in connection with their business organization. In order to be effective, it has to minimize, if not eliminate, any risk of misunderstanding and ambiguity, and cover issues such as the permissible use of personal emails and the length of time for which communication needs to be stored, as well as technical questions such as the choice of antivirus software (Whelan 2000: 115–130). The basic purpose of email policies is to lay the groundwork for specific email guidelines that can vary significantly among companies and, even more so, among different countries. To be more precise, such compliance measures may include the implementation of effective backup procedures, the recording of all email and attachments, fundamental archiving techniques, full search capabilities, scheduled data deletion, the preservation of regulated data, and establishment of an appropriate audit system (Chudnow 2003: 10).

While problems often occur with regard to the appropriate or inappropriate retention of email, the root of all difficulties can be found at a much earlier point, namely the actual writing of the mail. Employees need to be made aware of the fact that whatever they put in a company email can, and often will, feature as an official

company record, no matter how informal and personal the original message was supposed to be. As Henry Blodget, formerly of Merrill Lynch, puts it, “Email seems on the surface to be a remarkably cheap, convenient technology, but it can have a major hidden cost. Pressing the ‘send’ button, unfortunately, may always bear an instant resemblance to Russian roulette.” (Blodget 2005).

Some major companies have learned this lesson the hard way, in particular Merrill Lynch. In late 2002, the president and the chairman of the company sent an email with the subject “Email content training to begin in October” to its more than 50,000 employees. While this sounds routine, it was not, as in the mail Merrill Lynch was ordering all its employees to attend what might be considered re-education. “It is imperative that every employee knows how to use email effectively and appropriately [...] Email and other forms of electronic communication are like any other written communication, and are subject to subpoena,” it said in the mail; “Ask yourself: How would I feel if this message appeared on the front page of a newspaper?” Perhaps to help the Chairman answer his own question, “[s]ome thoughtful Merrill staffer, apparently, zapped the email to the Reuters news service (or to someone else who did), from which it travelled to the pages of the New York Post, the Boston Herald, and the Houston Chronicle, and to Lou Dobbs Moneyline on CNN” (Varchaver 2003).

Additional aspects that prescriptive sources say should be taken into consideration are the following.

- Do not automatically use email for your communication; in some instances, using the phone or engaging in face-to-face communication may be just as effective or even more appropriate.
- Take your time before you hit the send button – email deserves just as much attention as other forms of communication, if not more.
- Avoid misrepresentations, as it has been shown that your mail can easily end up as evidence in a lawsuit; in the same vein, be very cautious when using humor, sarcasm, and similar language.
- Be sure to mark confidential communication as such and try not to raise potential red flags to outsiders by highlighting iffy issues (Sloan 2004: 38–42).

8 Technological advances in business communication

Just as letters did with the advent of electronic mail, so email has been facing competition from more sophisticated forms of business communication, most notably texting and, more recently, instant messaging. One of the underlying reasons for this struggle is obvious. Email is a fully asynchronous medium with all the associated

disadvantages, whereas texting is less so. And instant messaging represents a real-time, synchronous form of communication offering the most instantaneous feedback of the three.

Another reason may be far simpler than that. A sizable study conducted in South Korea, arguably one of the most advanced nations with regard to telecommunication and the uptake of new technology, showed that younger users considered email a tool to be used when communicating with the older generation and simply “a lot of bother”. That suggests that texting and instant messaging may be poised, not only to complement, but eventually even to displace email as a medium of choice, even if for the moment email remains the most important medium in business communication (Fitzpatrick 2007).

Texting (often referred to as SMS in much of Europe) has been around for more than two decades now, with the first message of this kind said to have been sent in 1992 (Kelly 2012). When cellphones started to proliferate, so did the use of text messages – in the U.S. alone, about 6 billion text messages were sent per day in 2011 (O’Grady 2012). Yet that particular year apparently also marked the approximate peak of texting use, as instant messaging made a very strong entry on the telecommunication stage. Consequently, while text messaging does have its place in business communication, there is doubt as to whether it will ever gain as solid a footing as email. Kiddie (2014: 82) elaborates on this issue as follows:

SMS will continue its popularity in personal communication because it is simple, inexpensive, quirky, and ubiquitous. [...] Workplace communication, however, is not so simple. Besides the limitations of 160 character messages, workplace communicators require coordination, confirmation, and exchanges of large volumes of data. Workplace communicators need access to corporate networks to exchange documents, to access corporate calendars and employee directories, and to talk with colleagues.

Some of the disadvantages listed by Kiddie apply less strongly to instant messaging. Where email may be considered a form of communication somewhere in between face-to-face and letters, instant messaging is a “hybrid of the telephone and e-mail” (Flynn 2012: 10). “Instant messaging (IM), for example, supports synchronous feedback and text-based substitutes for nonverbal behaviors (e.g., smileys). It may thus better support the communication styles of various cultures” (Setlock, Fussell, and Neuwirth 2004: 04). This last feature may make it a more effective tool for communication across cultures by allowing the parties involved to focus on their preferred way of communicating. As a result, more and more companies are employing this form of communication, which is promoted further both by the fact that “[t]he workplace is evolving into the communication nexus, a central connection point for messages among workers” and by “the need for instantaneous communication” (Levine, Allard, and Tenopir 2013: 123). It is true that the same might be argued for workplaces in the past, but until mobile communication became commonplace, real-time interaction was possible only with those physically present.

9 Conclusion

Email is alive and well and will most likely continue to dominate the field of written business communication even in the face of newly emerging technologies. Its manifold advantages, such as simplicity, universality and lack of major constraints will ensure that “while some people don’t like using it, email is just too useful to be killed off” (Mackie 2010). Consequently, electronic mail with its many different facets will also remain an object of study for future academic research.

What may be more surprising is that traditional letters are not only still used, but appear to be experiencing a renaissance of sorts. For one, companies are realizing that customers do appreciate the occasional business letter, even if only to break out from the daily routine of dealing with one’s electronic mailbox for an ever increasing amount of time. Similarly, drafting a letter usually requires the sender to more carefully consider their message, which may in itself lead to better communication: “Text and emails are contagions for miscommunication. [...] And the speed with which we write our emails and texts certainly doesn’t help. So when clarity is key, best to resort to the old fashioned letter.” (Pfeffer 2013).

Furthermore, developments in recent years, ranging from legal discovery issues to revelations about widespread surveillance by the NSA and other organizations, have certainly led many to reconsider their use of digital communication. To quote one prominent example: In a recent TV interview, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter stated that “I have felt that my own communications are probably monitored. And when I want to communicate with a foreign leader privately, I type or write a letter myself, put it in the post office, and mail it.” (Gander 2014).

To end this article on a global note with a positive message, consider this development with regard to snail mail, viewed as a dying breed by many: According to the Universal Postal Union UPU, one of the biggest suppliers of toys worldwide, received 8 million letters in 2013, about 2 million more than in 2007. The supplier? Santa Claus and his many incarnations worldwide (“Santa to get record 8 million letters this year: UN”).

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9 Company websites

1. Introduction
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1 Introduction

The sheer range of communicative options facilitated by the internet means that websites have become very widely used commercial as well as communication tools. First and foremost, they offer functions suited as to every type of business, from manufacturers of construction materials to merry-go-round operators: introducing the company, presenting its products and services, providing contact details, offering informative customer service (usage, processing and operating instructions) and establishing feedback channels (e.g., for complaints). In essence, these functions provide information for (potential) customers and demonstrate accessibility as the basis for customer retention. Depending on formal and procedural design, the emphasis can be shifted to explicit advertising.

The second major area of website use is e-commerce. On the one hand, companies such as traditional mail order businesses transfer their catalogues to the internet (sometimes retaining printed versions) and process orders online instead of (or as well as) by telephone or post. On the other, e-commerce is also the stamping ground of numerous new businesses, many of which, unencumbered by traditional models, have emerged as pioneers in harnessing the web's potential to stimulate and support sales (e.g., by enabling customer feedback through standardised rating scales, such as the star system on Amazon). The net is also the delivery channel for digital and digitisable commodities (especially e-books, software, music and films) and all manner of bookings (e.g., tickets, hotels). For companies, the main side benefit lies in the opportunity to outsource a sizeable proportion of their business processes to consumers; in the case of e-banking, virtually all transactions can now be conducted on the internet.

Finally, there are those cases where the web has enabled certain business activities to be undertaken on a large scale or generated entirely new business models. The former include file sharing, generally accessible auction and sales sites, temporary property lettings, marketing of personal skills (e.g., taxi-driving) and raising risk capital from private individuals, mostly in small contributions (crowdfunding).

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-009

Most (exchange-based) business models developed on the internet are very heavily based on the user's attention, which is becoming a commodity in itself (see the very early theoretical analysis of this "economy of attention" in Franck 1998). In return, the user has access to web-based services such as search engines, webmail, cloud storage, messaging, social media and so on. At the same time, data is captured from user conduct or directly requested, enabling advertising to be better targeted.

Of course, other internet functions also act as business tools (e.g., research, order processes, intranet systems, internal cloud solutions and training; for webinars, see Chapter 4). However, the focus of this paper is on designing websites for external communication.

Designers utilise language in highly innovative ways. At first glance, its role might appear to be restricted by the requirement to share limited screen space with numerous visual elements, sometimes very large ones. A closer look, however, makes clear that quantitative presence is not the (only) issue. On the web, text blends with hypertext, within which the key points – the links – depend to a large extent on language (see Sections 2.3 and 3.3). Without a minimum amount of language-based elements, successful navigation is hard to imagine and difficult to implement. The key aspect here is the contribution of the site user, who must find their way through virtual material of which they have no clear overview, constructing a coherent text from their own individual steps. Nonetheless, text elements in the traditional sense remain relevant, their place in the site structure secured by their status as hypertext modules coordinating and potentially interacting with other texts and units of information. In addition, in deciding on text structure, the designer must anticipate user approaches, which may range from slow, distracted reading, through cursory skimming to "batling through" (especially on pages mainly concerned with navigation; see Storrer 2004: 215). Important in determining user behaviour is the way the communication channel "leads back" towards the site, especially when designing forms (cf. Wroblewski 2008). Thus language must operate in new ways that demand new, tailored means of observation and analysis that take account of the need to integrate text with images in what can often be a highly complex semiotic ensemble.

Despite the numerous display conventions already developed for desktop and laptop monitors, the emergence of tablets, phablets and smartphones has often meant going back to square one. Some functions (mouseover, right mouse button) are unavailable in touchscreen systems, which also require larger reactive buttons. Moreover, smaller screens invariably demand different forms of content presentation and data input. Given the desire to make transitions between devices as seamless as possible, these requirements have a feedback effect and encourage universal, device-independent solutions in the form of responsive web design: "Rather than tailoring disconnected designs to each of an ever-increasing number of web devices, we can treat them as facets of the same experience." (Marcotte 2010).

2 Mixed dialogicity

2.1 Hypertext and hypermedia

The parallel presence of different modes of representation (text, image, animation, sound, video) tends to hide the fact that web content is mainly accessed by means of a single, unified organisational principle: by triggering references (i.e. links). The trigger, at present generally a click or a tap on a reactive screen, will increasingly involve other actions such as wiping and sliding owing to the rise of (multi)touch systems (cf. Machate, Schäffler, and Ackermann 2013: 19–20). The tool required is the web browser, which also gives data a visual representation by interpreting Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) tags. Other (often highly complex) processes performed in browsers are generally based on the embedding of (mini) programs (using, for instance, JavaScript and Ajax). As a result, users have a steadily broadening range of options, from selecting menu elements to choosing perspectives or engaging in “dialogues” with virtual “assistants” or “guides” (cf. Storrer 2004: 213), together known as “interactivity”.

A second means of access is the direct input of a uniform resource locator (URL), which provides the unique address of a website. It typically comprises the transmission protocol (“http[s]”), the characters “://”, the host name (e.g., “www”) and the domain (e.g., “example.com”); these elements are followed by the rest of the file path (Gergen 2002: 367–369).

Especially in theoretical discussions, the term *hypertext principle* has been carried over from the early days of the web, when content was almost exclusively comprised of texts. In line with subsequent developments, it was augmented by that of *hypermedia*. In “hyperstructures”, content is distributed between linked modules; they are thus essentially non-linear, a characteristic that has important implications. The connections between these modules form a “network”, usually with a hierarchical structure, but which may also be more like a path or branch into individual sub-structures (cf. Storrer 2004: 221).

Seen from a linguistic perspective, hypertext is both fascinating and challenging. On the one hand, hypertext and hypermedia require a new understanding of text, which in its conventional form appears only on individual pages (and possibly in pop-ups). Even there, it must be tailored to the needs of web users (see Sections 3.5 and 3.6), whose complete, individual texts are constructed in the hypertext from the sum of the various elements they access, which may extend across several websites. This phenomenon, known as ergodicity, means that texts lose their unity and stability (cf. Marx and Weidacher 2014: 187, 191). On the other hand, in this text construction process certain criteria already identified and explored in text linguistics acquire a new importance. User behaviour is steered by a coherent “sense of purpose” which can evolve within pragmatic, hedonic or affective action frameworks (cf. Jakobs

2013: 132). Since the links contribute importantly to creating a text experience, they should be cohesively structured, or at least have the potential for cohesion.

Although the user's path can to some extent be determined by the design of links, they still have ample scope to surf in various ways. Jakobs (2003: 243), for example, distinguishes between interest-specific, task-specific and preference-specific behaviours. In their analysis of methods adopted, Canter, Rivers, and Storrs (1985) classified access behaviours into: scanning (skimming through large areas of the web), browsing (following a path to a destination), searching (for a given target), exploring (the scope of a site) and wandering (random surfing).

In the early days of the web, the focus was largely on converting conventional texts into hypertext while striving to generate “added value” relative to the latter (Storrer 2004: 208). Now that the web has become part of everyday life, printed and electronic forms of publication and communication provide alternative options with different features for different purposes. In his comparative analysis of the websites of mid-sized enterprises in Spain and Germany, Sánchez Prieto (2011: 15–16) found that the German sites displayed greater distancing from print conventions than the Spanish ones.

2.2 Communicative usability

First and foremost, the web is a technical product whose development has been and remains primarily driven by technicians (in the broadest sense). It therefore comes as no surprise that thinking about how to structure and design websites has become a distinct technical discipline known as user interface design (UID). The quality of interfaces in terms of their ease of use (in terms of ergonomics, effort required, accuracy and so on) is analysed and evaluated under the heading of usability. As regards language-related properties, qualitative requirements such as clarity, distinguishability, compactness, consistency and comprehensibility have been set (e.g., in various sections of the standard DIN EN ISO 9241). However, aside from some brief descriptions and a handful of examples, the ideas behind these keywords have yet to be operationalised (cf. Jakobs 2013: 128–130).

As sites incorporate more and more images, and more and more complex media mixtures, usability research is therefore increasingly reliant on openness to disciplines such as graphic design, cognitive science, semiotics, psychology, media sciences – and linguistics. Equally, since its “pragmatic turn” and the emergence of applied linguistics, this discipline has displayed a keen interest in technically-based communication. With regard to usability, it has contributed the concept of “communicative usability”, which emphasises communication modes, higher-level action frameworks, contextual conditions and the interplay of content, interface and support (cf. Jakobs 2013: 131–135). As a result, linguistics has been able to follow up on work in the media sciences, which were early to recognise that: “Web site design is communication

design” (van der Geest 2001). From a number of case studies, this author derived a comprehensive checklist, ranging from strategic decisions to content, interaction and production processes. The items referring to text (van der Geest 2001: 148–149) relate to general features of communication, and so retain their relevance today.

2.3 Architecture and links

Web content is mostly located “behind” the screen content actually seen by users, who also lack the tangible orientation provided by printed matter. Consequently, the way modules are divided up, arranged and linked is of paramount importance. Ideally, the user should be given an idea of a website’s structure from the moment they enter it, above all through skilful design of the homepage (see Section 3.2). Adopting a scheme devised by Blum and Bucher (1998), Storrer (2004: 218–219) defines three main approaches to modularising complex information. These are: by function (different modules achieve the same communicative goal by different means); by perspective (different modules provide different perspectives on the same object); and by topic (different modules address different sub-topics of a single topic). In structural terms, Kalbach (2008: 215–223) distinguishes between linear, net-like and (poly)hierarchical structures, as well as facets (where the position of an element is determined by the categories to which it belongs) and expanding structures.

The structuring principles applied are governed by technical developments (and by fashion). One current trend is an orientation towards the genuine and supposed needs of different user groups and roles. At a technical level, this is facilitated by “displaying” selected material from a general “stock”; in logical terms, various (partially overlapping) hypertexts are prepared in the background. In sophisticated systems that react “intelligently” to user actions, these are gradually compiled as necessary. From a user viewpoint, reception is simplified in that information irrelevant for certain roles is suppressed. Pre-modelling user identities so that every one of the legions of web site visitors can navigate successfully and also find the “right” information is not without risk and may call for target group surveys. The user perspective must also be anticipated; even choosing between such apparently distinct identities as business client or private customer can be hard in the postmodern world.

In general, paths through the hyper-levels lead through layers of increasing degree of detail (on the application of the same principle within text modules, see Section 3.5). Storrer (2004: 219–220), for example, refers to the variants as “thematic granularity” (main topic, sub-topic, side-topics), “part/whole granularity” (wholes are broken down into ever smaller parts) and “foreground/background granularity” (a topic is enriched by the addition of background information).

A site’s accessibility depends heavily on the configuration of the links it contains (to be precise, the anchors). These constitute an “*Angebot* [offering]” (Runkehl

2011: 148), or even a “promise” (Pernice 2014), and “have to convey both the motivations for users to activate them and the possible consequences” (Austaller et al. 2006: 101). Links should be self-explanatory, but in practice are often inadequate to make all potential consequences transparent. Austaller et al. (2006: 101) cite the following as some uncertainties that need to be overcome: “Navigation [...] Is the destination within the current web site or outside? [...] Download [...] Are tools (e.g., plug-ins) required to represent the document available? Process [...] Will it be possible to navigate back, or to undo the action?”

Any confusion runs contrary to the widely accepted notion that web users do not want their activities to involve much thinking (cf. Jakobs 2013: 120). Krug, who adapted this idea for the title of his best-selling book on web design (“Don’t make me think”), typifies user attitudes thus: “We don’t make optimal choices. We satisfice (satisfy+suffice, © Economist Herbert Simon)” and “We don’t figure out how things work. We muddle through.” (Krug 2014: 24–25). However, other authors suggest integrating a “desirable difficulty” in order to “use cognitive disfluency to slow the mind down” (Benartzi and Lehrer 2015: 212).

2.4 Location and orientation

For the user to form and maintain a mental picture of a site’s content, they must feel certain of their current location within the hyperstructure (the opposite of feeling “lost in cyberspace”). One way of ensuring this is to organise effectively the space to be navigated while avoiding redundancy (one example of which is the “star-shaped navigation” used in some indices, which requires the user to return to the index itself, even to call up the next or previous element). The larger the web site, the more important becomes additional help, a fundamental part of which is a constantly present display showing upcoming links and so giving the user a preview of the main surfing paths. To enable self-location and enable reverse navigation, the currently relevant section of the navigation menu should be highlighted. Additional path representations (“breadcrumbs”) are useful because clicking on their elements enables larger backward steps to key pages recently visited (cf. Austaller et al. 2006: 102–103).

Positioning within the overall structure is facilitated by a sitemap, which is an overview of the site’s hierarchical (or other) connections; again, clicking on the pages shown provides direct access. The value of sitemaps in web design is disputed. Critics regard sitemaps as unnecessary, arguing that properly thought-out links render them superfluous. Advocates view them as helpful, especially on extensive sites, because they can offer a greater depth of detail; the existence of a sitemap is also one factor in search engine optimisation (see Section 4.3, as well as Kalbach 2008: 65–66, 227–235).

By omitting the need to make choices, contents structured in pre-determined series allow the user providing cognitive recovery phases (cf. Handler 2006: 211). For certain sub-areas such as archives, chronological layering of the elements offered is the most appropriate principle of arrangement. Even in the case of modules structured according to other (e.g., thematic) principles, time stamps enable users to place elements in a timeframe (cf. Storrer 2004: 220–221).

2.5 Web addresses

A site's web address also serves a navigation purpose. Fixed by registration as a unique code, it constitutes the linguistic key to the site to be typed into the address bar of a browser. However, this is not the full story. For one thing, websites are also reached via individual links (bookmarks, advertising buttons and other web texts) and search engines. For another, web addresses are supplemented with extra functions on account of their prominent role. Web addresses have maximum effectiveness when they are easily memorised and thus ready to use at all times. They may make use of expressions already fixed in the consumer's mind such as brand, product or other names, or slogans (e.g., *coca-cola.com*, *imlovingit.com*). Alternatively, communication strategies are employed to disseminate specially designed addresses (e.g., *call.me*, which reinterprets an existing domain ending, that of Montenegro), perhaps through large-scale advertising (poster) campaigns. When advertising and language come together, rhetorical (and other similar) effects that rely on structures that are eye-catching and/or easy to grasp (*comcom.com*, *car4you.ch*, *tr.im*) are sure to follow. Ideally, several objectives are achieved at once: attention is grabbed, memorability ensured and a message conveyed. For further discussion of web addresses in business, see Handler (2011).

3 Semiotics, linguistic structures and pragmatics

3.1 Websites as semiotic ensembles

The way in which web content is presented on computer screens today is essentially the result of trial and error since the emergence of the world-wide web and the emulation of best practice (or influential bodies). This process has been constantly dependent on software and hardware developments as well as organisational decisions about how sites are designed and “filled”. Websites are an amalgamation of building blocks. On the one hand, these are functional in nature. They serve to ensure orientation and progress (system-based, e.g., navigation pages and search interfaces), the carrying out of non-linguistic activity (task-based, e.g., order forms) and interaction with other persons (interaction-based, e.g., “contact”, visitors' book).

On the other hand, the thematic components contain the content, which may consist of company/product presentations, job ads, FAQ/frequently asked questions, etc. (cf. Jakobs 2003: 237).

Content management systems (CMS) are now standard practice. Increasing division of labour and specialisation is leading to a proliferation of roles such as CMS designer, responsive web designer, screen designer, content designer, e-publishing designer and web app developer to mention only a few. This has encouraged innovation in layout and design, and in some instances a conscious attempt to design sites individually, to break away from established norms. Yet there is also evidence of consolidation and maturity in the way sites are constructed. This is supported by the fact that users are generally loath to learn new logic every time they access a new web site. Krug (2014: 21–27, 64–70) demonstrates how strongly the perception of sites is affected by their form and appearance. At significant points, users always expect to meet the same elements (identification data, navigation, search interface, etc.).

This model is characterised by the following elements and properties that basically derive from traditional modes of perception (here, of cultures that follow a left-to-right convention) and the needs of navigation. First and foremost, constantly present elements should be distinguished from those representing new content. The former tend to include, at top left, a site identifier, normally the company logo. Krug advocates, in addition, a “tagline” directly connected to this; indeed he proposes (2014: 95–98) a succinct “tagline theory”. A navigation band running across the visible area gives a thematic breakdown of the entire site and allows direct navigation to the various elements (if necessary, via pop-ups giving more detail). In the top right corner the user typically finds tools allowing them to obtain necessary information (e.g., contact details, shopping lists) or to initiate actions (e.g., searching, ordering, changing language or, if necessary, signing in). Another prominent location for ever-present material is the footer. This usually becomes visible only after downscrolling and is thus a suitable place for content or processes which, while only occasionally used, are required to make the site complete (e.g., imprint, addresses, offer of a newsletter subscription). Partial or complete sitemaps (see Section 2.4) are also positioned here (cf. Kalbach 2008: 67), increasingly alongside links to social networks.

The left-hand screen edge is suited to local navigation, that is, navigation within the current level. The central area is thus left free for the display of actual content, with its strongly eye-catching upper portion generally containing images that appeal to the users’ emotions, as well as the site name. That leaves the screen’s right-hand edge as the most popular area for advertising (which has a life of its own and may contradict the above; see Section 4.1), for up-to-the-minute news or for job advertisements.

Given that overall aesthetic impression plays an important role in a site’s semiotic macrostructure, use is made in design of a grid (cf. Santa Maria 2014: 113–

118). Of importance here are the distribution of visually powerful and lighter surfaces (or even white space), the balance between text and images, and the nature and combination of colour effects. Boucher (2013: 265, 271) provides examples of schemata for such zoning and for “wireframes” (schematic page renderings) on e-commerce sites. At the detailed level, the main objective is to present logically connected items so that they are also visually related. One way of achieving this is to call on gestalt psychology (cf. Boucher 2013: 46–53) with its principles of similarity, continuity, closure, symmetry, figure-ground and common fate (cf. Johnson 2010: 11–23).

3.2 The home page: A special case

The home page is not necessarily the page via which users enter a site: search engines and other links may take them straight to a particular (sub) page. Nonetheless, it has a special status because a start point is useful even, or especially in the context of a hyper-structure. It is therefore vital that this page can be accessed directly from every sub-page (via a “Home” button or, for instance, a constantly visible logo). Krug (2014: 86) offers an abstract model of a home page, divided up by areas and functions, which forms the basis of the following overview. Needless to say, the home page also features those elements that generally demand a permanent presence: identification details, global navigation, a search interface, registration (if applicable), footer elements and so on, and which the user must be able to locate there in the absence of such presence).

The home page stands out from the entirety of a site, and is accessed more often than its other pages; Krug terms it the “waterfront property of the Web” (2014: 87). It is hence also the location for very specific elements. Here it is possible to make explicit contact with the visitor (e.g., by means of a powerful welcome message) and to provide an overview of the site (with “teases” about its content, “[c]ontent promos” that “spotlight the newest, best, or most popular pieces of content”, and “[f]eature promos” which “invite [the user] to explore additional sections of the site or try out features”) (Krug 2014: 86).

Home pages have many other uses. Shortcuts placed there can provide the visitor with a direct path to especially important and/or high-demand content that would otherwise require several navigation steps to access. Regularly updating an area on the home page with new, topical content motivates potential visitors to return to the site more often than they otherwise would. Finally, its high visitor frequency makes this page a particularly lucrative location for advertising, especially that of a cooperative nature (cross-promotion, co-branding, etc.). More abstractly, the home page as a whole can be employed to foster credibility and trust by clarifying what the site does (and does not) contain and making it easy for visitors to identify rapidly the next steps they can take (even if these vary from one visitor to another). Furthermore, corporate marketing departments are becoming increasingly aware of

the home page's attention-grabbing value, as is apparent in the trend towards large alluring visuals. Sometimes these take the form of automatic slide shows to present the broadest possible range of images, now successively rather than alongside each other, and to encourage visitors to click on them. Elaborate navigation structures are invariably located in the lower area, with users clearly prepared to scroll there provided they have a clear overview.

Through targeted search engine optimisation (see Section 4.3), site visitors can be directed to a page which more exactly matches their search item than the home page. Similar considerations to the above apply to such "landing pages", which are designed to trigger a desired conversion activity such as purchasing, downloading, form-filling, or "clicking through" to other pages (cf. Ash 2009: 31).

3.3 Images versus words

As the carrier of visual information, the computer screen can tempt designers to make excessive use of graphic elements, in particular icons, and especially as buttons for (mostly functional) links. While icons have the advantage of utilising scarce space economically, they can also be difficult to decipher unless they are among the few genuinely established symbols, such as search, print and add to basket. This problem is exacerbated when the user is asked to select one of many icons positioned alongside or below each other as these will be perceived as tiny, barely distinguishable patterns (cf. Boucher 2013: 133).

For these reasons, it may well be advisable to use words rather than images in links. Words convey meaning directly provided they are part of the user's vocabulary. Since websites are founded on information technology, there is a risk of employing specialist technical terms that mean nothing to many visitors. However, it is possible to build on those terms familiar to any computer user. Where there are valid reasons for an extensive use of icons (e.g., shortage of space), mouseover text boxes can clarify meaning and simplify usage.

One aspect of the user interface design debate among major software suppliers, for whom graphic design contributes to product distinctiveness, also impacts on the web. This is the promotion of a minimalist, "flat" interface for links in reaction to skeuomorphic representations (i.e. simulations of reality) sometimes perceived as awkward. In this way, however, links can easily lose their "affordance", that is, their ability to make an object's purpose visible (cf. Boucher 2013: 63–69; see also Section 2.2). Links should be expressed in concise, meaningful language; metalinguistic instructions (e.g., "For xyz click here") are considered over-complicated (Redish 2012: 259–270). Lack of transparency can also be counteracted by contextualising links externally, by grouping them or adapting them to conventions (e.g., placing them at a specific location). Yet many companies deliberately reject excessively "flat" design, such as Google with its "material design".

The proliferation of images begs the question of how they should interact with text. Pictures are deployed because they can communicate in ways that are not possible with language; at the same time, words remain a key element because images cannot do everything. Ideally the two will work together, with each type of code contributing its own properties as required. Stöckl (2011: 48–49) draws a detailed comparison between the two types of sign. Here are examples from each of the four areas he analyses. First, from a semiotic viewpoint, images are iconic and thus easily perceptible, while language is arbitrary and so harder to perceive. Second, images are perceived simultaneously and holistically, language gradually and in a linear manner. Third, the semantic potential of images is vague and indeterminate, while that of language is (or at least tends to be) precise and definite. Finally, in pragmatic terms, images portray well the relative locations of objects within a space; by contrast, language can explain the logical connections between elements.

In considering the relationship between specific configurations of text and images, and its effect on perception, it is assumed that the two should be melded to form a coherent communicative act. An important indication of how this process might be modelled was provided by Barthes, who was primarily concerned with the semiotics of images themselves. He described that which is depicted as a “message without a code” (1977: 36) and, on another level, identifies connotations deriving from the wealth of cultural experience. As regards the combination with text, he addresses three basic relations: text that specifies the message of the image (“anchorage”); the reverse situation, where an image supports understanding of the text (“illustration”); and a category where both contribute in roughly equal measure to conveying a message (“relay”).

More recently, text-image research has strived to refine its analytical methodology. Bateman (2014) provides an overview of the state of the art. The list of chapter titles alone indicates the number and the diversity of approaches: “Multimodal relations modelled on account of cohesion”, “[...] modelled on grammar”, “[...] modelled on discourse semantics,” “[...] modelled on accounts of rhetoric” and “[...] based on speech acts, interaction and action” (Bateman 2014: 151–163). These approaches also reflect the fact that relations between text and (moving) images are becoming ever more complex and must be embedded in entire text-image networks. In many cases, the relation of a single text to a single image represents just one aspect of such a configuration, or is found in a conventional hypertext module. Text-image analyses work best on the basis of concrete corpora as demonstrated by (amongst others) Stöckl (2011), who combines and adapts different approaches in order to analyse the case of advertising. Clearly, it is impossible to make general statements about text-image relations in websites; here, too, closely-defined corpora give the most satisfactory results (see Section 4.1: Runkehl 2011 on banners).

3.4 Text visualisation

The aspect of written text that most immediately strikes the user and shapes his assumptions is its visual form. Adequate size and contrast with the background are essential for clear visibility. Surrounding visual noise can be confusing (cf. Johnson 2010: 41–43). For longer on-screen texts – “[t]ype to live with” (Santa Maria 2014: 62) – simple fonts have become standard. Serifs (small dashes attached to letters) can be distracting, unlike in printed media, where they aid legibility. Italics generally appear uneven when represented in pixels and are thus to be used sparingly, as is also the case in print (and for emboldening). Underlining was originally used on the web to indicate hyperlinks but this convention, being highly obtrusive, has now been largely superseded by coloured text (traditionally blue). Other secondary aids to recognition are: manageable line length, which reduces the length of lateral eye movements; left justification only because an unjustified right-hand margin makes for easier readability than the highly variable word spacing caused by full justification (cf. Crystal 2010: 203); and ample division into paragraphs, if possible with subheadings.

Such headings, as well as other short but large-font word sequences – “[t]ype for a moment” (Santa Maria 2014: 59) – may demand non-standard typographical choices. In such cases, semiotically “charged” fonts (decorative, playful, strong, minimal, etc.) may be used to convey the particular character of the content concerned. In the case of navigation categories, for the designation of which there is generally little space, neutrality and rapid perceptibility retain paramount importance. Limiting the number of fonts used (the recommended maximum is usually two) can prevent the screen becoming a typographical jumble. Another issue is the combinations used: depending on the style to be conveyed, the aim is to achieve an appropriate blend of differentiation (no fonts that are too similar) and harmony (strong complementarity). “[A] good rule of thumb is to pair a serif and a sans serif.” (Santa Maria 2014: 78). Colour, size and spacing can be employed to generate further variation within an otherwise consistent display.

As regards background coding, the current trend is towards logical renderings, such as ``, which leads the browser to apply its own highlighting mode, rather than ``, which always results in emboldening. This approach need not imply losing control over the final on-screen appearance. The preferred solutions for such instructions (e.g., the way `` should actually appear) are cascading style sheets (CSS). These enable structural logic and final appearance to be processed separately, even though they are combined in the browser.

3.5 Text composition

Most commentators agree that longer texts on websites are inadvisable (cf. Price and Price 2002: 85–95), with the exception of, for instance, online newspapers, blogs and scholarly sites. According to web specialists, text should be presented according

to the principle of progressive disclosure (i.e. progress from the general to the particular). However, this requires qualification. The principle of the inverted pyramid borrowed from journalism is by no means universal (cf. Jakobs and Lehnen 2005: 180); it may apply to news, but not to instructions.

Textuality on websites typically displays a high degree of pre-determination owing to background (software) technology. Even the earliest HTML codes (e.g., <h1> to <h6>) aimed at strong visual segmentation through (sub)titles. Yet simply “[g]oing through existing content and putting in a heading every so often does not produce good information” (Redish 2012: 168). Continued expansion and, above all, CMS systems in which key decisions on text structure are taken in advance, at system management level, have led to further widen the range of ready-made text modules. One classic example is the FAQ section; initially a straightforward list of questions and answers, this now often displays the questions only, the corresponding answers being revealed by clicking. The same principle has been transferred to the text level in the form of an “accordion”, in which, for instance, subheadings are expanded into longer texts by clicking. Another variant on text segmentation is to place some elements (e.g., supplementary information) in separate boxes. For compact content providing clarification at a specific point (e.g., in running text or on a map), layers make efficient display formats, above all because the main page remains visible (Redish 2012: 140).

Here, linguistics raises the question of text types. Regarding these as communicative devices associated with particular functions highlights their close connection with technical structure. Jakobs and Lehnen (2005: 166) stress that hypertext types tend strongly to be polythematic, that is, to combine several sub-topics under one thematically overarching roof. The result is a nested structure, in which entities can be integrated at various levels. From a general perspective, smaller units tend to form building blocks, although they can also be classified as text types. On the basis of practical knowledge, scenario-based entities such as virtual shops (cf. Handler 1998: 144–146) can achieve strong pragmatic coherence (and also create expectations about the way the site operates). Given the very different communication configurations involved, it seems sensible to draw text-type boundaries between websites, newsletters, (micro)blogs, video portals, social platforms and so on, while establishing interconnections between the types. Conversely, hybrid forms of usage may be identified within a single type, e.g., the WordPress blog service, which is also used to create websites.

One technical special case is that of pdf documents. Not in principle part of the display level of websites, these can be regarded as de facto print texts that are distributed via the internet. Redish (2012: 120–121) sees the use of pdfs as justified in situations that demand the form of a printed document but where transmission via the web is chosen for cost reasons or because access is more convenient for users (permanent retrievability, no physical effort). However, pdfs are not suitable for displaying large bundles of information, of which only specific details may interest the user. Moreover, smartphone displays are totally unsuited to pdfs.

3.6 Language properties

The ever-present danger that surfers may leave a site with a single click demands that the style be carefully chosen to offer a user-focused reading experience. Admittedly, reader-friendly writing was desirable long before the internet. It is part and parcel age-old considerations about the quality of language and communication which have crystallised in the form of prescriptive style guides, one example from the English-speaking world being “The Elements of Style” (Strunk and White 1975). Even in the new-media age its reputation as a classic has been maintained by allusions to its title, such as “The Elements of E-Mail Style” (Angell and Heslop 1994) and “The Elements of User Experience” (Garrett 2003:).

Unsurprisingly, general advice on good writing style is also applied to the web, as in these examples: “Write short, simple sentences”, “Cut unnecessary words”, “Put the action in the verb”, “Use your site visitor’s words”, “And always use plain language” and “Write in the active voice (most of the time)” (Redish 2012: 198, 224). At the same time, linguistics aims to provide research-based guidance while qualifying over-generalisations. The passive voice, for instance, is suitable for expressing negative or unwelcome messages. Compare, for example, “Supplies of part X have been discontinued” with “We are discontinuing supplies of this part” (cf. Jakobs and Lehnen 2005: 180). Where dialogicity is involved, interaction style remains relevant. Here Redish (2012: 202) recommends using the imperative, directly addressing the reader as “you” to ensure gender neutrality and referring to the company or organisation behind the site as “we”.

In view of the large number of text types, hardly any general characteristics can be identified. Attaining even such apparently obvious aims as “clarity” in practice is heavily dependent on users’ status. Whereas for a subject specialist a precise technical term will probably make the meaning clear, the layperson may be better served by paraphrasing. For interdependencies with corporate language, see Chapter 27.

3.7 Alternatives to text

As part of the intensive consideration of presentation style so fundamental to website communication, it is necessary to ask whether some types of content routinely transmitted in sentence form could be better represented on the web in another format. Lists are an obvious choice for elements in the same ontological or pragmatic category. Augmented with bullet points, these can contribute to establishing the site’s visual identity; numbered, they can highlight the order of processes and instructions. Lists require careful formatting; the spacing between elements should be greater than between the lines of a single element, while parallel syntactic patterns can assist cognitive processing.

Given the potential of tables to establish relationships, they are especially well suited to if-then structures and to providing answers to series of questions (e.g.,

in FAQ sections). Tables are also the classical location for comparative figures. On the web, they can be made especially clear by the use of background colours to emphasise their structure (e.g., two alternating colours for the rows). Their width should be limited to the screen size to avoid the need for horizontal scrolling (cf. Redish 2012: 227–251). Infographics are well-suited to illustrating pragmatic relationships and processes (see Chapter 4), while images are advisable where their strengths match communicative goals (see Section 3.3).

4 Transversal topics

4.1 Advertising

The phenomenon of advertising permeates the web at almost all levels. In general terms, it is apparent as commercial policy in the form of business models such as Google AdWords (paid advertisements on the margins of search result lists, in an almost identical design and with links). Innovative devices (e.g., fading in the address of a nearby restaurant on a geolocalised device via Google Maps) can achieve the purpose of advertising relatively easily; it suffices to display the name and address on the map (although logos, images, links to company websites, ratings and virtually any other information can also be displayed). Traditional distinctions between marketing forms are cast in doubt as they may be intermixed or just one click apart, and so truly become parts of a single hypermedia construct.

The form of advertising recognisable to website users as such – “display ads” generally consisting in graphics, mostly with a language element – may be static, animated or interactive (Janoschka 2004: 52–62). Although some such messages do not include links, most do. For links are the ideal means to exploit the hyperstructures typical of the internet and so to lead the viewer on (to a company site, to additional content on a specially designed site or directly to an order form). A distinction is drawn here between the “‘initial advertising message’ [and the] ‘linked advertising message’ [...] with additional links which lead to further internal or external target places [...], the ‘extended advertising message’” (Janoschka 2004: 50). Particular problems are posed by variants such as pop-ups and fade-ins, which are invasive and may force users into further, undesired actions. Also classifiable as invasive are graphics where a simple (and often accidental) mouseover while surfing triggers additional effects such as audio messages. Pop-ups can be blocked by special software or using browser settings. In their counter-lobbying, the web industry and operators of internet services financed by advertising argue, for example, that they are dependent on advertising revenue. Pop-up blockers that simultaneously maintain whitelists for paying companies constitute a particularly perfidious business practice.

The term “banner advertising” derives, by analogy with outdoor advertising, from the most popular form of advertising space. In the broadest sense, this kind of advertising includes variants whose names in specialist jargon reflect their shapes, such as “(standard) banner”, “tile”, “leaderboard” and “skyscraper” (Maddison Multimedia 2015). Currently, framing and layered ads are in vogue. In this chapter we do not concern ourselves with purely visual images; instead, we concentrate on the messages conveyed by language or language-image combinations.

A study of classic banner advertising by Runkehl (2011: 293–305) demonstrates that this is steadily moving closer to “traditional” configurations (with a headline, slogan and logo) as advertising space increases, partly owing to desktop’s ever-larger screens. More text is also being integrated into less space in the form of “animated advertising message[s]” (p. 174), that is, banner cycles. Temporary deictics (e.g., “now free of charge”) are another special feature; the desired rapid user response to them is also necessary because banners may change in random sequence. Moreover, text clearly predominates over images. As we are dealing with graphics, typography is not bound by the usual font requirements; re-shaping (even distorting) a font can elicit associative responses and, in interaction with text and images, create original messages (cf. Ortner 2015). In Runkehl’s corpus, these opportunities are taken up only to a limited extent. Janoschka (2004: 132–158) is especially interested in the linguistic means (e.g., questions, imperatives, personal and possessive pronouns) used to persuade users by integrating them communicatively and the role played by emotional modes of address (e.g., via trigger words or simplifications). However, involvement devices go beyond the purely linguistic and include devices such as fading in a “virtual smart agent” at strategic points in purchase decisions (cf. Veloso 2013: 182).

Given that electronic screen displays can be changed so easily, it has become popular among marketeers to integrate eye-catching corporate design components from advertisers (e.g., the colour magenta for T-Mobile) throughout a web site such as a daily newspaper. One aspect of the general trend towards personalised advertising is the introduction of procedural flexibility to websites by means of context-sensitive content advertising in the form of so-called native ads that “promote engaging content with stories users want to read without changing the form and function of a website” (Native ads 2015). The ever-expanding range of web tools offer consumers involvement, sometimes with weighty – and desired – consequences: web site visitors who accepted an offer to use an image-editing application in order to “age” their photos on the web site of a financial services provider were more likely to buy a pension-related product (cf. Benartzi and Lehrer 2015).

The extent to which differing interests compete on websites is apparent from the fact that page views, one of the metrics of online advertising, are sometimes favoured to the detriment of readability, with content divided into several modules to generate clicks. This has implications for text, which must incorporate, at critical

points, strong incentives to click ahead. Nodder (2013) has focused on devious ways “to lead [web users] into temptation” with internet advertising.

4.2 Web design for mobile devices

Since many websites are now accessed via mobile devices with relatively small screens, it is essential to tailor content to this type of reception. Initial approaches such as the creation of special “light” versions with limited content (and cross-references to the desktop version if more detailed information is required) have proven unsatisfactory. Unless adequate strategies are sought, numerous problems arise: confusingly truncated titles and texts, arbitrarily cropped photos, informative diagrams shrunk to the point of illegibility and tables reduced to a jumble.

The solution, so-called adaptive content, can also improve an existing desktop site. It is both organisationally and technically challenging, requiring as it does a powerful CMS system. Small chunks of content are arranged into a pool (e.g., title, subtitle, summary and running text, ideally segmented with subheadings), augmented by meta-information on status, and the whole assembled appropriately for the front-end device in question (cf. McGrane 2012: 47–82). Initially, content is generated in presentation-independent form; only later is it converted into text using device-specific layout information. Formatting and selections are applied to specific screen situations, as well as to services such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, search engine result lists and the like.

The ultimate goal of rendering all content suitable for mobile devices may demand the preparation of alternative versions to suit reception conditions, e.g., shorter titles with a meaning as close as possible to the original, or graphics displaying portrait format data shown in landscape format on a desktop.

Of course, smartphones and tablets also present different challenges as regards navigation. Since the home page remains extremely valuable as the first point of contact, it would be unwise to give it over entirely to navigation buttons. Where there are very clear user priorities, though, the most important buttons and fields can be positioned here (e.g., input masks for ticket bookings with Lufthansa); a second step is then needed only to access other pages. Increasingly standard use of an icon with three horizontal bars (also known as a “hamburger”) to denote navigation is helpful as it is widely used and understood. The time-consuming business of struggling through content on smaller screens (as more steps are generally needed) makes progressive disclosure a guiding principle in the packaging and distribution of content (cf. McGrane 2012: 111; see also Section 3.5). Given the responsiveness of modern smartphone displays, the elementary (and highly ergonomic) action of swiping has made even longer texts relatively easy to read – more so, in fact, than scrolling. Admittedly, it is impossible to obtain a proper overview of a longer text on a small screen, but the accordion principle can help to compensate for this.

4.3 Processing for search engines

The number of visitors to a website is a highly important measure of business success. To a considerable degree, site access is initiated through search engines (Google in particular). It is therefore critical for a site to appear as high as possible in their results lists. Only in this way do sites have a realistic chance of being accessed; more than 90% of all clicks from Google are made on sites listed on the first page of results, with those near the top claiming more than 30% (cf. Chitika Insights 2013: 5).

Amongst other things, Google's complex algorithms – the details of which remain secret – respond to links from other, ideally reputable sites (Larry Page's "PageRank" principle that made Google great), the topicality, scope and frequency of content updates, the range of media employed and, more recently, responsive web design. Henze (2013) lists more than 200 factors that can influence ranking, many language-related – as stands to reason since search queries are couched in language. Taken together, the criteria applied by Google and their weightings embody how the search engine defines relevance for its visitors – although its own interests also likely play a role. At the same time, companies are invariably keen to figure high in hit lists, and therefore make use of search engine optimization (SEO) to make their websites responsive to known and presumed factors used in search algorithms.

Strategic areas where the emphasis is on language include, for example, everything written in the HTML code <h1> to <h6>. These are the tags that create the hierarchical structure of text, from the text heading and lead paragraph to the subtitles and subheadings (up to six levels in total). The linguistic material contained in these levels – and in <title> (page title) and <meta [...] description> – is one of the preferred targets of search robots. The more clearly it expresses a site's content and its components, the more accurate the hits. The first 50 to 60 characters of <title> become the first line of entries of Google search results lists and recur in the top line of the browser frame, while the first 150 characters of <meta [...] description> provide the description that largely determines whether or not the user clicks on the result concerned.

Google is also geared towards tags, towards any language associated with images (from the file name itself to alternative text in <alt> and to captions) and towards highly expressive URLs. Effectiveness is thus enhanced by distributing keywords characteristic of the site throughout these locations. Running text must be reasonably long (at least 200 words) to ensure that search engines can comprehend content properly; responsiveness is further improved if it includes key terms (several times if possible, but not too often). From an SEO perspective, Andrieu (2014: 113–116) recommends creating a separate page for every relevant concept, with keywords placed at the locations mentioned above. In view of reports that Google algorithms increasingly incorporate semantic aspects, it also seems advisable to include a sprinkling of semantically-linked words (synonyms, hyponyms and hypernyms).

Since there are so many intricacies to be considered, SEO is becoming a specialist area and occupation in its own right. Attempts are also being made to circumvent web robots. In the internet's "Stone Age", when search engines simply counted keywords, large numbers of these would be "hidden" in sites as white text on a white background (invisible to users but identifiable by web crawlers). Such simple deceits are uncovered immediately these days; both the strategies used to fool search engines and the means of defeating them have become much more complex. Generally, it should be remembered that SEO should serve rather than undermine a site's communicative purposes. Hence McGrane's advice (2012: 118): "Write two different versions of your headline. One that's designed for human readers, who appreciate style, humor, and even the occasional pun. Write a different headline that's crammed full of SEO-friendly keywords, and let Google [...] chew it up and spit it back out." Yet a Google algorithm may already exist to deal with this approach!

4.4 Evaluation, culture(s), ethics

This section will consider – for space reasons only briefly – some important issues not yet touched on. First, testing and evaluating are essential to website implementation. Textbooks devote ample space to them (cf. Krug 2014: 110–141, 295–347), with Jakobs (2013) among others providing a linguistic perspective. Evaluation involves, once again, considering the extent to which access is ensured for users with particular needs.

As a world-wide medium, the web must also cope with the implications of cultural diversity. This can mean taking account of the culture-specific interpretation of colours, while cultural considerations must also be applied to layout, animation, sounds and image selection. Focusing on global presence requires a combination of global templates and localised provision, in which the communicative tone must correspond to the relevant languages or dialects (cf. Meidl 2014: 21–30).

Ethically speaking, it is necessary to ask "*À qui profite le clic?* [Who profits from the click?]", as do Benabou and Rochfeld (2015), who trace values created in the attention economy and suggest fairer alternatives. Pasquale (2015) issues a wake-up call with the finding that we are living in a "black box society" in which we have less and less understanding of how the mechanisms that shape our lives actually work.

5 Conclusion

This contribution has shown that the importance of language for websites is not limited to the texts they present. It also plays a decisive role in usability since – usually in concert with visual elements – it orients and guides users by labelling links. In linguistic terms, this means that investigating a site of any complexity

involves the construction, from the links followed, of an individual, ad hoc text. Good linguistic labelling of the potential paths will enable for the user a coherent text experience spanning the various hypertext levels.

Site construction has now achieved a certain maturity. Typical patterns have emerged, the conventions of which have enhanced the ease of information transfer and communication in general. A degree of order has been brought to the boundless variety of possible hyperlinkages, and means have been established of efficiently combining text with images, as well as audio and video elements.

Alongside the usual mix of code types (text, image, etc.) and functions (viewing, completing tasks/processes, interacting, etc.), the most important prospect for company websites is likely to be the establishment of a new constellation. This will involve electronic communication scenarios stemming from Web 2.0, the “read-write web”, as opposed to the “read-only web” (Jones and Hafner 2012: 42), such as social networks, (micro)blogging, participative activities and so on. Revolutions in hardware (e.g., 3D touchscreens) and software (e.g., “native apps”, which may replace websites in certain cases) will entail fresh challenges. More specialists will be needed to work in a multitude of related areas, with more and more company departments encouraged to make contributions that will feed in directly to sites. Given the resultant management and co-ordination requirements, large companies’ websites (and other associated channels of electronic communication) will become major enterprises within enterprises.

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Johannes Schnitzer

10 The annual report

1. Introduction
2. Clarification of the concept
3. Function and reception of annual reports
4. Structure and contents of annual reports
5. Layout and style of annual reports
6. Historical development of annual reports
7. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Annual reports are corporate-communications tools. This fact allows us to deduce the two main perspectives from which they are usually discussed: (applied) linguistics and communication science, on the one hand, and business administration on the other, each including various sub-disciplines and focuses (e.g., terminology research and discourse analysis, as well as accounting and public relations). However, these are not all the disciplines interested in annual reports; the variety of research approaches ranges from company law and cultural studies to graphic design, photography and IT applications. Yet, regardless of discipline, viewpoint and aims, studies of such documents unfailingly come up with two statements.

The first refers to the significance of annual reports, which – according to the unanimous opinion of all authors – exceeds that of the other types of text used in corporate communications. Some characterisations are relatively neutral, such as “key communication instrument[s]” (Garzone 2004: 314), “integral part[s] of a firm’s promotion” (Anderson and Imperia 1992: 113), some use superlatives such as “the most important external documents and the most used channels for communication between organisations and stakeholders” (Wang, Lixin, and Cao 2012: 55) or “the highest form of corporate communication” (Keller 2009: 19), and some even metaphorical expressions such as “a company’s business card” (e.g., Ditlevsen 2002: 81) or “a company’s handshake” (Leu 2010: 7).

The second recurring statement refers to the annual report’s complexity and diversity. It is seen as a “complex genre” (Ditlevsen 2010: 163), the heterogeneity of which is reflected in practically all relevant dimensions, including authorship and readership, function and content, as well as the form in which it is presented. Oddly enough, the same authors (e.g., Rudolf 2011) who emphasise the complexity of this type of text often use the term *annual report* in its most restricted, financial meaning. On closer examination, therefore, it turns out that the term is far from unambiguous.

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-010

2 Clarification of the concept

Annual report, at first sight, seems to be a semantically clear term, the meaning of which can be relatively simply described as “a report on an organisation’s activities in the course of one year”. This definition would cover annual reports of companies as well as those of public institutions, educational institutions, associations, etc. Sometimes, however, the term is used in a more restricted sense, with a strong emphasis on its financial aspect. Merriam Webster¹, for example, defines *annual report* as “a usually lengthy report issued yearly by an organization giving an account of its internal workings and especially its finances”. Moreover, the term is frequently interpreted to refer to the business sphere only, for example in Wikipedia²: “An annual report is a comprehensive report on a company’s activities throughout the preceding year”. It is this interpretation that will be adopted here, in consonance with the general theme of the Handbook.

On the other hand, it seems too restrictive to define the annual report as “an obligatory publication” (Rudolf 2011: 19) or as “a booklet published once a year, providing (legally required) information about the financial position and performance of an entity, i.e. a company” (Ditlevsen 2010: 163). First of all, not all companies are obliged to publish annual reports. The legal requirements and regulations vary between countries, and also depend on factors such as corporate structure, size and business sector, and many annual reports are published by companies not required by law to do so. In fact, the duty of public disclosure does not refer to an annual report as such, but only to certain documents usually published together with others of a non-obligatory nature. The obligatory category includes financial statements and, depending on the legal requirements and the type of company, other documents such as a corporate governance report or a sustainability report. By contrast, letters to shareholders, mission statements and presentations of corporate strategies are examples of non-obligatory documents (see Section 4).

In general, the information published goes beyond – sometimes far beyond – “the financial position and performance”, to take up Ditlevsen’s wording. Thus the annual report consists of different elements, and the obligatory and optional parts are clearly separate in many regards. This separation is sometimes reflected in terminology, as when Ritzinger (2010: 38) calls for a differentiation between “the addressees of the annual report and those of a financial statement”, reserving the term *annual report* for the non-obligatory parts only. On the other hand, Ebert (2004: 278) uses the term *annual report according to the Commercial Code*, which by definition only refers to the obligatory financial statement.

¹ [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/annual report](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/annual%20report) (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annual_report (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

Thus reports consist of various parts that differ in form and function. They are also sometimes published separately, e.g., in the form of a “manual”, “CSR report” (CSR standing for *Corporate Social Responsibility*), “group management report” or an “annual review”. Given that, it is debatable whether we can speak of one text or a single text type (or genre). Indeed, Hundt understands *annual report* only as “a summary term for a wide variety of text types” (2000: 644), which “(a) consists of numerous different types of text and (b) is very stable regarding the number and order of the individual text parts” (2000: 656). Of course, opinions may differ as to the stability of text types, and it may seem legitimate to call the annual report a “genre on the move” (Ebert 2002: 139). Yet – at least according to relevant advice literature – it represents a “complete work based on a compact script that is more than a series of individual parts and results in a coherent and conclusive overall work” (Heisters 2010: 66). Whether it is really perceived in this way remains to be seen, but as regards terminology, *annual report* has been introduced as a name for a separate genre or text type. It is therefore reasonable to regard the annual report as a text type consisting of various different sub-types that fulfil different functions individually and as a whole, and are directed at different addressees (Garzone 2004: 314; de Groot 2014: 239–241). The text parts are not (or should not be) placed next to each other without cross-reference, although some of them may gain sufficient independence to be regarded as stand-alone texts.

3 Function and reception of annual reports

From a linguistic viewpoint, i.e. seen purely as a matter of identifying the sender in the communication process, characterising the production of annual reports is simple: the company is the communicator whose name appears on the published annual report. However, seen from a business perspective, an elaborate annual report requires the co-operation of several departments in a company. Some of these (Finance, Human Resources, Production, etc.) must provide the requisite content, while others (such as those responsible for public relations, investor relations) convert this content into an annual report (cf. de Groot 2014: 242). Companies with sufficient (financial) means and interest may call in specialists (photographers, graphic designers, public-relations agencies, etc.) to assist in the process, whereas those wishing to fulfil only the minimum legal requirements will go with a minimalistic, no-frills version. This leads us to two crucial and closely-related questions. What is the purpose of producing an annual report? And what is the target audience?

The name *annual report* clearly indicates that the document concerned reports primarily on the past business year. However, this focus automatically leads to an assessment of the company’s situation at the time of production. Increasingly, annual reports are even extending their content to include a review of the company’s future prospects (see Section 6). Their informative role is clearly apparent in

the parts detailing facts and figures about the company, its production, employees and branch offices, its management, financial circumstances and so on. The information to be disclosed (in particular, financial information) is regulated by a wide range of provisions under commercial, corporate and capital-market law. Also to be taken into account are the recommendations of, and standards set by various institutions (e.g., the *Principles of Corporate Governance* of the OECD³, the *Corporate Governance Code in Germany*⁴, the *Global Reporting Initiative*⁵, etc.).

Legal provisions relating to the reporting requirement laid on annual reports, and on their financial part in particular (the so-called “annual statement”), are primarily intended to protect companies’ shareholders. Nowadays, millions of people own shares, but only a few of them are involved in managing the companies concerned. As a result, their right to information can only be guaranteed by government action, and by ensuring the information is comprehensible. That is why large, listed stock corporations have to fulfil the most far-reaching publicity requirements. It is also the reason that annual reports are aimed primarily at shareholders, even if other groups also have a statutory right to information; these include financial authorities and employees, where these enjoy the right to participate (Maul 2007: 603). Furthermore, the company itself may, in its own interest, wish to inform other stakeholders: (potential) investors, financial analysts, investment consultants, business journalists, creditors, suppliers, customers, employees, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the general public. All these groups demand precise information and/or should be able to form an impression of the enterprise, its brands and its products (Silberschmidt 2013: 55). The annual report thus has two distinct communicative functions, viz. “to give a true and fair view of the state of the company, and to provide a positive image of the company” (Ditlevsen 2012: 92). It may be that only one of these functions is fulfilled, but in most cases the two are combined. The more the latter is the case, reports lose their purely informative character and become more promotional in nature, concerned above all with building an image.

In that case, the aim is to present the company’s product portfolio, its corporate strategy, its ability to compete in a positive light. The focus is now on strengths and – albeit to a lesser extent – weaknesses, on expertise (Ebert 2004: 279), social position (Silberschmidt 2013: 53) and, most importantly, trust in the company (Keller 2009: 32–44; Malavasi 2010: 212). Yet, even as information meets promotion, the two functions may come into conflict (Ditlevsen 2006: 59). For correct information does not always help to build a positive image, and information that pleases a major shareholder may provoke unrest and fear in a general public sensitised to certain issues.

3 <http://www.oecd.org/daf/ca/oecdprinciplesofcorporategovernance.htm> (accessed 21 March 2015).

4 https://www.bundesanzeiger.de/ebanzwww/wexsservlet?session.sessionid=e5adcad5-d6913a8434090d63f6d9be14&page.navid=detailsearchlisttodetailsearchdetail&fts_search_list.selected=69319ca6eaf14e18&fts_search_list.destHistoryId=01496 (accessed 21 March 2015).

5 <https://www.globalreporting.org/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed 21 March 2015)

Figure 10.1: Bimbo – Reporte Anual⁶Figure 10.2: Bimbo – Informe Anual⁷

Fulfilling different functions for different target groups is certainly a challenge for text composers. It is made even more complicated by the fact that the intended recipients form a very heterogeneous group. Shareholders range from fund managers, who wish to check financial information (to which they presumably already have access), to small investors, who are in no real position to properly read and absorb a particular section. Investors who stay faithful to a company for years must be addressed differently from speculators whose positions may change within a few hours. The general public is, by definition, a heterogeneous group with a wide range of interests, desires and requirements. It is therefore understandable that many companies generate different annual reports for different recipients (or groups of recipients). For example, the financial authorities will be provided with a text different from that made available to the general public (see Figures 10.1 and 10.2, which show the covers of two different annual reports produced by the Mexican company Bimbo, the “*reporte anual*” for the Stock Exchange, and the “*informe anual*” for the general public).

Against this background, it is clear why much information in the annual report is repeated; for example, the most important key figures in a (very technical) annual report are condensed into a summary table of key figures for “speed readers”. For

6 http://www.bmv.com.mx/infoanua/infoanua_546144_2013_1.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

7 http://www.grupobimbo.com/assets/files/inversionistas/2013/Informe_Anual_Grupo_Bimbo_2013.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

this group, an attractive and well-structured layout that makes it easier to find the information of interest is especially important. So much becomes clear when one considers that, according to an adviser on this subject and assuming a length of 200 to 300 pages, the authors of annual reports anticipate a reading time of three minutes for “speed readers”, ten for “fast readers” and an hour for “thorough readers” (Heisters 2010: 90–91). The suspicion is “that the annual report may well be consulted, but it is hardly ever read” (Ebert 2002: 141). Hence, it exists as an elaborately designed, glossy brochure that, above a certain size, is only ever absorbed in excerpts, and selectively.

4 Structure and contents of annual reports

As we have seen, the annual report can range from a compulsory exercise required by law to an elaborate public-relations instrument. Moreover, its intended recipient groups are many and heterogeneous. Above all, companies can pursue widely differing

Geschäftsbericht der Wiener Stadtwerke 2013



Die Wiener Stadtwerke zählen mit den operativen Geschäftsfeldern Energie, Verkehr, Garagen und Bestattung und Friedhöfe zu den 23 größten Unternehmen Österreichs und erwirtschafteten im Geschäftsjahr 2013 Umsatzerlöse in der Höhe von 2.044,8 Millionen Euro. Das Gesamtergebnis ist durch notwendig gezeichnete Abschreibungen der thermischen Produktion negativ geprägt. Die Bilanzsumme des Konzerns war im Jahr 2013 mit 13,4 Mrd. Euro um knapp 100 Mio. Euro höher als im Jahr davor. Die Eigenkapitalquote des Konzerns, der zu 100 Prozent im Eigentum der Stadt Wien steht, sank leicht von 35,3 Prozent im Jahr 2012 auf 34,4 Prozent. Damit liegen die Wiener Stadtwerke im guten Branchendurchschnitt.

„Die Lage am Energiemarkt prägt die Bilanz 2013 der Wiener Stadtwerke negativ. Wir blicken nun allerdings nach zwei Bilanzstichtagen Jahren vorsichtig optimistisch in die Zukunft, weil wir viele Maßnahmen zur Effizienzsteigerung im Kerngeschäft bereits eingeleitet haben“, sagte Vorstandspräsident und Finanzvorstand Martin Krupar. Die Wiener Stadtwerke investieren in den kommenden fünf Jahren, von 2014–2018, rund vier Milliarden Euro in Wiener Infrastruktur. Im Mobilitätsbereich werden der Ausbau der U-Bahn fortgesetzt und neue Fahrzeugtypen (Busse, Ulf, Zug) angeschafft. Insgesamt investieren die Wiener Stadtwerke hier rund 1,9 Milliarden Euro. Im Energiebereich sind der Ausbau der Erneuerbaren Energien forciert und gleichzeitig die Versorgungssicherheit weiter erhöht. Investitionen von insgesamt rund 2 Milliarden Euro sind geplant. Die Wiener Stadtwerke sichern mit ihrem konsequenten Investitionsprogramm zukunftsweisende Arbeitsplätze im Großraum Wien.

16.100 MitarbeiterInnen Tag für Tag im Einsatz

Der Erfolg der Wiener Stadtwerke liegt in der Summe der Erfolge von 16.100 MitarbeiterInnen und Mitarbeiterinnen. Denn eine umfassende Versorgungssicherheit, hohe Qualitätsstandards und eine gut funktionierende Infrastruktur gibt es nur mit perfekt ausgebildeten und motivierten MitarbeiterInnen. Nicht zuletzt deshalb bilden die Wiener Stadtwerke 800 Lehrlinge in zwölf verschiedenen Lehrberufen aus und gestalten so die Zukunft des Wirtschaftsstandortes Wien ganz wesentlich mit. Davon können sich die Wienerinnen und Wiener Tag für Tag überzeugen.

Entwicklung einer zukunftsfähigen und umweltfreundlichen Mobilität

Als Wiener bedeutendster Infrastrukturdienstleister denken die Wiener Stadtwerke schon heute an die Herausforderungen der Zukunft. Im Rahmen von Projekten wie der „Mobilitätskarte“ und „Digital“ forschen die Wiener Stadtwerke mit zahlreichen Partnern an der Entwicklung einer zukunftsfähigen, umweltfreundlichen und für die BürgerInnen und Bürger attraktiven urbanen Mobilität. Ein zentrales Ziel ist es, den ausgesprochenen Bedarf für eine weiter zu verbessern und durch innovative Mobilitätsangebote zu ergänzen. Hier finden Sie mehr Informationen zur [SHSL](#) und der [StBIOStadts](#).

Figure 10.3: Wr. Stadtwerke (Vienna Public Utilities) basic version⁸




Figure 10.4: Wr. Stadtwerke (Vienna Public Utilities) elaborated version⁹

⁸ <http://www.wienerstadtwerke.at/eportal/ep/channelView.do/pageTypeId/11080/channelId/-30119> (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

⁹ http://www.wienerstadtwerke.at/media/files/2014/wiener%20stadtwerke%20gesch%C3%A4ftsbericht%202013_126301.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

objectives by publishing such documents. So it is no surprise that their structure and contents (and consequently their formal characteristics; see Section 5) are equally diverse (see Figures 10.3 and 10.4, which show a rudimentary annual report for the general public and the cover of its elaborate equivalent consisting of 84 pages).

However, if extreme cases are disregarded, the annual reports of large, listed companies – those that are predominantly dealt with in the literature and best correspond to the general notion of such publications – display a typical structure. Its essential characteristics can be described using the example of one of the world's biggest companies (in turnover terms), viz. British Petroleum (BP) (see Figure 10.5).

BP in 2013		Information about this report		
<p>Our actions continue to make BP stronger and safer. We are growing shareholder returns through operational efficiency and financial discipline. We report on our progress here.</p>  	1 Strategic report			Strategic report
	2 BP at a glance	25 Upstream		
	6 Chairman's letter	31 Downstream		
	59 Corporate governance			Corporate governance
8 Group chief executive's letter	35 Renault			
10 Our market outlook	37 Other businesses and corporate			
	115 Financial statements			Financial statements
12 Our business model	36 Gulf of Mexico oil spill			
13 Our strategy	41 Corporate responsibility			
	235 Additional disclosures			Additional disclosures
18 Our key performance indicators	49 Our management of risk			
20 Our approach to executive directors' remuneration	51 Risk factors			
	273 Shareholder information			Shareholder information
22 Group performance	56 Liquidity and capital resources			
40 Board of directors	77 Safety, ethics and environment assurance committee			
46 Executive team	79 Gulf of Mexico committee			
69 Governance overview	78 Nominations committee			
71 How the board works	80 Chairman's committee			
72 Board effectiveness	81 Directors' remuneration report			
73 Shareholder engagement	109 Regulatory information			
74 Audit committee				
116 Statement of directors' responsibilities	200 Supplementary information on oil and natural gas (unaudited)			
117 Consolidated financial statements of the BP group	224 Parent company financial statements of BP p.l.c.			
126 Notes on financial statements				
236 Selected financial information	267 Further note on certain activities			
239 Upstream analysis by region	268 Material contracts			
242 Downstream analysis by region	269 Property, plant and equipment			
245 Oil and gas disclosures for the group	268 Related party transactions			
252 Environmental expenditure	269 Exhibits			
252 Contractual obligations	269 Certain definitions			
253 Regulation of the group's business	271 Directors' report information			
257 Legal proceedings	271 Cautionary statement			
274 Called-up share capital	278 Fees and charges payable by ADSs holders			
274 Share prices and listings	279 Fees and payments made by the Depository to the issuer			
274 Dividends	279 Documents on display			
275 UK foreign exchange controls on dividends	280 Administration			
275 Shareholder taxation information	280 Annual general meeting			
277 Major shareholders				
278 Purchases of equity securities by the issuer and affiliated purchasers				
282 Cross reference to Form 20-F				

BP Annual Report and Form 20-F 2013 i

Figure 10.5: BP - Contents¹⁰

Following the cover and inside cover, the BP annual report starts with a section titled “Information about this report” (without page details). This is a type of lead paragraph which sets out the report's legal basis, explains changes to relevant

¹⁰ http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/investors/BP_Annual_Report_and_Form_20F_2013.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

regulations and gives an overview of the report's layout. Furthermore, this section provides basic information about the company (headquarters, group structure, stock market valuation, shares), as well as a list of abbreviations. The main sections of the report follow this introductory information: "Strategic report", "Corporate governance", "Financial statements", "Additional disclosures", and "Shareholder information". In the one-page section "Cross reference to form 20F", the report's contents are presented in a format specifically required for the listing of shares on US markets.

The strategic report describes the company in general, positions it in its environment and reflects the opinion of the company's management team on future developments. As reflected in the table of contents in the BP report, this section rarely consists of a single, coherent text. More usually, it is an accumulation of different subtexts ranging from a presentation of the company's activities and business areas ("BP at a glance"), to graphics showing key company figures ("Our key performance indicators") and statements regarding risk management ("Our management of risk"). Other aspects often included in this section of annual reports are: details of the company's (or group's) structure; a list of its major shareholders; the geographical distribution of its activities (production sites, sales outlets); an organigram; and a presentation of the product range.

What is striking in the example text is the relatively limited space given to corporate social responsibility and sustainability, as compared to other annual reports. This fact, surprising for an energy company, is explained by the existence of a separate "Sustainability review", which can be seen as a kind of parallel publication to the annual report in terms of its graphic design and many sections of its content. Its separate nature is explicitly emphasised ("*BP annual report and form 20-F 2013 and the BP strategic report 2013 may be downloaded from bp.com/annualreport. No material in this Sustainability Review forms any part of those documents.*" (inside cover¹¹)), whereas other companies most definitely treat this subject in the annual report itself.

Central to this narrative section is the letter from the chairman (or CEO) to the shareholders. This element has certainly attracted the most interest thus far from a linguistic perspective (Vogel 2012: 89–90). It is presumably also the most read, especially by those readers who lack the expertise required to follow other sections of the report and prefer a distilled presentation of the most important information in letter form (Garzone 2004: 321). The letter's communicative functions are broadly similar to those already identified for the annual report as a whole: to provide readers with information and to generate a positive relationship with them. Each function may be more or less explicit and emphasised, but both are always present. The main target group is the shareholders (it is not accidental that this part of the text is referred to in German as *Aktionärsbrief* [letter to the shareholders]). However,

¹¹ http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/sustainability/group-reports/BP_Sustainability_Review_2013.pdf

it is also directed at employees and customers, in other words at the company's key stakeholders (Rudolf 2011: 21). Thanks are expressed to these two groups for their commitment and trust, while the performance and positioning of the company is explained in the current business environment. Many companies also use this opportunity to highlight their social role and what they regard as their "responsible activities". Of greater interest to the shareholders and potential investors will be a summary of the most important data and results, of the company's strengths and weaknesses in the past financial year, of the management's strategy at the time of writing and an indication of the profitability of their investments (though important cultural differences have been found to exist in this regard; cf. Schnitzer 2013a).

From the company's point of view, however, the most important goals are to build trust in the firm and to give it a positive image, without raising unrealistic expectations and avoiding longer-term disappointment (Rudolf 2011: 21). If the financial year has not gone to plan, the report will (wherever possible) ascribe this to external circumstances or unexpected events, while stating that, in any case, the situation is under control. In this way, it conveys reassurance and reinforces trust (Rudolf 2011: 22). This strategy appears to work; investors seem to regard precisely the non-financial elements of the annual report, such as the Chairman's letter to the shareholders, as critical to long-term investments (Nickerson and de Groot 2005: 328). That is surprising, given that they are fully aware that, in reality, the letter comes not from the signatory but, at least in more elaborate reports, from a public relations department or agency (Reinmuth 2011: 44–45). These authors naturally draw on every rhetorical register to deliver a convincing message to readers. Again, the challenge is to reconcile different and potentially conflicting functions and requirements, and to satisfy target groups with different expectations and requirements, always without appearing formulaic (Schmidt 2008: 321). It is therefore only to be expected that letters to shareholders can vary widely from a formal perspective, as is manifest in their different lengths and internal structures (sub-headings, etc.) (Garzone 2004: 321–322).

In the BP report, the first section is followed by one on corporate-governance. It presents the board and the directors (in many annual reports this is done in the first section), describing their positions and functions along with their responsibilities, before listing their remunerations and shareholdings in the "Directors' remuneration report". The corporate-governance report is a relatively recent part of annual reports and has been incrementally introduced by listed companies in individual countries following the first edition of the OECD's guidelines (*Principles of Corporate Governance*) in 1999.

Finally, the financial statements form that part of the annual report subject worldwide to the strictest regulations. Besides long-existing national rules designed to protect ownership rights in public limited companies, there are now also international standards (*International Financial Reporting Standards* and *International Accounting Standards*). These have been compulsory for the consolidated financial

statements of listed companies in the member states of the European Union since 2005, and may be adopted by other companies. According to the *Official Journal* of the European Union, a complete set of financial statements comprises:¹²

- (a) a statement of financial position as at the end of the period;
- (b) a statement of comprehensive income for the period;
- (c) a statement of changes in equity for the period;
- (d) a statement of cash flows for the period;
- (e) notes, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information; and
- (f) a statement of financial position as at the beginning of the earliest comparative period when an entity applies an accounting policy retrospectively or makes a retrospective restatement of items in its financial statements, or when it reclassifies items in its financial statements.

The “statement of financial position” corresponds to what was previously known as the “balance sheet”. It presents the company’s total assets and the means by which these have been financed, either by its own capital (equity) or by borrowings (liabilities). The “statement of comprehensive income” is the former “income statement”, with the addition of a few new items. It shows the company’s profit or loss and the various activities from which this derived (operational activity, financial activity, extraordinary events). The “statement of changes in equity” shows how the equity has changed over the year as a result of the company’s performance, and of capital inflows or outflows. The “statement of cash flows” lists the cash flowing into and out of the company to illustrate its liquidity. What all these documents have in common is that their content and language are both highly technical in nature (Ditlevsen 2006: 63), making them largely inaccessible without specialist knowledge.

The same applies to the next section (“Notes”), which is also a compulsory part of the annual report. It is much longer than the documents mentioned thus far, which consist of relatively small tables and, if especially detailed or elaborately laid-out, may cover at most one or two A4 pages (companies have a relatively large amount of freedom in the level of detail in which such documents are set out). In fact, the harmless term *notes* usually conceals an explanation, frequently covering numerous pages, of how the figures set out in the earlier documents should be read and how they were arrived at. This section therefore includes details of assessment and calculation methods, along with breakdowns of the aggregated figures.

The fact that two different sets of “financial statements” are listed in the contents is the result of BP’s dual status as a group of companies and the parent company of that group. The first set contains the consolidated financial statements relating to the BP group in its entirety (“Consolidated financial statements of the BP

¹² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008R1274&rid=7> (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

group”). The second includes the financial statements of the parent company as a separate entity (“Parent company financial statements of BP plc”). This structure is characteristic of companies/groups of BP’s size.

A key legal element of financial statements is the “Independent auditor’s report”, in which an independent accountant reaches an opinion on whether the relevant accounting standards have been met. This, too, involves largely standardised text with formulaic expressions that exhibit little variation. However, together with the Chairman’s (or CEO’s) letter(s), it is the only text in the annual report whose author is explicitly identified.

In the section following the financial statements (“Additional disclosures”), BP provides further information on the production and financial activities of the company, which is of interest for a wide variety of reasons. A final section is explicitly tailored to the interests of shareholders (“Shareholder information”), and informs them on their rights and obligations, as well as the implementation/enforcement of these.

5 Layout and style of annual reports

The previous sections of this chapter have set out annual report’s diversity in terms of function and target audience, on the one hand, and scope, structure and content, on the other. This diversity is naturally reflected in the report’s formal aspects, in the widest possible sense. From paper quality and format, typography and imagery, to the use of rhetorical tools in the CEO’s letter, almost any formal aspect can vary with the parameters mentioned. Naturally, this primarily concerns the sections that can be laid out as companies please, but it also applies in part to the compulsory sections (primarily the financial statements), the legal provisions for which are largely formulated as recommendations or take the form of templates. As Ebert (2004: 278) observes, “in theory the annual report could even be published in handwritten form”. Not surprisingly, this extensive freedom regarding the report’s layout is used in full: examples of annual reports can be found with no visual elements or with just a few diagrams, while others – admittedly the exception – consist exclusively of visuals and not a single sentence of running text (see, for example, the annual report of the Austrian company Huber¹³). Another significant consequence of the limited standardization of annual reports is that the terminology used in these documents is much less consistent than one might expect (Schnitzer 2013b).

In striking contrast to this diversity of layout, the relevant literature laments the linguistic monotony of this type of text – one might even speak of “cloned annual reports” – broken only by companies especially creative in this area (Piwinger 2007: 456). Behind this criticism lies a simplified view derived from the conventional annual report for large international groups with a broad target group. Such documents typically display the following characteristics:

¹³ <http://www.huber-tricot.com/doc/pdf/gb2013.pdf> (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

- The scope is ample: “rarely less than 200 printed pages – in some cases significantly more” (Piwinger 2007: 458);
- The accounting section and image section are strictly separated, with the former taking up around 80 to 100 pages, while the latter is very variable in length;
- The accounting section contains little or no imagery (at most some diagrams), but consists of plentiful tables to assist the reader in visualising data and facts (Borgmann 2013: 92) and, above all, text. The language is “prosaic, even technical. It is not emotional, it explains. It underscores figures from tables and graphics” (Borgmann 2013: 92). Colour is used only to highlight individual headings, sub-headings, etc. (cf. Figure 10.6).
- The image section makes use of imagery that ranges from relatively limited to widespread (close-up images, photo galleries, elaborate graphics, etc.; cf. Figures 10.7 and 10.8). It is further characterised by the use of rhetorically elaborate language depending on the part concerned, and a lower proportion of technical language, in presenting core commercial subjects (accounting, finances), thereby enhancing readability for laypeople.

1. Significant accounting policies, adjustments, estimates and assumptions – continued

Generally, revenues from the production of oil and natural gas properties in which the group has an interest with joint operation partners are recognized on the basis of the group's working interest in those properties (the entitlement method). Differences between the production sold and the group's share of production are not significant.

Interest income is recognized as the interest accrues using the effective interest rate that is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial instrument to the net carrying amount of the financial asset.

Dividend income from investments is recognized when the shareholders' right to receive the payment is established.

Research

Research costs are expensed as incurred.

Finance costs

Finance costs directly attributable to the acquisition, construction or production of qualifying assets, which are assets that necessarily take a substantial period of time to get ready for their intended use, are added to the cost of those assets until such time as the assets are substantially ready for their intended use. All other finance costs are recognized in the income statement in the period in which they are incurred.

Impact of new International Financial Reporting Standards

Adopted for 2013

BP adopted several new and amended standards issued by the IASB with effect from 1 January 2013. Of these the following two standards have a significant effect on the group's consolidated financial statements:

IFRS 11 Joint Arrangements

In May 2011, the IASB issued IFRS 11 'Joint Arrangements', one of a suite of standards relating to interests in other entities and related disclosures. IFRS 11 establishes a principle that applies to the accounting for all joint arrangements, whether parties to the arrangement account for their underlying contractual rights and obligations relating to the joint arrangement. IFRS 11 identifies two types of joint arrangements. A 'joint venture' is a joint arrangement whereby the parties that have joint control of the arrangement have rights to the net assets of the arrangement. A 'joint operation' is a joint arrangement whereby the parties that have joint control of the arrangement have rights to the assets, and obligations for the liabilities, relating to the arrangement. Investments in joint ventures are accounted for using the equity method. Investments in joint operations are accounted for by recognizing the group's assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses relating to the joint operation.

The main impact of IFRS 11 is that certain of the group's former jointly controlled assets, which were equity accounted, now fall under the definition of a joint operation under IFRS 11. Whilst the effect of the new requirements on the group's reported income and net assets is not material, the change does impact certain of the component lines of the group's financial statements, as shown in the table below. We have derecognized approximately \$1 billion of investments and we now recognise the group's assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses relating to those arrangements. BP's share of oil and natural gas revenues associated with former jointly controlled entities that were previously equity-accounted, and are now classified as joint operations, have been reclassified from 'legally unaffiliated entities' to 'subsidiaries' in the Supplementary Information on oil and natural gas.

Adjustments to IAS 19 'Employee Benefits'

In June 2011, the IASB issued an amended version of IAS 19 'Employee Benefits', which brings in various changes relating to the recognition and measurement of post-retirement defined benefit expense and termination benefits, and to the disclosures for all employee benefits. The main impact for BP is that the expense for defined benefit pension and other post-retirement benefit plans now includes a net interest income or expense, which is calculated by taking the discount rate used for measuring the obligation and applying that to the net defined benefit asset or liability. This means that the expected return on assets credited to profit or loss (previously calculated based on the expected long-term return on particular assets) is now based on a lower corporate bond rate, the same rate that is used to discount the pension liability. The impact was to decrease profit before tax by \$1,001 million in the year ended 31 December 2013 (\$122.8 million, 2011 \$659 million) with after-comparative income being increased by the same amount. There was no impact on the balance sheet at 31 December or on cash flow.

Adjustments made to certain selected financial statement line items

The following table sets out the adjustments made to certain selected financial statement line items of the previously reported comparative amounts as a result of the adoption of the amended IAS 19 'Employee Benefits' and the new standard IFRS 11 'Joint Arrangements'.

Selected line only	2013				2012			
	As reported	IAS 11	IAS 19	As restated	As reported	IAS 11	IAS 19	As restated
Income statement								
Earnings from joint ventures – after interest and tax	768	1840	–	760	1,708	(603)	–	767
Net finance income (expense) relating to pensions and other post-retirement benefits	201	50	(783)	966	283	40	(850)	(500)
Profit for the year	11,816	22	(287)	11,251	26,097	2	(640)	25,609
Earnings per share – cents								
Profit for the year attributable to BP shareholders								
Basic	60.96	0.12	(2.06)	67.80	136.00	0.01	(2.80)	133.36
Diluted	50.42	0.11	(2.06)	57.30	124.29	0.01	(2.80)	121.44
Balance sheet								
Property, plant and equipment	120,618	–	–	120,391	119,214	–	–	120,031
Intangible intangibles	24,041	591	–	24,632	21,732	501	–	21,692
Investments in joint ventures	16,734	–	–	16,814	16,816	–	–	16,809
NET ASSETS	119,622	1,582	–	119,817	112,762	502	–	112,260
Cash flow statement								
Profit (loss) before taxation	18,026	86	(783)	18,111	38,816	81	(850)	38,756
Net cash provided by operating activities	20,287	82	–	20,479	22,196	86	–	22,218
Net cash used in investing activities	(12,063)	(113)	–	(12,076)	(26,833)	(120)	–	(26,793)
Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	8,224	(27)	–	8,403	11,669	(124)	–	11,545

1 Balance sheet amounts presented as at 31 January 2013.

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Figure 10.6: BP – Accounting section¹⁴

14 http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/investors/BP_Annual_Report_and_Form_20F_2013.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

Our business model

We aim to create shareholder value across the hydrocarbon value chain.



T Toledo refinery in Ohio has been in constant operation since 1939. The facility has the capacity to process up to 180,000 barrels of crude per day.

R The redevelopment project at Vahhal was one of BP's most complex field expansion developments and gives the field a further 40-year design life.

A rising global population and increasing levels of prosperity are set to create growing demand for energy for years to come. We can help to meet that demand by producing oil and gas safely and reliably.

We believe that the best way to achieve sustainable success as a group is to act in the long-term interests of our shareholders, our partners and society. We aim to create value for our investors and benefits for the communities and societies in which we operate, with the responsible supply of energy playing a vital role in economic development.

Every stage of the hydrocarbon value chain offers opportunities for us to create value – both through the successful execution of activities that are core to our industry, and through the application of our own distinctive strengths and capabilities in performing those activities. In renewable energy our focus is on integrating biofuels into the hydrocarbon value chain, and on wind operations in the US.

Our approach spans everything from exploration to marketing. Integration across the group allows us to share functional excellence more efficiently across areas such as safety and operational risk, environmental and social practices, procurement, technology and treasury management.

A relentless focus on safety remains the top priority for everyone at BP. Rigorous management of risk helps to protect the people at the front line, the places in which we operate and the value we create. We understand that operating in politically complex regions and technically demanding geographies requires particular sensitivity to local environments.

Our businesses
For more information on our upstream, downstream and alternative energy businesses, see pages 35, 31 and 37 respectively.

Our business model

<p>Finding oil and gas</p> <p>First, we secure the rights to explore for oil and gas. Through our exploration activities we are able to renew our portfolio, discover new resources and replenish our development options.</p>	<p>Developing and extracting</p> <p>When we find hydrocarbon resources, we create value by seeking to progress them into proved reserves or by deciding if they do not fit with our strategy. If we believe developing and producing the reserves will be advantageous for BP, we produce the oil and gas, then sell it to the market or distribute it to our downstream facilities.</p>	<p>Transporting and trading</p> <p>We move oil and gas through pipelines and by ship, truck and train. Using our trading and supply skills and knowledge, we buy and sell at each stage in the value chain. Our presence across major trading hubs gives us a good understanding of regional and international markets and allows us to create value through entrepreneurial trading.</p>	<p>Manufacturing and marketing</p> <p>Using our technology and expertise, we manufacture fuels and products, creating value by seeking to operate a high quality portfolio of well-located assets safely, reliably and efficiently. We market our products to consumers and other end users and add value through the strength of our brands.</p>
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Our illustrated business model see page 2

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Figure 10.7: BP Image section¹⁵

The image section offers a company the best opportunities to present itself as attractive but at the same time reputable, while communicating the business’s corporate identity and giving it character. The generally very dry explanatory language employed in the financial reporting sections is ill-suited to attaining this goal since there “it is not a question of creativity but of legally correct presentation” (Borgmann 2013: 92). The financial data and key figures that are suitable for PR purposes are normally anticipated in the first section in a type of summary (under the heading “Group performance” in the BP report used here as an example; see Figure 10.5).

That apart, the typical bipartition of annual reports is further softened by the need for them to appear as coherent and consistent wholes – from the design of the cover to the last page. To that end, many annual reports attempt to tell a type

¹⁵ http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/investors/BP_Annual_Report_and_Form_20F_2013.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

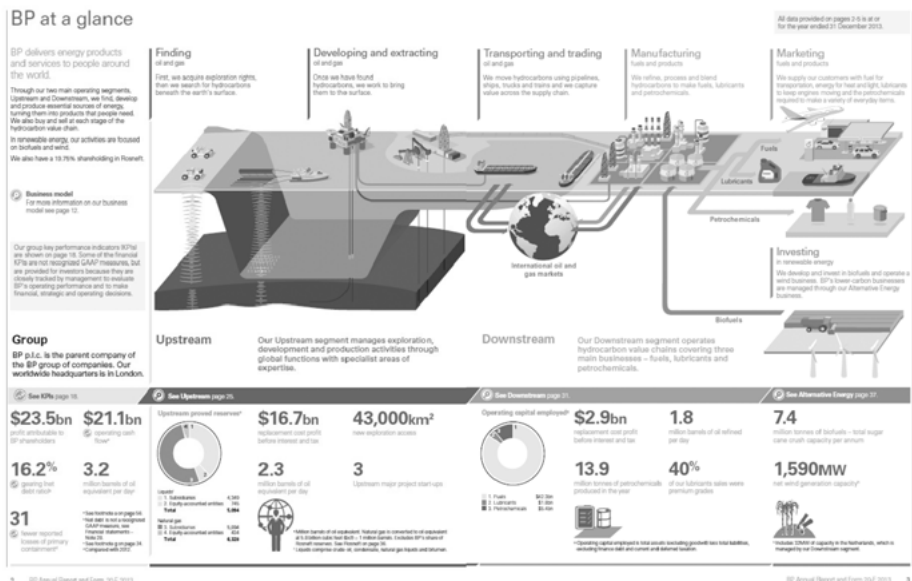


Figure 10.8: BP image section with elaborate graphic layout¹⁶

of story (de Groot 2014: 241–245), and/or they begin with a slogan that is then repeated in the course of the document, both in the text sections and in the imagery. Our example company has been using the slogan “Building a stronger, safer BP” since 2011 (see Figure 10.9) for its annual reports; the use of section headings such as “Our management of risks” or “Risk factors” over the same period is certainly no coincidence. This illustrates how the company has responded to the serious accident of Deepwater Horizon in 2010 (an oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico that sank following a fire, causing the worst oil spillage in the world to date). Hence, the company has had to address a catastrophe within the reporting period, and has, of course, also reconciled the image instruments with the financial data. In this sense, the finance section becomes evidence for the message formulated in the image section: the notion of the “dramatisation of the annual report” (Heisters 2010: 82) is indeed highly appropriate for elaborate reports such as BP’s.

As far as the style of annual reports is concerned, it is striking that neither the business administration nor the relevant advice literature has much to say on the subject. General text layout and visualisation appear to be the focus, while language

¹⁶ http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/investors/BP_Annual_Report_and_Form_20F_2013.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

Annual Report and
Form 20-F 2013

bp.com/annualreport



Figure 10.9: BP Annual Report – cover¹⁷

tips are often formulaic (“Try personal pronouns”; “Omit superfluous words”).¹⁸ Yet interested parties from the world of public relations often complain about the poor linguistic quality of annual reports (“Why is annual report language so bad?”¹⁹), and similar criticism is also found in scholarly publications (Ebert 2002: 145–146; Piwinger 2007: 459).

Researchers are confronted with several problems in considering annual reports’ linguistic features. Firstly, as we have seen above, this is a type of text that consists of multiple, sometimes very different subtexts. For example, in the majority of cases there are virtually no common linguistic denominators between the Chairman’s letter, with its rhetorically elaborate style, and the table-form cash-flow statement in the same annual report (apart from the fact that they are written in the same language). Accordingly, deeper language-oriented studies of the annual report tend to concentrate on particular sections (Breeze 2013: 86). The Chairman’s letter seems to be a preferred object of study, whereas the notes section has yet to undergo closer

¹⁷ http://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/pdf/investors/BP_Annual_Report_and_Form_20F_2013.pdf (accessed 17 Sept 2014).

¹⁸ <http://www.sec.gov/pdf/handbook.pdf> (accessed 21 March 2015).

examination from a linguistic perspective. A second problem, of course, is constituted by the language- and culture-specific character of many observations (Garzone 2004; Bolten 2007: 83–92; Conaway and Wardrope 2010). In fact, the majority of empirical studies relate to individual languages and specific linguistic aspects (cf. Garzone’s 2006 “The use of discursive features expressing causal relations in annual company reports”). Finally, many studies focus on specific types of company (cf., for example, the work of Malavasi 2006 and 2010 on the annual reports of banks). It is therefore unsurprising that efforts to characterise the language of annual reports have so far produced few concrete results:

Studies of verbal themes have shown, for example, that annual report texts include information on finance, management, CSR or marketing and expectations of future results [...] Several studies have also pointed out how the structuring of annual report texts help to build writer-reader relationships [...] and influences their readability level [...] From a stylistic perspective, moreover, lexico-grammatical research has exposed the use of informative as well as persuasive language [...] and the formulation of biased cause-effect relationships in annual report texts [...] (de Groot 2014: 244).

Findings of this type are hardly surprising and can be derived directly from the objectives of the type of text.

Few empirical studies relate to the language in the annual report as a whole or point out differences between the individual sections. Wang, Lixin, and Cao (2012) attempt to do so for the lexical area and generate some interesting insights, relating mainly to the following:

- Lexical richness vs. monotony: the Chairman’s letter and the CSR report are the richest parts lexically, while the auditor’s report demonstrates the least lexical variation;
- Word lengths: here the auditor’s report displays the highest average value, followed by the CSR report, a result of the high degree of formality typical of these text sections;
- Keywords, i.e. words characterised by an above-average incidence in relation to the British National Corpus: annual reports contain an unusually high percentage of words from the financial domain;
- First-person pronouns: these are significantly more common in the Chairman’s letter, where they are used “to create affinity, build corporate image and resonate the reader” (p. 68). Furthermore, the pronoun *our* figures strongly in the general overview and analysis of the business situation, but it is hardly ever found in the corporate-governance report or the financial statements, which strive to appear as objective information;
- Fuzzy words/hedges: frequently found in the Chairman’s letter and in the business overview, these “make expressions more flexible, efficient and avoid risks” (p. 68); abundant use is made of the quantifier *many*;
- Evaluative words: words used generally have positive rather than negative connotations, in order to leave the reader with a positive image.

The characteristics listed here are taken from a single study, but they largely coincide with those that have been highlighted in compilations by other authors (Breeze 2013: 91–105; Leibbrand 2015). Naturally, differences can be found in the details, and statements are not always directly comparable since different aspects have been targeted, although generally a “positive framing” (Breeze 2013: 105) of the company performance prevails, even in the legally compulsory sections of the annual report (Rutherford 2005). However, factors such as the business sector, the results achieved or exceptional events (such as the Deepwater Horizon accident) affect the linguistic means used to “frame”, with regard to both word selection and syntax (e.g., the more frequent use of passive constructions in times of crisis; cf. Thomas 1997), and so contribute to the complex and dynamic linguistic character of this text type.

Just as much diversity as in the text sections can be found in the imagery and graphical representations. It can be assumed that the former serve essentially to “address the reader on the emotional level, in order to counteract a dry reporting style” (Neubner 2008: 3), whereas in the graphs and other figures “facts are coded into a graphical system and hence the complexity is reduced” (Neubner 2008: 33). This does not mean that images are used purely as a kind of aesthetic accessory, completely detached from the rest of the content, but that verbal, graphical and image content are usually inter-related and mutually enhancing. Accordingly, best-practice literature suggests that the images in an annual report should be selected in such a way that they “form a common theme through the report and hence tell a story that helps bring the company to life” (Kuhn 2003: 237). Likewise, improving a report’s readability by means of graphical representations should not be seen as a neutral process. Essentially, easier readability is desired only if “the curves are constantly pointing upwards” (Kuhn 2003: 237) or, at least, a positive tendency can be surmised. Graphics offer sufficient opportunities (changing the period included, scaling of axes, etc.) for manipulation. Similarly, images are often idealised representations of corporate reality, “eliminating reference to less positive realities of the business world, such as the dangers and pressure to workers and injuries to the environment that business and industry create” (David 2001: 198). Witness the two images in Figure 10.9, which convey an impression of strength, security and even satisfaction, rather than that of a workplace which constitutes a danger to both workers and the environment.

6 Historical development of annual reports

Among other things, annual reports have been referred to as “tree rings in the life of a company” (Piwinger 2007: 456), in the sense that the company’s development is documented in its successive reports. Not only that: they also react to commercial and technological changes of every kind – probably more directly and rapidly than many other genres. Thus a change in accounting standards will be applied in the

subsequent annual report, and a commercially controversial subject has to be addressed relatively quickly insofar as it affects the company (like the Deepwater Horizon accident mentioned above). Hence, it is understandable that a type of text that *a priori* should strive for continuity in order to build trust has nevertheless undergone enormous changes. The majority of studies on this topic focus on the last 40 to 50 years; those that go further back, such as the studies by Ditlevsen (2002, 2012), are exceptions. If one examines annual reports from this period, three things stand out immediately: the rapid increase in scope and in the number of text sections, the increasing importance of image and typographical components, and the emergence of new channels of publication and distribution. It is hard to quantify these developments. Indeed, the literature provides highly divergent values depending on the period analysed and on the company, or at least the business sector. However, just to give an idea: Ditlevsen's study about a Danish company starts with an annual report from 1935 consisting of 12 pages, eight sections of text and one visual element, and ends in 2007/2008 with an annual report of 128 pages, 36 text sections and 123 visual elements.

The reasons for this trend are multifaceted and to some extent overlap. It is clear that the legal and social requirements concerning the structure of annual reports have become stricter over time. This applies both to the financial statements and to other sections, whether legally prescribed or not. Corporate governance and sustainability are merely the two most obvious examples of topics added recently to annual reports. This expansionary tendency will certainly be reinforced in times of financial crisis and increasing investor protection, as well as by internationally applicable prescriptions. Similar expansion has been experienced by the purely graphical layout and, to an even greater extent, by the image section.

Many authors see sufficient justification for this development in the fact that the annual report has turned more and more "from a retrospective log into a future-orientated instrument for marketing shares and for identity or image management" (Ebert 2004: 280). More widespread shareholding and the increasing internationalisation of financial markets have meant "that the target groups of corporate communication in the area of investor relations have become more and more heterogeneous" (Schmidt 2008: 317) and that competition between companies for investors' patronage has certainly also risen. With ever more elaborate layouts requiring the services of specialist agencies (Stanton and Stanton 2002: 479–480) and with versions in multiple languages (at least in the case of non-English-speaking companies), businesses are attempting to reach an ever more varied and international readership.

Of course, the relative decrease in the importance of the actual reporting function is also associated with the fact that, by the time of publication, the annual report is of virtually no news value to many recipients (Ebert 2002: 143). Relevant figures, especially those needed by short-term investors, are communicated significantly more quickly, normally on a quarterly cycle or even faster. This has been made possible by the use of technologies that have also fundamentally changed

the way annual reports are published – and will continue to change it. Annual reports are still published in printed form, but the text is available as a PDF document on the home pages of every major company and, increasingly, in an HTML version. Hence the prerequisites have been met for a layout that exploits the Internet's potential: future developments will surely tend towards an animated, interactive format (Piwinger 2007: 463).

7 Conclusion

After an introduction dealing with conceptual issues, this contribution has concentrated on the function, structure, content, layout and history of the annual report as a medium of external business communication. I have used the 2013 annual report of British Petroleum as an example of the genre, but the discussion should have made clear that annual reports display enormous variety. Our description would certainly have been different if, instead of a European multinational petroleum company, we had chosen a smaller company from a different sector or from a non-European country with minimal legal disclosure requirements. In such cases, some of the textual functions described here would have featured more prominently while others faded into the background, with concomitant changes at the concrete textual level. Indeed, the annual report turns out to be not only a complex, but also a heterogeneous genre, which continues to combine highly specialized terminology with the most banal propaganda, complex semiotic devices with simple prose, and the use of the newest media with traditional forms of publication.

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III Foreign languages and culture

Renate Rathmayr

11 Intercultural business communication: A linguistic approach

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1 Introduction

In the age of globalisation, intercultural (business) communication is everyday practice. This situation, in theory, requires the command of more and more languages, though in practice English functions as a modern lingua franca. For example, after being created by international mergers, two multinational companies from Scandinavia chose English as their working language and used it as a lingua franca. However, the employees interviewed by researchers indicated that, although the use of English had increased, the proportion of mother tongue communication still amounted to nearly 80% on average (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta 2005: 406; also see the overview of company studies in Scandinavia in Charles 2007). At least as important as language, and inextricably linked to it, is culture.

The challenge that intercultural (business) communication presents to researchers is to reduce cultural complexity to an extent that will not unduly reduce cultural specificity, but still avoid the consolidation of stereotypes. In research, the terms *intercultural* and *cross-cultural* are typically used as synonyms, but occasionally with different meanings: while the latter contrasts the communicative practices of distinct cultural groups, the former focuses on interaction between two distinct cultural groups (Piller 2009: 318; Holmes 2012: 206; Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 2003). The problem is that either the subject area chosen is too narrow, so that one gets lost in individual episodes and individual cases (micro-analytical approaches of ethno-methodological research), or one works with dimensions which are too broad and externally determined, which can lead to stereotyping and overgeneralisation (Bolten 2007: 106–107).

Culture manifests itself in various types of implicit and explicit principles and is associated with social groups, but no two members of one culture exhibit the exact same cultural characteristics. Behaviour and its interpretation are acquired and/or

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-011

established, and also influenced, by interaction with others (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009: 15). The intercultural psychologist Alexander Thomas defines culture as an orientation system which consists of specific symbols (e.g., language, gesture, facial expression and other non-verbal signals and behavioural patterns) and which influences thinking, values and actions in a society (Thomas 1996: 112). However, there is no general definition of culture. For the purposes of this article, I will use a concept of culture developed in order to describe the role of linguistics in intercultural business communication. On this view, culture is to be understood as the mutual influence of social practices in a society, and of the ideologies or mentalities prevalent in that same society, this influence taking the form of mediation through discourses and through the conventions which apply to them. “Communicational and interaction conventions, discursive conventions, i.e. the usual ways of talking about something are linked with other practices in a mutual relationship with prevailing ideologies. Imagine the sets of ideologies and social practices constantly influencing each other, always through language, thus creating, maintaining and/or changing dominant speech conventions” (Klingseis, Rathmayr, and Schmid 1997: 209). This definition incorporates the notions of dynamics, constant change, and power (to influence discourses).

Linguistic interaction plays a major role here, being determined by cultural factors as well as establishing them. Culture is reflected in communication; without considering cultural factors it would not be possible to communicate successfully. A shared cultural background tends to facilitate communication: different cultural backgrounds complicate it (cf. Rathmayr 2008a). It has long been known that the majority of top managers’ work consists of communication, whether intracultural or intercultural; as early as 1973 Mintzberg established that spoken communication alone took up 50–90% of working hours (Mintzberg 1973: 38–39). Consequently, internal and external business communication has increasingly become the focus of business research since at least the 1990s. For Riel and Fombrun (2007: 1), “[c]ommunication is the lifeblood of all organisations: it is the medium through which companies large and small access the vital resources they need in order to operate.”

What is more, against the background of mergers, purchases or sales of companies in whole or in part, and other forms of restructuring, intercultural (business) communication is increasingly gaining in importance in the view of top management practitioners. Communication’s “task is to lead the employee into the new corporate world, to get him to participate and to enable him mentally to assume his new role there. Intercultural (business) communication is therefore explicitly invited to contribute to the successful implementation of planned changes and to the achievement of business objectives” (Schick 2007: 1). At the beginning of the 21st century – if not earlier – competence in this area, both in companies and in academic curricula, has emerged as a key skill for entry into the job market (Busch 2013: 8). Even politics has become aware of this topic. For instance, 2008 was declared the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue by the EU and the International Year of Languages by UNESCO.

Nonetheless, despite the recognised significance of intercultural communication, it is far from clear how linguistics should best approach it. Intercultural (business) communication tends to be superficially understood, not as a linguistic or communicational problem, but as a psychological one, with support for business people consisting mainly of intercultural studies and training run by psychologists, sociologists or economists. According to Hofstede and Hofstede, the knowledge of the “software of the mind” (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005) shared by members of a culture should serve as an instruction manual to facilitate intercultural interaction. It is exactly such categories and recommendations elaborated by psychologists or business people themselves which are popular in business communication and in educational programs at business schools and which, in the form not only of advice literature but also of intercultural training programmes, have gained currency. In contrast, linguistically-orientated approaches are less common or not evident at all. Interestingly, linguistics has also played hardly any role in intercultural learning, a situation which Dervin and Liddicoat (2013) want to rectify.

In what follows, the most well-known, non-linguistic approaches will first be presented in brief (Section 2). Section 3 describes major trends in linguistic approaches to intercultural (business) communication and, by way of conclusion, identifies unresolved issues, such as that of the intercultural differences in conversational maxims (Grice 1975). On the other hand, Sections 4 and 5 are more prescriptive in nature. In Section 4 the aim is to demonstrate the merits of the linguistic approach, which starts from the assumption that intercultural (business) communication is a special case of communication rather than something completely different. The focus of the section, therefore, is on fundamental knowledge about the functioning of communication. Pertinent subjects include speaking and understanding, verbal and non-verbal communication, explicit and implicit elements of communication, and the relationship level. Section 5 presents three verbal strategies which are especially useful in intercultural (business) communication whatever the language involved. Finally, the reader will find an overall conclusion and a look to the future.

2 Non-linguistic approaches and intercultural training

2.1 Psychological and sociological approaches

A focus on cultural differences and a strong focus on misunderstandings in communication are fundamental to the broad approaches to be presented here. This direction in intercultural (business) communication research regards the nation as the locus of cultural difference and counts as its main representative the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede (Hofstede 2001; Hofstede and Hofstede 2005), who famously defined five dimensions of culture: power distance, individualism,

masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation vs. pragmatism. These dimensions represent statistically-determined categories that enable national cultures to be compared. Latterly, Hofstede added a sixth category, namely “indulgence”: “Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun” (Hofstede 2011: 15). A high degree of indulgence is supposedly typical of South and North America, Western Europe and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas a lower degree of indulgence, or in other words a higher degree of restraint, is apparently characteristic for Eastern Europe, Asia and the Muslim world. Mediterranean Europe occupies a middle position on this dimension.

Another set of cultural dimensions have also found their way into management training practice, the one developed by the Dutch specialist in intercultural management Fons Trompenaars. He and his team have questioned over 30,000 participants in management seminars and built up a corpus of 80,000 cases (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 2012: 366): Using this, they have compared over 100 nations and countries with one another and identified the following seven dimensions:

- Universalism vs. particularism: the relative significance of rules and relationships;
- Individualism vs. communitarianism: the significance of group integration and affiliation;
- Neutral vs. affective: the extent to which emotions can be displayed publicly or have to be suppressed;
- Specific vs. diffuse: the extent to which responsibility is assigned individually or collectively, and to which work and private life are kept separate from each other;
- Achievement vs. ascription: the question of whether status is inherent in some way or has to be earned;
- Sequential time vs. synchronous time: whether the culture prefers to complete tasks simultaneously or consecutively, according to a strict plan;
- Internal vs. external control: the question of whether individuals control their environment (focus on one’s self, the group, the organisation) or are controlled by it and required to adapt to it.

The GLOBE study (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program) is to date the largest research project to compare cultures in the field of intercultural management, focusing mainly on leadership behaviour. It questioned 17,000 managers in 951 organisations and 62 societies worldwide over a period of ten years. The qualitative data was supplemented by interviews, focus groups and print media analyses. As a result, nine cultural attributes and six major global leader behaviours were determined, which, in the form of quantified cultural dimensions, are designed to represent preferred leadership behaviour in the cultures studied. The nine main dimensions are: future orientation, gender egalitarianism,

assertiveness, humane orientation, in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, performance orientation, power concentration vs. decentralisation, and uncertainty avoidance (House 2004: 3).

Also used to educate managers is the cultural-standard approach of intercultural psychologist Alexander Thomas. He describes cultural standards as “all types of perception, thinking, evaluation and action [...], which are seen as normal, self-evident, typical and obligatory by the majority of members of a specific culture for themselves personally and others” (Thomas 1996: 112). In contrast to cultural dimensions, these central features are not invariant categories stretching across all cultures; instead, they are ascertained qualitatively by comparing a maximum of three cultures. They describe culturally specific factors which influence human activity, e.g., in comparing the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany, personal reference / factual reference, structures / love of improvisation, consecutivity / simultaneity, rule orientation / rule relativisation, etc. (cf. Fink, Novy, and Schroll-Machl 2001: 146–153).

In those approaches which compare cultures, affiliation to a specific nation is conceived of as a stable attribute of a person. Given the mobility that now characterises the business world in particular, this is problematic and has given rise to criticism (e.g., Sackmann and Phillips 2004: 384; Shi and Wang 2011: 96). Moreover, many studies of cross-cultural management research equate culture boundaries with state borders. This too has its problems because, as already mentioned, no two members of a social group are culturally the same and communication is also dependent on context. Here the cohesion approach of Klaus P. Hansen can be useful. It assumes that cultures exist within human collectives (be they national states, companies, or even clubs) at numerous different levels which may overlap but also be mutually contradictory. Individuals within a group have room to combine elements of different cultural frameworks (Hansen 2011: 153–155). Thus, within national cultures and beyond them, divergent cultural characteristics may be accepted, depending on affiliation to other collectives or groups (geographical, ethical, occupational, age-related, etc.); commonality results from the limits placed on the degree of divergence accepted (cf. Rathje 2006: 15). Consequently, it is crucial to specify the context in which cultures under consideration have been or are being studied. The concept of Third-Culture Kids, for example, acknowledges that seeing cultural affiliation as one-dimensional is problematic. Third-Culture Kids are people who lived in two or more cultures during their childhood and youth, either because they moved away from their parents' country of origin, or simply because they moved often. The “third culture” results from the merging of all those cultures which influence the persons concerned and define their identity (cf. Pollock and Van Reken 2009). Moreover, the concept of intersectionality, which takes social and other non-cultural factors into account and pushes country specifics into the background, has entered into intercultural management literature aimed at higher management levels (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006). However, this more fluid concept of cultural affiliation (regarding

fuzzy cultures, see Bolten 2013) has not done the popularity of the cultural dimensions any harm; the business world loves figures and tables which clearly depict the evolution of individual parameters in various nations for comparative purposes.

Knowledge of different concepts of time, of different distributions of the roles of men and women in society, of the varying significance of status and hierarchy can definitely be of help and facilitate intercultural (business) communication. Awareness of potential differences in the areas mentioned can also facilitate communication with members of one's own culture, as here too there can be considerable variation. However, attributing specific behavioural patterns and value orientations to the members of a specific nationality is problematic, at the very least, because it places the focus on differences and reduces the individual communication partner to his or her national and ethnic affiliation.

2.2 Intercultural training and the collection of critical incidents

The growing internationalisation of the economy and politics triggered a need for training programmes designed to assist orientation in foreign environments, initially felt in the USA after the Second World War. This prompted a large variety of such programmes, including the culture assimilator approach (Fiedler, Mitchell, and Triandis 1971). This method entails putting into writing a collection of critical incidents, which are construed or manipulated for didactic purposes (Heringer 2010: 222). The incidents simulated in training programmes for managers, specialists and executive staff are individual cases supposedly representative of the culture as a whole. The following example relates to the subject of prestige in Russian professional contexts. The representative of a large German company, Mr Schmidt, travels to business meetings by underground in order to avoid traffic jams. On being asked by a negotiating partner how he managed to be on time despite the heavy traffic jams, he states this openly, which causes amazement amongst the other parties. That, in turn, gives Mr Schmidt the impression that the negotiations subsequently went badly (Yoosefi and Thomas 2003: 49–53). Four possible explanations are offered, of which the first – that taking the underground does not correspond to the status of a large company's representative – is considered correct. Such “representative” cases intrinsically hide the danger of undue generalisation and can quickly become obsolete given the speed of development in Russia and other transitional countries. Ten years on, awareness of some status symbols remains important; for instance, Gazprom's current dress code (Gazprom 2009) specifies the western clothing labels which are to be worn. However, travelling by underground has now become “socially acceptable”.

Using critical incidents as a training method is popular because it presents intercultural encounters in a clear and at least seemingly realistic way. Its dangers lie in the multiple choice format, often with only one correct answer. In addition, it is questionable whether the ethnic stereotyping inherent in critical incidents is of

relevance for decision-making. Such doubts led Dominic Busch to adopt the discourse-analysis-orientated approach to research into intercultural (business) communication (Busch 2013: 13–14; for further points of criticism of the critical-incident method see Heringer 2010: 233–235).

To conclude this section, here is an example of prescriptive recommendations established non-linguistically, for a central, fundamentally verbal business activity – giving presentations in various cultures. *Presenting Across Cultures* addresses the question of how to adapt business and sales presentations to key markets around the world (Hernandez 2013). The author is a trainer who has taught and observed around 700 participants from over 74 countries at his training events; he has also carried out extensive research, including around 130 interviews with internationally-active business people and other trainers. In his book, each of the 16 nations it analyses is introduced in a clear graphic showing 13 cultural dimensions and a short section about typical values and behavioural patterns, for example the significance of punctuality and titles in Germany. This is followed by characteristics specific to a particular presentation: speaker attributes, the opening structure, points to be considered in the content and persuasion sections, and a bullet-point summary of likes and dislikes for each country. The whole text is formulated as a recommendation. For example, it gives the following advice for giving presentations in front of a Russian audience: “State the purpose of your presentation in clear and specific terms. It does not have to be as concise as typically formulated to native-English speakers or Germans, but it should not be vague or too general either” (Hernandez 2013: 151). This type of non-linguistic prescriptive recommendations for communication in a concrete professional situation is typical of the business world. The recommendations are, as the example shows, kept very general and have no basis in linguistic models.

2.3 Intercultural management and multi-disciplinary approaches

Jürgen Bolten devotes a whole chapter of his introductory book *Einführung in die Interkulturelle Wirtschaftskommunikation* [Introduction to Intercultural Business Communication] to intercultural business communication as a sub-field of economics and business administration (Bolten 2007: 258–263). It was only in the 1980s that researchers began to look into “soft” factors of international business activities. Articles emerged on cross-cultural management in various countries, as well as international management. Then, in the 1990s the failure of political and economic shock therapies made it clear that market economy models and principles of operational organisation “are not transferable from culture A to culture B” (Bolten 2007: 260). The resultant move from research approaches that compare cultures to genuinely intercultural approaches also acknowledged that interactions between cultures A and B permanently “generate interaction scenarios C”. This “synergetic

third party” or this “interculture” is an interaction, an event, in which negotiation processes take place. Against this background, “intercultural management as social action” developed interdependently with the communication, educational and behavioural sciences, as well as psychology (Apfelthaler 1998, Hasenstab 1999 according to Bolten 2007: 260).

Realisation of the need for multi-disciplinary approaches to the complex reality of intercultural (business) communication has been reflected in their spread. A good example of such an approach is the volume *Intercultural Interaction* by Helen Spencer-Oatey and Peter Franklin, which conceptualises intercultural interaction in its first, descriptive section, the second, prescriptive section being devoted to promoting competence in intercultural interaction (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009). The increasing attention paid to language as a fundamental resource, now even in the economic sciences, is evidence of the linguistic turn observable for some time already in the historical sciences, sociology and medicine (cf. Stahl and Menz 2014: VI, as well as Chapter 24 on corpora).

3 Linguistic approaches to intercultural (business) communication

3.1 Culture and language

Linguistic approaches to intercultural (business) communication consider this, not as a distinct concept, but as a particular type of interpersonal communication in general, and therefore focus on features common to the latter. The goal is for communication in intercultural situations to take place on an equal footing between participants. At the same time, culture is not conceived of as something external, not as a control mechanism or structure, “but rather as a dynamic set of conditions and as a regulatory framework of interpersonal action” (Metten 2014). Nor is culture conceived as a universe of objective items or as a system of ideas, values or subjective opinions, but rather as “collective, especially linguistic practice” (Renn 2004: 430).

3.2 Combining linguistic aspects with cultural standards

The fascination of cultural standards and dimensions also extends to linguists, some of whose studies combine Hofstede’s cultural dimensions with linguistic categories. Thus power distance is expressed through references to previous communication or in the form of salutations. Uncertainty avoidance is reflected in the nature of commands or requests (explicit or vague), in the placement of the thesis/purpose statement, or in the way contact information is provided (in the text of the letter or in the letterhead only). Individualism / collectivism is mirrored in the form or

reference to self (as an individual vs. as a group) (Loukianenko Wolfe 2008: 93). This method, however, involves the risk of missing the real linguistic facts by looking merely for linguistic evidence of the standards specified. Hofstede's cultural dimensions have also been correlated with stylistic dimensions. Thus the stylistic contrast between instrumental (goal and sender-oriented) and affective communication (process-oriented, relationship-oriented) has been linked with Hofstede's masculinity-femininity dimension. Similarly, a relatively elaborate communication style and a more succinct one (i.e. brief and to the point) have been associated with low and high uncertainty avoidance, respectively (according to Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken 2013: 304).

3.3 Combining linguistic and financial aspects

Various language-related problems are connected with the internationalisation of companies, such as the need for knowledge of foreign languages, the costs of translators and interpreters, the necessity of a language policy, and considerations about language and power. For the first time, there is a focus on the costs of managing intercultural communication : Nekula and Šichova (2004) estimate that the 2000 Czech joint ventures with German-speaking companies must have generated language costs of €3.3 billion between 1989 and 2003 (quoted by Piller 2009: 321). In addition, “softer” language factors come into play whose cost cannot be easily calculated. This was shown by Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, and Welch (1999) with the help of a Finnish multi-national company whose official language is English, which presents a barrier for many employees because of restricted information access, obstruction of horizontal relation-building across units, etc. (Piller 2009: 322).

These financial aspects are also considered in connection with the figure of the interculturally oriented individual, whose intercultural communication skills can be converted into economic gain: “The term ‘language work’ describes jobs where a substantial aspect of the work consists of language-related tasks, for instance language teaching, translating and interpreting or call center work” (Piller 2009: 323). For example, the activity of workers in Indian call centres has been researched in extensive field studies (Mirchandani 2004; Pal and Buzanell 2008, quoted in Piller 2009: 323). Critical analysis of the results shows that Indian call centre workers are becoming increasingly aware of their exploitation; for example, they know that their North American colleagues are paid significantly more for the same work (Piller 2009: 324). Duchêne (2011) describes similar conditions amongst employees at Zurich airport: lower-status, migrant employees with a knowledge of unusual languages are used as informal interpreters, but this knowledge, which is economically valuable for the employer, is not honoured by payment or status in the hierarchy. Comparable practices are also common in hospitals, such as the general hospital (AKH) in Vienna, where the language knowledge of employees is recorded in lists for such work.

3.4 Contrastive approaches

Another strand of intercultural business communication research is the use of contrastive linguistics to compare two or more countries. A good summary of these localised perspectives can be found in Bargiela-Chiappini (2009: 332–453). In such a comparison, the analysis of authentic communication with the focus on its culturally specific aspects can produce valuable results. For example, one study compared letters to shareholders and homepages produced by German and Italian banks (Schafroth and Costa 2013). Dubrovskaja has examined the discourse of judges from English and Russian speaking countries for its cultural specificities. The focus of this comparative discourse-analysis study is the verbal activity of the judges, the expression of opinions and emotions, as well as politeness. Its results are explained by both the genesis of the text types and the peculiarities of the respective conversational styles, such as the permeability between work and private life in Russia, on the one hand, and their stronger differentiation in Anglo-Saxon cultures on the other. The methodology goes beyond purely linguistic text analysis based on vocabulary, grammar, syntax and style. As in discourse analysis, it also covers extralinguistic pragmatic factors such as communicative goals, the status of the communication participants, the direct context, as well as the broader social and historical one, and leads to conclusions about the peculiarities of thinking (Dubrovskaja 2014).

3.5 Intercultural pragmatics

Intercultural pragmatics (Blommaert 1991; Blommaert and Verschueren 1991; Wierzbicka 2003; Kecskes 2014) examines, for example, politeness from an intercultural perspective (Holmes 2012). Here it must be borne in mind that in different cultures politeness is not only expressed differently, but also has different significances. Thus, in Russian culture the expression of positive politeness has priority over negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987; on politeness in Russian, Rathmayr 2008b). For example, Russians usually do not apologise if they miss an appointment because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control. This will irritate an Austrian considerably more than an incorrect article or incorrect word, and the seemingly unreliable and impolite Russian partner who failed to apologise will probably be seen in a negative light. The misunderstanding results from the fact that in Russian language and culture an apology is required only if at least some guilt exists or is experienced (cf. Rathmayr 1996). However, changes can be expected here given the increasing international experience of many business people.

3.6 Anthropological linguistics and critical approaches

Anthropological linguistics deals with language and speaking from two (interdisciplinary-determined) points of view: that of language as a constituent of culture

and that of speaking as cultural and social practice. Cultural traditions, institutions, collective awareness and associated social structures are continually organised, formed and supported by language and culture-specific linguistic practices. According to Günthner (2007: 126–128), anthropological linguists investigate communicative practices as well as communicative genres. In accordance with Bakhtin, speaking occurs in speech genres which guide the interaction and which are determined by social structures: “On the one hand, they guide interactants’ expectations about what is to be said (and done) in the particular context. On the other hand, they are sediments of socially relevant communicative processes” (Günthner 2007: 129).

Culture-specific ways of using and interpreting genres involve three types of features (Günthner 2007: 130–136), viz. internal, interactional and external features:

- Internal features concern words, rhetorical figures and tropes, stylistic devices, prosodic melodies, specific regulations of dialogicity, repair strategies and prescriptions for topics and topical areas (Luckmann 1992).
- Interactional features include the interactive organisation of conversations, including patterns of turn-taking, preference organisation, strategies for longer stretches of conversation and the participation framework. Preference organisation refers to the type of reaction preferred in a given situation: for instance, whereas direct disagreement is preferred in German argumentation, demonstration of communicative harmony is more important in the Japanese variety (Kotthoff 1993; Naotsuka and Sakaoto 1981, cited in Günthner 2007: 133). The expression of compliments is also subject to genre norms of this type: for example, in professional situations in Russia it is not only usual, but almost required, for men to compliment the women present (Rathmayr 2013: 353).
- External features reflect the relationship between the use of genres and particular communicative milieus, situations, the selection of types of actors (according to gender, age, status, etc.) and the institutional distribution of genres. To give an example: for American business people, meetings are “thought to be the appropriate place in which to persuade people or try to change their minds” (Miller 1994: 224, according to Günthner 2007: 135). By contrast, Japanese businessmen deal with major differences of opinion before meetings, which thus only serve as a seal of approval and present a false impression of harmonic agreement.

The knowledge of text types required here of those interacting is so complex that Bourdieu (1982) rightly designates linguistic knowledge as an important component of symbolic capital. Günthner (2007: 135) expresses it as follows: “Knowledge about how to speak is a powerful means for certain groups to stay in power and also to keep other groups from having power.” This power factor is particularly visible when determining languages to be used at the workplace (see Chapter 13 on multilingualism and 14 on English as a lingua franca). But it also manifests itself in the language choice for every intercultural encounter and should thus always be taken into account.

The power factor is at the centre of critical approaches, in particular of critical discourse analysis, which explicitly draws a link between language use and social inequalities of power. In that way, they can show that language may serve to mask racism as cultural difference (Dijk 1993; Bonilla-Silva 2003). The performative dimension of culture and language “suggests that culture and linguistic expressions, just like expressions of gender identities, are performed by members of a community, rather than simply being dominated or controlled by external objective mechanisms called language or culture. [...] In this view, what structures social practice and perspective is not a pre-existing system of culture or language but people’s acting on symbols and not only iterating actions but also appropriating, resisting, bending, and inventing language and culture” (Kubota 2012: 96, with reference to Butler’s 1990 notion of performativity).

4 Linguistic recommendations: General knowledge about the functioning of communication

4.1 Heringer’s approach

The foundations of communication are formulated in a generally understandable way in Heringer (2010: 9–22). Heringer compares various definitions and models with each other, finally establishing the frame of “communication” with its various aspects: the scenario (when and where?), the participants (who?), the topic (about what?), the intention (why?), the mode (how?) and the medium (with what?) (Heringer 2010: 23–26). The ensuing chapters in Heringer are titled accordingly: Speaking and understanding, What is conversation?, Non-verbal communication, Language and culture, Understanding culture, and Culture in language. Following these is another chapter about cultural standards and stereotypes and one about critical incidents. Without reproducing the content of the chapters in full, I will present some general knowledge about communication below; this knowledge can and should be embraced even if one lacks a linguistic background, for by doing so one will be best equipped for intercultural (business) communication. Another good description of pragmatic “rules of communication” based on Paul Watzlawick’s five axioms of communication are explained for the non-linguistically educated reader by Stahl and Menz (2014: 43–51). They equally apply to both intercultural communication and intercultural business communication and are, in part, reflected in the following sections.

4.2 Speaking and understanding

It is widely assumed that the most difficult thing about a foreign language is speaking. Yet a speaker always has the options of rephrasing or using body language in

order to transmit the intended meaning. In contrast, understanding is directly linked to the spoken or written source, and, apart from the request for something to be repeated, rephrased or explained during spoken face-to-face communication, a receiver cannot facilitate understanding by exerting influence. In order to be well equipped for intercultural (business) communication, it therefore helps to have a precise idea of how understanding works.

Understanding an utterance does not simply require linguistic decoding, but also involves a number of contextual factors and requires an understanding of speakers' cultural assumptions and their communicative goals (Lindenfeld 1994). In fact, understanding takes place through the joint negotiation of meaning; it is a continuous process of interpretation. "When B answers A communicatively, B makes it clear to A and all others involved in the conversation how he interpreted A's input and whether he accepts it, as he understood it. B therefore defines the 'meaning' of A's input through his own input" (Brinker and Sager 2001: 154). This concept of understanding and being understood in conversation leads to the awareness that one's utterances may be interpreted in ways that differ from their intended meaning, and that one may potentially misinterpret the utterances of others. This in turn results in the development of strategic questions for the purpose of understanding, specifying and inquiring, and in the formulation of intermediate summaries at delicate points in international business communication. This will be expanded on in the next section.

Within the framework of interactional sociolinguistics, Gumperz developed the concept of contextualisation references, which are signals making explicit how what is said should be understood and interpreted: "Contextualisation can take many linguistic forms. Among the most important are the choice among permissible linguistic options at the level of pronunciation, morphology, syntax or lexicon – as in code or style switching, the use of intonation or tone of voice, speech rhythm or pausing, and the use of formulaic phrases or idiomatic expressions that have particular interactional import" (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 2007: 23). Such contextualisations can be helpful in intercultural (business) communication, but can also be completely misleading as different conventions are dominant in different cultures. By contrast, the use of contextualisations that make meaning lexically explicit in place of para-linguistic signals (e.g., tone) always serves a disambiguating function and contributes to understanding. Such devices include metalinguistic comments (e.g., "I mean that now as an urgent request" following an indirectly formulated request)

4.3 Non-verbal, para-verbal and conversation-organisational levels

Non-verbal (i.e., not linguistic or para-verbal) characteristics accompanying language, such as rate of speech and pitch, as well as discourse-related features in general, are much more constant, more difficult to change and also much more difficult for

people from different cultures to recognise than those of as lexical, morphosyntactic or phonological nature. Non-verbal and para-verbal elements are perceived less consciously than verbal parts of communication, presumably because irregularities in expected behaviour are more noticeable. This explains the example quoted below (Section 5.1) in which talking that was loud and simultaneous compared to the listener's expectations was interpreted as irritation. Tannen (2012) suggests that there are cultures where it is completely normal to begin talking at the same time and where there would be no irritation. From a linguistic point of view, various areas of pragmatics are particularly relevant for intercultural (business) communication: pauses for breath, for example, are more common and longer in Swiss German than in the German spoken in northern Germany. According to the expectations of speakers from northern Germany, speaking slowly is interpreted as the expression of slow thinking, whereas from the point of view of speakers from Switzerland a fast rate of speech is perceived as shallowness (cf. Slembek 1993).

Proxemics, a term originally coined by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall in the 1960s (Hall 1966), explores the spatial behaviour of people communicating and therefore belongs to non-verbal communication. Thus there are unwritten rules for various situations in various cultures as to the appropriate distance between interaction partners. Regarding the location of communication, Russian conversational culture allows conversations to be started everywhere and requires people to involve themselves or mix in (a behaviour which is generally termed "communicativeness"). In other words, the unwritten rules of proxemics work in different ways.

Moreover, when doing so, Russians come physically closer to each other than is the case, for example, in German- and English-speaking cultures. The appropriate distance between speakers is relatively small: the intimate distance is 10–25 cm (compared to 10–45 for Germans), the personal distance 15–25 cm (compared to 45–120), the social distance 30–200 cm (compared to 1–4 m), and the public distance begins at 2.5 m (compared to 3.5 m) (Prochorov and Sternin, 2006: 165). Although the exact distances can vary in individual cases, it is possible to confirm these findings through contact with Russian interaction partners. The same is true of those from Spanish-speaking cultures. While it is impossible to know the separations typical of all cultures, increased awareness of this aspect of interaction is essential. Too large a distance (in comparison to what is expected) may be taken as detachment or arrogance, and is certainly negatively-loaded, while too little distance can be perceived as an attempt to create intimacy or to intimidate.

4.4 Relational level

Watzlawick's second axiom of communication indicates that all communication has a content and a relational aspect (Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1990, cited in Stahl and Menz 2014: 44). This means that a key factor in understanding communication is consideration of the relational level, where "relationship" is understood as

the perceived number of possible partner-orientated behavioural patterns. Relational competence, which includes the ability to interpret observed behaviour as a relationship, to assess it in terms of its suitability and to establish, change or cut off relationships themselves, may be reflective or not, and can be used intentionally in very different ways. The degree of reflectivity varies between individuals groups, situations (Adamzik 1994: 362) and, of course, cultures. The model of the “four-eared recipient” (cf. Schulz von Thun 1981: 44–68, in particular 45) is very well suited to providing those interested in the topic an awareness of the relational level, even if they have no linguistic background.

4.5 Knowledge asymmetries

Knowledge asymmetries are constitutive for communication generally and for intercultural (business) communication in particular (Günthner and Luckmann 2002). It must be assumed that a foreign business contact will lack knowledge of institutions in one’s own country and the way they function, and of its geographical, educational and other features. Of course, the contact can always ask for these gaps to be filled, but it is much more elegant if this is done by timely “mini lectures” on the country, so that the contact does not have to show his or her lack of knowledge. More problematic is the asymmetry of text type knowledge about which conventions apply for specific text types or communicative genres (negotiating, interviews, etc.) in other cultures. The lack of such knowledge can lead to the formation of new hybrid forms of intercultural (business) communication, as each of the participants introduces certain arrangements, expectations and fragmentary knowledge of the genre conventions and uses adaptation strategies and compromises (Günthner 2007: 140–142). To interpret this “concession” in intercultural (business) communication correctly requires great awareness on both sides.

4.6 Conversational maxims

Grice’s (1975) conversational maxims are a constant in linguistic pragmatics, particularly because they have contributed to explaining communicative or conversational implicatures. These are conclusions from statements which are not part of the literal meaning of linguistic signs; instead, they derive from the use of signs in communication and are based on the common background knowledge of the conversational partners. To date they have not been taken note of in intercultural (business) communication; however, familiarity with them can be of some help. We will discuss the content of the Maxim of Manner – whether someone is speaking directly or indirectly, which volume is suitable, etc. – in another context (cf. Section 4.7). The Maxim of Quality, i.e. the requirement to only make true statements, that is those whose truth can be proven, is valid in most cultures provided lies out of politeness

and the like are ignored. The Maxim of Relevance, according to which speakers must remain on topic, is significantly more controversial; digressions are common in the German scholarly style, but they are inappropriate in English. The Maxim of Quantity, that is, the amount of information should be sufficient but not too extensive, is largely unexplored. In the analysis of Russian job-interviews it was shown, for example, that Russian applicants have problems choosing the correct amount of detail, talk too much for many interviewers, and are often not precise enough about the topic (Rathmayr 2013: 317–319). The implementation of the individual maxims has not been researched adequately for individual languages, but, of itself, awareness of the various maxims and their validity stimulates intercultural competence.

4.7 Degree of explicitness in comments: high-context and low-context

It is not only what is said that matters, but also how it is said. The “how” is treated in linguistic literature on intercultural (business) communication, for example, as a conversation style with certain aspects, such as degrees of (in)directness and (in)formality (Kotthoff 2007: 177). This is particularly relevant for the conventions of agreement and disagreement. The comparative analysis of disagreement in German and American office-hour conversation at universities showed “that to a much greater extent than the Germans, the American participants framed their dissent as proposals or suggestions, thereby mitigating the level of directness” (Kotthoff 2007: 178).

The concept of high and low context was first introduced by American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher Edward T. Hall and has been described for many cultures. It is identified by Hooker as “probably the single most useful concept for understanding cultural differences in business communication” (2012: 389). Although Hall is regarded as the founder of intercultural communication as an anthropological science, his concept is closer to linguistics than the approaches described in Section 2 since the extent of appropriate explicitness is a linguistic category which shapes all statements. The essential concern is what portion of the intended content is not expressed explicitly, instead being left to the surrounding circumstances of communication.

In high-context cultures a lot is implicitly assumed and mentioning numerous details can be taken negatively. A high degree of explicitness is perceived as impolite and will result in a negative opinion of the speaker. The facial expressions of the conversational partners, allusions, the circumstances of the encounter and many other contextual factors are independent conveyors of information which shouldn't be underestimated. High-context cultures can be found in Southern Europe (Spain, France), in Asia (China, Japan and many other countries) and Africa, as well as in Latin America.

In comparison, in low-context cultures it is not expected that the majority of information is already known or is discernible without explicit linguistic expression. Here everything is called by its name; people communicate directly and feel obligated to give the most precise information possible to their counterpart. A high degree of explicitness – direct disagreement, clear and negative opinions – is considered “normal” in low-context countries. As a rule, cultures with Western European roots rely more heavily on low-context communication. These include Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA, as well as much of Europe, for instance Germany, the Benelux countries and Switzerland. One of the more obvious markers of a low-context culture is the proliferation of signs and written instructions, whereas in high-context cultures, verbal correction by others is a normal procedure for regulating behaviour (Hooker 2012: 390–391).

High-context cultures are therefore relation-based, low-context cultures rule-based. This difference has strong effects on business life, which lead to the following recommendation: “Because company norms in a high-context culture must be communicated personally, close personal supervision is essential. Rules that are not personally enforced may be seen as non-binding” (Hooker 2012: 392).

4.8 Culture in language: hotspots

Ideally, international businesspeople should have an encyclopaedic knowledge of cultures to which they are exposed and particularly of those they wish to do business with. They should also know their history, politics and economics, not to mention their geography. This ideal is achievable only for a maximum of one to two countries and cultures. That, however, is not enough in the globalised world. There, “global” or “cultural nomads”, or “globals” (cf. Elliott and Urry 2011), i.e. people who are distinguished by high mobility, who – as managers – travel frequently because of their job or actually move abroad, are more the norm than the exception, and each international contact involves several countries with which the individual participant must interact. The aim must therefore be to develop strategies which increase the chances for successful interactions with members of as many cultures as possible. An awareness of how one is moulded by one’s own culture helps in doing this, as does an intensive engagement with even just one other culture. Both of these create and foster a sensitivity to possible sources of friction and conflict triggers.

From a linguistic point of view it makes sense to study awkward moments typical of each interaction type. This area is dealt with in linguistic intercultural (business) communication research under various headings, e.g., as “hotspots”, a term used by German-studies specialist Hans Jürgen Heringer for situations regulated, whether verbally or non-verbally, in all cultures in a specific way, and which are also difficult to manage intraculturally in some circumstances. These include choosing between

formal and informal forms of address (for example, *du* and *Sie* in German), making contact, criticising, agreeing, disagreeing and greeting (Heringer 2010: 162–173).

Heringer refers to a whole palette of verbal and non-verbal options for expressing agreement and disagreement (Heringer 2010: 169–170). However, the decisive question is, as he rightly observes, whether disapproval is expressed directly or indirectly. In Japan smiling, nodding or even a spoken affirmation can be a “no” veiled in politeness (Heringer 2010: 170). Additionally, and for good reason, there are many more options for the face-threatening refusal, from which successful speakers select carefully. Agreement is well known to be gladly accepted (cf. Pomerantz 1984) – which is exactly why questions in advertising or even propaganda are formulated in such a way that the chance of a positive answer is as high as possible. This is universally valid, though with significant culture-specific and also individual deviations. The individual preferences of conversational partners are only learnt with time, but culture-specific tendencies should already be known. Pragmatic research on direct or indirect forms of expression yields information on individual cultures which also covers how to formulate disapproval delicately. An important, actually non-linguistic approach to intercultural (business) communication research is devoted to this difference between direct and indirect expression: the study of high and low-context cultures (cf. Section 4.7)

4.9 Culture in language: hotwords

Furthermore, there are words in every language which can be considered more or less untranslatable, but are even more important as a result. A branch of linguistics in Russia concentrates on such words within the framework of the *Lingvisticheskaja kartina mira* (linguistic world map) which reflects everyday awareness (*naivnaja kartina mira*, Apresjan 1995: 57–60). It studies lexemes such as *rodnoj, toska, rodina, dusha* (Zalitznjak, Levontina, and Šmelev 2005). They are only translatable to a limited extent because of their connotations: loved/familiar, longing/home sickness, home (extremely positive in Russian, but the German translation *Heimat* is associated with its use in the Nazi period) and soul. It is in this context that Anna Wierzbicka speaks of keywords, which she used to compare the English, Russian, Polish, German and Japanese cultures (Wierzbicka 1997).

Here Heringer talks of “hotwords” which take into account the dynamics of cultural developments (Heringer 2010: 174–175). They “contain a great quantity of culture, are culturally charged and hot, because they deal with burning questions of culture, because they can be controversial, because they label cultural focus points, because they are topical”. It is pointless learning hotwords as vocabulary, for “to understand these words you have to immerse yourself in the culture of the language. Only in this way can you attain a true understanding, only in this way do you acquire the necessary communicative competence” (Heringer 2010: 174). Yet, for

competent participation in intercultural (business) communication, it is important to be sensitised to the existence of hotwords in order to be able to react appropriately and to enquire if irritation arises (for enquiries, cf. Section 4.2). Heringer explains the problematic nature of these words using the examples of “Viennese humour” [*Schmäh*], which even German natives find difficult to explain (Heringer 2010: 164, 174). As a further example; he examines the cultural model behind the various elements of meaning of the hotword *Heimat* ‘home’ (Heringer 2010: 174–175), which, as we have seen, is also a hotword in Russian culture. Knowing a culture’s hotwords will help to avoid potential dangers and allow their appropriate use in order to build rapport.

5 Promising verbal strategies for managing intercultural (business) communication

5.1 Intercultural competence

What does ideal competence for intercultural (business) communication look like? Successful participation in intercultural (business) communication is coupled with awareness of one’s own expectations and those of the interaction partner. According to observations made by Clyne, successful intercultural (business) communication makes maximum use of culture-neutral expressions. Other typical features are regulation of communication and preservation of face, without offending the partner (cf. Clyne 1994: 203). “Face, defined as the social value a person claims for himself in an interpersonal contact, depends on a line, a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts by which he expresses himself” (Goffman 1955: 213). In intercultural (business) communication, disruptions are seldom – in Clyne’s (1994: 204) corpus, “almost never” – caused by morpho-syntactic, phonological or lexical problems, but rather by disruptions on the pragmatic and discourse levels. More momentous is the misinterpretation of para-linguistic phenomena. A colleague told me about the following incident: a non-Russian-speaking American guest at a birthday party in Russia asked the Russian business associate who took him to the party: “Are they so annoyed because I came?” The associate answered, somewhat bewildered: “Why? No one is annoyed, everyone is happy that you are here.” The cause of the misunderstanding was the transfer of the para-linguistic phenomena of volume and turn-taking habits from American conversational culture to Russian. In the former, loud volume and interruptions signal negative emotions, which led to the mistaken impression of annoyance (cf. Rathmayr 2008a: 398–399).

Some communicative strategies are especially helpful for intercultural business communication independent of the interacting individuals’ cultures of origin. These include continual questioning, repeated summarizing of what has been mutually

understood, and the avoidance of “relative” adjectives, i.e. adjectives denoting relative size. Language-specific and culture-specific aspects follow only in a second step. The overall advantage of the linguistic approach lies in its emphasising common ground as opposed to stressing difference, as is typical of psychological studies, and in raising sensitivity for “hotspots” as opposed to the accumulation of individual cultural peculiarities. The conscious use of language allows for “the tolerance of ambiguity and the willingness to engage in building new discursive frames” (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken 2013: 31). The necessity of cautiously forming criticism and disagreement has already been mentioned (cf. Section 4.8). Below, recommendations will be presented for asking questions, summarising and avoiding relative adjectives (cf. Rathmayr 2008a).

5.2 Question strategies

Given the potential difficulty of understanding what is meant and the increased risk of creating misunderstandings, questions are particularly important in communication. Generally, the following rule applies: it is better to ask once too often, than be understood wrongly and then act incorrectly. However, over-application of this rule entails the danger of seeming less competent. For exactly this reason it is worth paying particular attention to the wording of questions. Thus, competence can be displayed when formulating questions by not beginning them with a question tag (who, when, where, how much, etc) as in a police interrogation, but rather by explaining the reason behind the question. If uncertain whether an indirectly formulated demand is to be understood as a question or an instruction, one can expressly enquire about its illocutionary significance:

I am not sure how I should understand that: do I have to do it immediately, or is it up to me whether I do it?

The dangers of failing to do this are illustrated by the following request directed by an Austrian manager to his Russian secretary:

Could you, if you have time, rewrite the letter to the magistrate?

The secretary heard what, according to Russian conventions, was a non-binding observation and did not act. The boss could, of course, have added a meta-communicative comment:

I mean you to do this right away.

In intercultural business communication, it is especially important to strive for maximal clarity if facts and regulations which are not particularly well-known are involved. Specifying questions and enquiries for ensuring understanding are useful when there is the least doubt. Here it is worthwhile to explicitly address potential interculturality-determined differences, e.g.:

What does ... mean?

What is usual in your country if ... ?

Do you also take a break if the negotiations are at a standstill?

Questions are generally a problematic speech act because of the association with exam questions. Even in everyday situations, if someone requires information, they do not always ask for it; in some circumstances, they may be fearful of showing weakness or being regarded as uninformed. This is supported by studies, notably for men (cf. Tannen 1991: 62–65). Additionally, some questions are actually more problematic in intercultural situations than in one's own culture, e.g., questions about age or social situation, which are of a private nature (cf. Borge 2007). Nevertheless, it has been shown that good negotiators ask around twice as many questions as less successful ones (cf. Görge 2005: 110).

The following excerpt is from an interview carried out by Ljubov Kostyleva (K) in Vienna during December 1999 for her diploma thesis with a controller from the company Bosch (B). It shows that practitioners too are fully aware of the question strategy (cf. Rathmayr 2008a: 413):

K: Do you have problems understanding your colleagues [in the Bosch office in Kiev, founded in 1993], are suggestions always formulated clearly?

B: Sometimes there are problems understanding someone, or I'm not sure if they have really understood me. They answer yes, but if I ask the opposite question, they still say yes. And I know they didn't understand something. This displays the principle of enquiring. If you ask a question and receive a "yes" and then ask the opposite question, you should get a "no" in return. But you have to be extremely careful as we also have colleagues who speak excellent German [...] and who are offended and answer "you just asked me this question but the other way round". Therefore you have to know exactly when to use this.

5.3 Inserting interim summaries

No less important in intercultural business communication is the insertion of interim summaries once a point seems to have been clarified. Brünner (2000: 154) refers to an authentic example of the time wasted in telephone negotiations between a building contractor and a representative of the public services, solely for lack of such summaries. Before moving on to agree the steps and measures to be taken, it was not clearly established that both sides had the same amount of information and that they were taking the same prerequisites with them into the decision phase. The example is taken from intracultural communication between German native speakers and displays once again the commonality of problems in intercultural and intracultural communication.

5.4 Avoiding adjectives and adverbs referring to relative sizes

Let us consider the following mini dialogue between an Austrian company representative (A) and a business contact in Moscow (R):

A: Can I see the machine?

R: It's best if you come to the store, it's not far.

The Austrian was amazed when it turned out that the store was 500 km away. The misunderstanding arose from transferring one interpretative model to another culture. Understanding of the relation between travel time and distance differs between Russian and Austrian cultures. In the former, a journey lasting under 12 hours is considered short and the corresponding distance small. In the latter, even two hours is a long travel time and a distance of 200 km is far. Therefore we are dealing with language- and culture-specific use of adjectives and adverbs in relation to expandable sizes, which becomes explicit in the following mini-dialogue (cf. Fellerer, Rathmayr, and Klingseis 1998: 65–66):

R: Vienna is near Bregenz.

A: No, it's far away.

R: Why? It only takes one night on the train.

An extract from a letter sent by a Russian colleague on 23 December 2006 shows how easy it is to clarify such vague expressions:

Three days ago, while I was ill, I travelled (not far, a 5-hour journey) to a conference in Ivanovo.

If a conversation partner uses adjectives or adverbs such as *far*, *large*, *soon*, *expensive*, it is advisable to seek clarification, which is more acceptably done by offering a plausible-seeming answer than by a pure wh-question. Compare

Our store is not that far.

How far? How many kilometres?

with this better alternative:

Does that mean that you can get there in 20 minutes with a car?

Were this enquiry to be made in Russia, it would probably receive the answer “No” as 200 or 300 km is “not far” there.

The strategy of creating maximum explicitness by avoiding vagueness arising from judgemental quality adjectives and vague expressions in general requires speakers to give concrete information. Thus, instead of using words such as **far*, **expensive*, **large*, **soon*, etc, they should use precise terms (e.g., *300 km away*, *\$750*, *4m long*, *on the 27th of August*). They must also insist on precision if their conversation partner is vague:

How many kilometres? So that means we will receive the order on the 27th of August?

The strategy of creating maximum explicitness by avoiding vagueness can also serve to balance asymmetries in knowledge of language use.

6 Conclusion

This chapter began by introducing common non-linguistic approaches to intercultural (business) communication: Hofstede, Trompenaars, the GLOBE study and Thomas. They are distinguished by their focus on behavioural characteristics typical of specific nations. However, they only consider verbal behaviour marginally and accord great importance to the individual's national affiliation, a questionable assumption, particularly given globalisation and the mobility of business people which comes along with it. Such approaches focus on problems and misunderstandings caused by interculturality, and on the differences between persons of individual nationalities. The key characteristics of individual cultures are predominantly determined by surveys.

By contrast, linguistic approaches focus on commonalities and sensitisation rather than individual cases. They seek to develop intercultural awareness through conscious consideration of the connection between language and culture, and to shift the focus away from misunderstandings in the globalised world towards the use of conscious communicative behaviour. Linguistic research is primarily based on authentic data, participant observation and field studies. Critical approaches show that intercultural interactions are not only shaped by cultural difference but also by more or less invisible power imbalances relating to race, nationality and language (Kubota 2012: 98).

According to Piller (2009: 324–326), potential lines of further research are dynamic perspectives on national culture, multicultural perspectives on companies, industry-specific perspectives on language work, as well as sociolinguistic, critical and training perspectives on intercultural communication. Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken (2013: 45–88) foresee the following avenues for future of business-discourse research: the future of intercultural business communication research with particular reference to rapport management, a discussion of multimodality and how business discourse might be changed in the future, and multimethod, multidisciplinary research. They also call for research-based business-discourse teaching (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken 2013: 91–126). Analogous demands can also be made for intercultural business communication, which, instead of prescriptively giving culture-specific concrete guidance, can communicate findings based on the analysis of authentic texts in intercultural business communication and can create the corresponding awareness. The great benefit of these approaches is the transferability of the findings and skills to various cultures.

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12 Multilingualism in business: Language needs

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1 Introduction: Changing language needs in a globalised economy

Although business has always been to some extent internationally oriented, the globalisation phenomena which we have been confronted with since the end of the 20th century have brought along new communicative scenarios and a series of potential “language challenges”. Thus we might ask, from the perspective of the organisation, which language(s) companies need for communicating with their clients and stakeholders or which language(s) multinational companies choose for their internal communication, or, from that of the individual, which language(s) managers and employees have to master in order to cope with their daily professional requirements. In the context of these questions, we can observe a tradition of so called “language needs analyses”. Some of these have didactic aims, such as defining learning targets for specific language learners or learner groups. In others, the focus may fall on language policy and planning in organisations and companies (either individually or within a certain geographical area). This chapter will give a typological overview of definitions of “language needs” (of companies, of individuals, etc.), as well as describe the types, methods, potential and limits of language needs analyses. In our conclusion, we will highlight the important role of language policies in the business context and for language needs issues, thus leading into Chapter 13, which is dedicated to language policies and practices in business.

2 Language needs: Definitions and typology, learners' vs. business perspective

Before dealing with the existing definitions of *language needs*, we will take a closer look at the different meanings of *need(s)* in general. This word is used as a technical

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-012

term in a series of disciplines. In psychology, for example, the famous “hierarchy of needs” (Maslow 1970) defines needs as goals that are yet to be satisfied. This disjunction creates tensions and hence motivates people to put effort into meeting the unattained goals. And in business studies, various types of needs – business, consumer, staff and training – are all of central importance. According to Schuler (1992: 19), “strategic business needs [...] reflect management’s overall plan for survival, growth, adaptability, and profitability”. In marketing, “consumer needs” are supposed to be studied and analysed carefully in order to ensure their satisfaction. In human resource management, “staff needs” relate to the difference between the future and current number of staff required by an organisation, in quantitative terms; “training needs”, in contrast, refer to the qualitative aspect of staff needs, from both individual and organisational perspectives (Berthel and Becker 2013: 298–311; Bruhn 2014: 13–25). In general, business studies scholars distinguish between individual needs (i.e., individual wants) and organisational needs (i.e., demands, goals and requirements of the organisation).

Despite the widespread use of the term *needs* in academic language, as yet no general approach has emerged that would summarise and differentiate all its existing and potential usages in the various scientific communities. At first sight, the Oxford Dictionaries (n.d.) are not of a great help either. They define the noun *need* as a “thing that is wanted or required”. The entry on the corresponding verb *to need* seems more precise: “to require (something) because it is essential or very important rather than just desirable”. This would suggest, for example, that having every manager speak twenty languages would not be a *need* in the narrower sense since, although perhaps “desirable”, this could hardly be seen as necessary or even important.

From a social-constructionist point of view, of course, “necessary” and “desirable” lie at two ends of a continuum. Moreover, a specific group that decides on its needs (language or other) simultaneously decides, at least implicitly, on their own understanding of “need”. The discourse about (language) needs not only describes but also co-constitutes them. Hence in this sense language needs can only be assessed subjectively. Nevertheless, we can have recourse to other, more “objective” data such as turnover in a certain national market. It is in this light that Vandermeeren (2005: 162) distinguishes between the objective and subjective language needs of businesses by means of the following criteria: “frequency of contact with a certain country indicates *objective need*, [whereas] informants’ perception of foreign language need indicates *subjective need*”.

The distinction between “subjective” and “objective” needs has been defined not only for companies but also for language learners (cf. Brindley 1989: 70). Thus, “to be more confident when dealing with visitors from abroad” is an example of a subjective need, as distinguished from the objective need “to be able to show visitors around” (Huhta et al. 2013: 12). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) differentiate between “target needs” and “learning needs”. According to them, the former are the skills to

be achieved, while the latter comprise the steps necessary to acquire those skills. Berwick (1989: 55) distinguishes between “felt needs” and “perceived needs”, as learners are often aware of only some of their learning requirements (or have false expectations in general) and depend on teachers or language planners to provide a more realistic assessment.

Another important point to address is the distinction between met and unmet needs. In effect, a “need” is very often seen as something that is still missing: “The gap between what is and what should be” (Brindley 1989: 65). But, for instance, the sentence *I need glasses for reading* can be uttered either by a person who has never possessed glasses or by one wearing a pair at the moment of happily reading a newspaper. Thus a need remains a need even when it is momentarily met/satisfied. (Terminologically speaking, in motivational theory – Maslow 1970 – *satisfied* is preferred, whereas applied linguists – Vandermeeren 1998 and 2005 – prefer the expression *met needs*.) These reflections suggest that there is a broad overlap between what, in business, are considered to be language policies and practices, and what are regarded as language needs. In fact, people in general do what they do because of their necessities. So if you look at what they do, you will know largely what their needs are. In other words, practices can also be regarded – from a needs perspective – as a certain set of needs being met (if this were not the case, businesses would not function). But there will always be some needs that are not met, in part or in full. These are what some tend to consider as “real” needs, being more salient in that they generate a requirement to act differently from before.

We want to emphasise that between a met and an unmet language need in a company, there is usually a scale of half tones and intermediate stages, among which are located the so-called survival and threshold levels. Suppose, for example, that complicated technical details must be explained to a Russian customer. Having this done by an employee who speaks severely broken Russian, supported by body gestures, is certainly not the ideal solution. But it might be the cheapest one (cost/benefit, or efficiency aspect), and it might work sufficiently well to get the job done (effectiveness aspect), albeit with some mishaps, misunderstandings, and the use of trial and error. In this case, the language needs are certainly not met completely. We could say that the situation is characterised by a certain portion of communication needs being met, whereas another (important) portion remains unmet.

Among unmet language needs, some may be clearly perceived by the participants, while others remain unperceived. (We prefer the terms *perceived* / *unperceived* to the dichotomy *conscious* / *unconscious* employed by Vandermeeren 2005, because the latter carries a certain psychological connotation.) According to Vandermeeren (2005: 162), an unperceived need exists if “[c]ompanies who are in regular business contact with a certain country [...] claim that it is not or only occasionally necessary for them to use that country’s language”. However, if a language need is unperceived, who may decide, and on what grounds, whether it really exists? This question is highly relevant for research methodology (as addressed in Section 4 below).

Be they objective or subjective, met or unmet, perceived or unperceived, (business) language needs can be considered and studied from various different angles. We first have to decide which languages are considered as “necessary”, and then, in further steps, which specific language competences and proficiency levels are “needed” (and: by whom, when, where, in what situation. . .). In doing so, we must also choose the perspective(s) we are interested in (following and adapting Huhta et al. 2013: 13) and define whose needs we are referring to: those of an individual (the user/speaker/learner/single employee), of a group (of learners, of professionals, etc.), of the workplace/company/organisation; or even those of the whole country or society. And we might then also ask who defines each of these needs, and how the different types and levels of needs correlate.

For the most part, current linguistic-didactical definitions of “language needs” only take into account a single perspective, namely that of the individual as language learner, or of language learners as a homogeneous group, for whom a curriculum is to be designed. See for example both Richterich’s seminal work from 1972 and Richterich and Chancerel (1978), as well as the Council of Europe’s definition of “language needs” that builds upon their work: “[T]his term refers to the linguistic resources which learners need in order successfully to cope with the forms of communication in which they are going to be involved”¹ (Council of Europe s.a.). “Linguistic resources” in this sense can be understood either as a certain level of specific language and communication competences in a given language, or as the languages themselves, although most definitions of “language needs” do not consider the latter. Actually, “needs” typically refer to those necessities that arise after a given language has already been chosen. See, for example, one of the earliest definitions by Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 54), who imply that a language has already been chosen before they define “language needs” as “the ability to comprehend and/or produce the linguistic features of the target situation”.

This reference to the “target situation” tells us that in a language needs analysis, the first step (following the selection of a language) is to determine in which target situation(s) learners are likely to use the chosen language. The next is to list the linguistic tools that are commonly used in such situations. Thus the text by the Council of Europe quoted above states further: “These needs (and hence these communication situations) are identified as part of a specific process which consists of gathering together the information required to assess what uses will actually be made of the language learnt and thereby determine what types of content should be taught

¹ The Council of Europe goes on to specify: “in the short or medium term”. This limitation of language needs to the short and medium term does not utterly convince us, as it is well known that curricula for schools, in particular, have to take into account the long term as well. And even for companies, a long-term needs analysis is certainly beneficial and may well be necessary as a basis for drawing up long-term language policies (see Chapter 13 on language policies and practices).

on a priority basis.” (Council of Europe s.a.). As mentioned previously, the perspective expressed in such definitions is clearly that of an individual learner or of a language class tailored to learners’ needs, which makes analysis of such needs primarily a part of, or a prerequisite for the design of curricula for specific learner groups (see below, Section 5).

As far as the professional language needs of companies or organisations are concerned, the target situations are determined by the activities in which a particular company engages or by the tasks typical of certain positions in a particular organisation. Therefore, language needs analysis must also take into account the perspective of an individual company. This does not necessarily imply the design of a curriculum for an internal language course; apart from staff training, there are other ways to react to a language need detected in the enterprise (e.g., by recruiting new staff, by purchasing additional language services, by delegating the language problem to subsidiary companies, by standardisation in the form of a *lingua franca*; see also Chapter 13 on language policies and practices). If the needs analysis is carried out at the enterprise’s own request, it can take the form of a “language audit” (or “linguistic audit”, see, e.g., Reeves and Wright 1996; Koster 2004). Alternatively, the initiative may come from outside the company – from a national or supranational body, or a research institution. In such a case, the resultant studies may be less concerned with possible applications and may be conducted out of sheer scientific curiosity.

With regard to methodology, we can find single case studies that use interviews and/or participant observation; here, of course, a number of similar studies will be necessary if general conclusions are to be drawn. On the other hand, some large, questionnaire-based studies have been conducted with the aim of providing an overview of the language needs in a certain geographical area (sometimes only for companies of a certain size or a particular sector). For more details, see Section 4 below. Both these methods have a common goal and allow the following rough definition of *language needs (analysis)* as seen by companies/organisations: (the study of) those languages that are and/or should be used in organisations (companies, etc.) to meet their internal and external communication requirements, in terms of language/variety choice, level of competence, and tasks/situations to be covered. Clearly, the learner-oriented and organisation-oriented aspects of language needs analysis are closely connected. For instance, the results of a needs analysis based on organisations’ needs should have an impact on the curriculum design of language courses in schools, universities, etc., as well as on national and/or local language policies.

In both perspectives, we have to deal with a hierarchy of layers, of strata. First, there is the layer of teaching/learning contexts. An individual who learns a language, or who uses it in her/his profession, can be ascribed certain types of needs. At the same time, in more abstract terms, there are also the needs of whole groups of learners, of a class or course, or even of larger social groups such as college students

in general, students of business colleges and business schools, language or translation students, etc. However, the language needs of individuals and groups can also be envisaged outside teaching/learning contexts. For example, a second – more private – hierarchy comprises language needs in families, in neighbourhoods, in peer groups and in other social, political or religious environments. A third hierarchy is work-based and ranges from the language needs of a particular position to those of a whole department, of a company, of a corporate group, of an economic sector, of the whole economy, etc. Fourth, from a geographical perspective, one may be interested in the language needs of a certain district, of a city, a region and a whole country. Last but not least, it is also possible to transcend the level of a single country and take into account supranational entities, such as the EU. On this level too, all four hierarchies mentioned can be found (the learning, the private, the work-based/economic, and the geographical; see Table 12.1).

Furthermore, we must take into account the fact that language needs are widely diversified on all levels, from the individual to the supra-individual, organisational, etc. Different languages, language registers and partial competences may be relevant for different communication situations or domains. In sociolinguistics, the term *domain* was introduced by Joshua Fishman (1972) to denote a type of human activity or situation – classified according to the criteria place, role-relationship and topic – that correlates with a certain language, variety or register choice. Thus one and the same individual or group might speak one language or variant in religious contexts, another in the family, a third at school or work and yet another in the peer group or among friends. The existence of such domains explains many of the code switches and code choices that occur in any kind of speech community. This “domain” approach is the “practices” correlate of what we describe here under a “needs” perspective. Table 12.1 gives an overview of the various perspectives and levels. Note that distinctions between different items are not always clear-cut and that the table is not meant to be exhaustive.

An example can serve to illustrate the interrelations between the various perspectives and levels of language needs in business contexts described above (individual/organisation/national economy). Many companies have a general demand for English-language skills, which translates into a corresponding demand for, and interest in, English language education among “individual” secondary school students. This, in turn, makes it necessary to develop language policies on a national level, such as the incorporation of English language classes in secondary and tertiary education. In many cases, however, the relationship between business demands, educational offers and individual interests is more complex, as is illustrated by an example from the Austrian context. In Austria, French is still the most frequently taught second foreign language, followed by Italian and Spanish. Although interest in Spanish has increased over the last few decades, it is offered as an option only in some schools, and there mostly as a third language (Bäck 2004: 163). These arrangements reflect the fact that Austria trades more with French-speaking countries than

Table 12.1: Factors influencing language needs: Perspectives and levels

Perspectives → Levels ↓	Learners' Perspectives	Private & Social Perspectives	Job & Work Perspectives	Geographical Perspectives
Individual	learner	human being, citizen	employee, manager	resident/inhabitant
Group	school class, students in a language class	family, friends, neighbours	department, members of a project team, board of directors, works council	neighbourhood, rural community
Organisation	educational institution (e.g., school, university)	specific social group, subculture	company	town/city, rural district
Several similar organisations	all secondary schools, all universities in a country	social classes, lifestyles, etc.	business sector	region, federal provinces/states
State, Society	education system of a country	society	economy of a country	territory of a country
Supranational (Europe)	education policy of the EU	EU as a societal actor	EU as an economic actor	EU territory as a geographical unit

with the Spanish-speaking world, but not Italy's position as a more important trading partner than either group (Bäck 2004: 130). At the same time, Eastern European countries – four of which actually border on Austria – are very important partners with which no single language can be used to facilitate communication. But the various “Eastern” languages play only a minor role in the Austrian education system, which seems disadvantageous in economic terms (even if bilingual migrants from these countries meet a part of the Austrian economy's language needs).

In the end, the crucial factors in school- or university-related language decisions are not restricted to the economic potential of a certain language or, to put it another way, needs analyses are not inspired by economic considerations alone. Demand and supply on the “language market” (Stegu 2008) are determined not only by economic or work-related interest in particular languages, but also (fortunately!) by the demands of leisure-related and everyday communication, not to mention culture, educational background, tourist interests, etc.

At the state level, language options in secondary schools (which of themselves affect individual pupils' decisions) are likely to be influenced by other aspects of current circumstances in the country's education systems. To return to Austria, one such aspect would be the lack of teachers of “Eastern” languages and the excessive number of state-employed French teachers who cannot simply be dismissed for legal reasons. However, private interests or systematic pressures in educational policy are not the focus of this chapter. In the following sections, we turn instead to the particular language needs that arise in business contexts and the methods used to determine them.

3 Language needs in business and in companies

The most fundamental question to be asked in assessing language needs in business is, quite simply: Which language(s) is/are needed? The next relates to competences and levels: “Is there a need for oral or written competences, active or receptive, and on which level of the CEFR [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages], A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 or C2?” (Council of Europe 2011). An even more sophisticated variant would be task-oriented, inquiring about the specific situation types and language acts the learner will have to perform (answering phone calls, writing mails, negotiating, etc.). As regards the possible answers, the need may be for one language, for two languages or for several (for all learners or for specific groups). In the last two cases, the same skills may be seen as useful in all languages or requirements may differ (“We need language A for task X, language B [only] for task Y, etc.”). For example, English language skills are frequently expected to be very well-developed and comprehensive, whereas in other languages receptive competences, or the ability to make small talk, may be regarded as sufficient. Of course, views may vary within an organisation between positions or departments. This leads to the questions of who needs which skills, in which languages, and for which tasks.

As an example of a needs-analysis study in the business realm we will cite here the ELAN study (ELAN 2006a) carried out on behalf of the European Union. Using questionnaires, it investigated a representative sample of 2000 export-oriented small and medium sized businesses located in a total of 29 EU, EEA and candidate countries. The focus on SMEs was an innovative approach. ELAN also stands out because it gives actual figures for language needs, which are then extrapolated to the whole of the EU economy. The title of the study – “Effects on the European economy of shortages of foreign language skills in enterprise” – suggests that the questions were focused on problems and barriers of a linguistic nature. Below are some quotes summarising the key findings:

The survey of SMEs found that a significant amount of business is being lost as a result of lack of language skills. Across the sample of nearly 2000 businesses, 11% of respondents (195 SMEs) had lost a contract as a result of lack of language skills. [...] If the proportion of businesses losing trade through lack of language skills were repeated across the whole EU exporting SME sector, we could calculate conservatively that at least 945,000 European SMEs may be losing trade as a result of lack of language competence. The average loss per business over a three year period is € 325,000. (ELAN 2006a: 5)

Recruiting native speakers with language skills appears to be widely used as a language management technique, with 22% of businesses drawing on this resource. [...] There was varied practice in the use of translators and interpreters – between 4% (Ireland) and 84% (Lithuania) of businesses per country. [...] The use of local agents tends to be a recourse of smaller businesses lacking the investment resource to appoint additional staff themselves to service the requirements of a new market. (ELAN 2006a: 5–6)

A high proportion of businesses (48% across the sample) claimed to offer language training to their staff [...]. The proportions drop, however, when businesses are asked whether they have undertaken training (as opposed to offering training) in the previous three years. [...] However, both small and large companies say they prefer to recruit staff who already have language skills rather than having to invest in training. (ELAN 2006a: 6)

English is a key language for gaining access to export markets. However, the survey results suggest that the picture is far more complex than the much-quoted view that English is the world language. Russian is extensively used in Eastern Europe as a lingua franca (along with German and Polish). French is used to trade in areas of Africa and Spanish is used similarly in Latin America. Longer-term business partnerships depend upon relationship-building and relationship-management. To achieve this, cultural and linguistic knowledge of the target country are essential.” (ELAN 2006b: 1)²

In general, we can assert that the great majority of studies of language needs and policies, and especially those which claim to be prescriptive, are characterised by a very restricted focus. The prototypical company in mind when language questions are investigated is, as to be expected, a large industrial internationally-oriented company. The questions asked relate almost exclusively to language needs in external communication, and above all in exporting (i.e., selling) rather than importing. In this context, the studies inquire about the languages of core international clients and the way companies cope with the resultant needs. Even in multinational businesses, internal communication is rarely investigated, particularly in production contexts. Moreover, most of the studies that do exist have been of situations where a “corporate language” is to be introduced – usually English, and following a merger or acquisition. This situation is salient because it tends to create massive short-term language needs and thus momentarily places the language question centre stage (see, e.g., Ammon 1996; Truchot 2001; Vollstedt 2002; Lüdi and Heiniger 2005; Nekula, Nekvapil, and Šichová 2005; Nekvapil and Nekula 2006; Leeb 2007; Millar and Jensen 2009; Nekula, Marx, and Šichová 2009; Truchot and Huck 2009; Groot 2012).

This limited focus – big company, industrial, international – urgently requires to be corrected and widened. Small and medium-sized companies, which in many countries make up the major part of the economy, also have international connections and thus language needs, as demonstrated by ELAN. The same is true of service companies (in tourism, insurance, bank, transport sectors, etc.) that deal with their clients personally, a situation which creates multiple, highly complex language needs. Moreover, languages can be crucial in importing as well as exporting. As for internal business communication, discrepancies may arise between a company’s official language policy (often “English only”) and the complex, multifaceted reality of language practice (see Lavric 2012). Interesting issues can also be found in the

² As *language* skills must always be complemented by *intercultural* skills, both individuals and organisations certainly have “intercultural needs” as well. For a detailed discussion of intercultural business communication, see Chapter 11.

much neglected production area, for example when foreign staff are employed or when all production is relocated to a country with a different language.

4 Language needs analyses in business: Methodologies

Long (2005) discusses language needs analysis in great detail, without focusing specifically on businesses. His study presents a list of “procedures” and related references: non-expert intuitions; expert practitioner intuitions; unstructured interviews; structured interviews; interview schedules; survey and questionnaires; language audits; ethnographic methods; participant observation; classroom observation; diaries, journals, and logs; role-plays, simulations; content analysis; discourse analysis; register/rhetorical analysis; computer aided corpus analysis; genre analysis; task-based, criterion-referenced performance tests; triangulated methods. This collection lists, in a non-systematic way, terms and methods used by a whole range of authors. However, Long later provides a more structured overview of the advantages and disadvantages of various qualitative and quantitative approaches. Not surprisingly, he suggests a mixed-methods strategy (i.e. triangulation), as is common in other fields, and recommends that both language and business experts be included in the process (Long 2005: 32–34).

In the following, we present our own overview of the major research methods for establishing language needs in companies, as well as a discussion of their respective advantages and drawbacks. We will concentrate on needs from the business perspective and focus on the most important current methodological approaches:

A. *Quantitative studies* based on *questionnaires*, usually covering very large samples of companies (in one country, or a group of countries), among which we would like to highlight Hagen (1999a and b) and Vandermeeren (1998), both European in scope. Other researchers focus, for example, on small and medium size businesses (ELAN 2006a), on a certain language or a certain economic area (e.g., Austria, see Archan and Dornmayr 2006), or on both a language and an economic area (see Minkkinen and Reuter 2001; Reuter 2003: German in Scandinavian countries). The great advantage of this type of studies is their breadth, which enables statistical conclusions to be drawn and numerical comparisons between different languages and regions to be made. Their major drawback is a degree of superficiality, as it is rarely possible to ask deeper questions or to take into account respondents’ individual experiences and interpretations.

B. *Case studies* in the form of *qualitative interviews*. These have been conducted above all by Lavric (2008) and (2009a) and her students: see Bäck’s (2004) Ph.D. dissertation, Mrázová’s (2005) Master’s thesis and the contributions to the collective volume Lavric (2009b). This method allows researchers to go into greater depth,

while making it harder to provide quantitative results. Its success depends heavily on the choice of interview partners in companies, as well as the precise formulation of questions and a skilful interview technique. The method gains in representativeness and, to some extent, allows more general conclusions to be drawn if several case studies are conducted using similar methods and comparable questions in a relatively large sample of businesses. In the case of Lavric and her students (see above), the sample included thirty companies covering a broad range of sizes and industries. A special type of case study is the language audit (or linguistic audit), which is peculiar in its client and its aim. Here, a company asks a consulting firm to conduct a survey about the languages needed, asking first who in the enterprise needs which language, when, and for what task(s), and then how the corporate language policy can be optimised. This approach does not necessarily mean that more language needs will be covered; it might, for example, be aimed at cutting language-related costs (see Reeves and Wright 1996; Koster 2004, quoted in Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen 2012).

Some scholars have tried to overcome the possible shortcomings inherent in choosing between a quantitative and a qualitative methodology, and to obtain a more realistic assessment of what is actually needed in the workplace. This has led to the development of “blended needs analysis” (Lung 2014). Based on Bhatia’s (2012) critical genre analysis – an approach which attempts to be multi-perspective and multi-dimensional at the same time – this combines different methodologies, such as surveys, language audits, text analysis and interviews in order to gather information from the reflections of specialist informants (see also the end of this chapter and our remark concerning triangulation).

Nevertheless, all these different methods or combinations of methods raise the question of whether it is really possible to establish language needs “objectively” (see above, Section 2). Indeed, any statement about such needs seems to involve a certain degree of subjectiveness (see also Vandermeeren 1998: 159 and 2005: 160). Questionnaires and interviews cannot establish language needs as facts; they can only generate utterances and subjective opinions about them. As Vandermeeren (2005: 160) states: “A respondent’s claim that his/her company has foreign language need [sic] originates in his/her attitudes towards the use, acquisition and perfection of foreign languages”. Effective analysis requires knowledge of who answers questions about needs, their degree of expertise,³ and the experiences and personal language biography that lie behind their claims. It can reasonably be expected that a multilingual person will see language skills as more “necessary” than someone who speaks only English, and has, as they see it, always got by with this single

³ It is difficult to define the qualifications needed for someone to count as an expert in language needs. “Folk conceptions” often play an important role. The distinction between “folk linguistics” and “academic linguistics” is a problematic one (see Wilton and Stegu 2011). But linguistic laypeople, which most managers can be expected to be, and linguists are likely to differ on some aspects.

lingua franca. These observations can be summed up, in slightly exaggerated form, in the claim that every (successful) manager is convinced that their specific approach to the language issue is optimal – even if some approaches may seem somewhat odd (Lavric 2008: 161).

In light of the above, we can see that research methods A and B share a common methodological weakness: they are more or less “self-report methods”, which are therefore liable to considerable bias. They identify, not real language needs (or practices), but the perception/representation/construction of those needs by respondents. This self-report bias should, at least, be borne in mind by researchers using the two methods.⁴

C. One way to override self-report bias, at least partly, is to employ one of the many research methods based on *observation* or *participant observation*, for example, case studies where the researcher him/herself works in the company that he/she is studying. But even here results may be influenced by a certain amount of subjectivity, that of the researcher. Greater objectivity can be achieved with recording methods, where recording can be done either by the researcher or by those recorded (see below, D). This brings us to the *language-diary* method developed by Bürkli (1999) in her study of code-switching between standard German and different varieties of Swiss dialect in a large Swiss firm. It has been adopted by some of Lavric’s students, especially by Mrázová (see Mrázová 2005 and 2009), whose studies are also notable because the author presents her results in the form of a “*logogram*”, a kind of a sociogram applied to language issues – in other words, a graphic representation of the language choices made by a single employee in her dealings with all her various professional contacts.

Just as much as language needs in companies and organisations, the qualitative methods discussed in the last paragraph actually serve to investigate language policies and practices, which once more underlines the interrelatedness of the “needs” and the “policies and practices” concepts: as we have seen above, language needs can be viewed in a double sense, those yet to be met and those already met. As a measure of the latter type we can reasonably take the actual language practices in a company or organisation. But in order to determine where an “unmet language need” exists, questions must be asked about communication problems or potential contracts that were lost, as, for example, the ELAN study did. Alternatively, questions can be posed about future developments that will require additional language competences. Company representatives are in general willing to answer such questions, but their responses will relate only to “perceived language needs”.

⁴ See Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012), as well as the publications issued by Lüdi in the DYLAN-project, for example, Lüdi et al. (2009). They deliberately do not speak of language needs *per se*, but of “representations”, of “discourse” uttered by certain people about perceived language needs.

How, then, can “unperceived language needs” be approached and acknowledged? In that regard, it is possible to adopt a fundamentally sceptical position and ask whether a researcher has the right to decree, from his/her expert perspective, the existence of an unperceived language need in a particular company. That leads us to the very heart of the “perceived-unperceived” or, as some authors might argue, of the “conscious-unconscious needs” dichotomy. The assertion that language needs exist but are not perceived might also be seen as deriving from the researcher’s imposition on the situation of a view favourable to multilingualism. Let us posit the case of a company that has regular commercial contacts with a certain language area and complains about related communication problems and contract losses. Among multilingualism researchers, there might be broad consensus that – to apply Vandermeeren’s (2005: 162) criterion – the firm has an unconscious (in our terminology: unperceived) and unmet language need, even if the respondents themselves assign their difficulties to a lack of English skills on the part of foreign business contacts. Yet, should the costs of an appropriate language investment outweigh the benefits, the company would however be acting in a very rational way. Be that as it may, language practices are likely to be suboptimal in some companies, and experts, researchers or simply rational outsiders can, by asking the right questions, potentially identify and diagnose such unmet and unperceived business language needs.

D. Last but not least, this survey of needs analysis methods must include those – particularly “objective” – methods that employ *audio or video recordings* of certain (business) communication situations, and their *transcription and analysis*. See the literature relating to business meetings (cf. Handford 2010 and Chapter 6 of this handbook) which has to cope with the problem of data confidentiality and is therefore constrained, in many cases, to have recourse to role play and non-authentic communication data. Unfortunately, in this research field questions of language practice and choice are hardly ever taken into account (for one of the few exceptions, see Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1998). In addition, the complexity of these methods means that they can produce only case-specific results with very little potential for generalisation. Admittedly, the results are analysed in great detail, often in data sessions that involve whole groups of researchers (and are thus more “objective” than observation by a single researcher). But these studies deal essentially with practices rather than needs. They might illustrate a language need that has been met but will hardly ever be able to uncover an unmet one.

All in all, it appears to be difficult to define and investigate language needs in companies and organisations independently of language policies and practices – even more so when the aim is “objectivity”. Nevertheless, the methods mentioned under A can provide numbers and statistics, while those discussed in B to D yield a multitude of relevant examples, observations and evidence. There is no doubt that the most complete research results would be obtained by combining as many methods

as possible. However, this approach, which is often referred to as “triangulation”, can rarely be applied thoroughly, partly for practical reasons. What is more, some puristic scholars object to it on principle, because of fundamental epistemological considerations (cf. Flick 2004; from a critical perspective already Blaikie 1991).

5 Language needs and teaching and learning of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP)

In contrast to businesses’ language needs, those of individuals or learner groups – which will often relate to business generally or to a specific job or professional area – seem more accessible and easier to research. In this context, needs analyses – using surveys, interviews and, less frequently, observation – are often conducted with the aim of improving and targeting language learning (including learning of technical language and job-specific jargon). The results obtained will gain in precision, the more precisely the work environment and tasks of the person or group concerned are defined. The ideal situation in this sense is one where the individual(s) in question already work(s) in a specific workplace, for example, when a company organises language courses for groups of employees or one-on-one language classes for specific employees.

In such cases, the language to be learned is often predefined. All that remains to be ascertained in order to design teaching materials is the relevant “tasks”, i.e. the situations expected to be encountered and the communicative acts to be performed within them. Examples of this strategy are the “Deutsch für Ballkünstler” German course for footballers (Wiemann 2003; Repplinger 2005) or the EU’s VinoLingua project (VinoLingua 2009), which designed materials for winegrowers wishing to learn German, French, Italian or Spanish. In the latter case, a preliminary needs analysis showed that there was one core situation/activity to be covered, i.e., wine tasting, and two relevant contexts: a visit by a client or group of clients to the winegrower’s vineyard, and his/her participation in a wine fair.

Language choice is also predetermined in training employees who are expected to work closely with people from a particular language area. In this case, the crucial point is to identify those skills in the language concerned that will be especially useful and seem especially relevant to the anticipated tasks. The simplicity/complexity of formulating precise needs also depends on the time frame. While language preparation courses for a short-term stay abroad can be highly targeted, that is not possible if future professional tasks cannot be predicted with any precision. Secondary and tertiary education is a good example of this latter situation.

In these contexts, learners often seek, and expect to be prepared for, the realities of “business” and, understandably, want to acquire language skills they will need in the long term. Similarly, companies may desire job applicants who already possess certain indispensable, general skills, whereas complementary specific skills can be

acquired on the job. In cases where it is impossible to predict the exact communicative skills that secondary and higher education (business) students will need in their professional future, determining language needs and crucial “tasks” is much more intricate. Moreover, the choice of a language in addition to English is also difficult: how can a 14-year-old student (or a 20-year-old undergraduate) be expected to know which language(s) might one day become important for them? Such a case not only tests the limits of needs analysis; it also requires a different understanding of learners’ needs, since every newly learned language helps to broaden the learner’s perspective(s) about the world and their intercultural competence. In addition, they will acquire techniques they may later be able to use for learning further languages. Finally, the choice of language(s) made during education can often – and hopefully – become a “self-fulfilling prophecy” with regard to language needs. Former students may deliberately look for – and find – jobs that require and enable them to use their language skills. Interestingly, according to Lavric (1991: 375–376), this scenario is more probable the better the skills in the language concerned.

Evidently, it is impossible to predict the concrete communicative purposes for which different foreign languages might be employed in the future. Yet business surveys geared at identifying necessary “tasks” can bring to light particular core skills that are crucial in almost all (office) work environments (e.g., making phone calls, participating in business meetings, writing emails) or that are closely related to professional life in other ways (e.g., job interviews). At the same time, other typical and representative genres (contracts, orders, stock exchange reports...) can be practiced, although primarily as examples.

Similarly, it is impossible to recommend simple recipes for implementing and integrating identified target needs into various forms of language learning and teaching (including the learning and teaching of technical language and job-specific jargon). Needs-based language learning can be expected to happen in many different ways depending on, for example, whether the learners are students who plan to become managers, translators/interpreters or “foreign business language” teachers, or whether they are already working in a specific occupation.

In that connection, we wish to mention so-called “task-based teaching methods” (see Ellis 2003). These have become a topic of discussion in modern language pedagogy because they are based on linking concrete tasks in teaching contexts very closely to potential needs. However, as it is difficult to predict ad-hoc needs for students who are still in school or university, the concept of “language (learning) awareness” may become especially relevant (James and Garrett 1996; Knapp-Potthoff 1997). This idea suggests, among other things, that learners should be prompted to reflect on their learning, and on how they may speedily adapt to, and achieve new learning goals. In other words, they should strive for their own “language needs awareness” which would enable them to become more acutely conscious of the requirements of their future work environments and their own concrete learning needs (compare the title of Holme and Chaluusaeng 2006: “The learner as needs analyst”).

6 Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter is at the same time a transition to the next, written by the same authors and covering language policies and practices. By now, it has become clear that language needs are closely related to both these latter, the differences deriving mostly from the perspective adopted.

Thus we have remarked on the very wide overlap between needs and practices, many of which can be considered as examples of needs already or about to be met. In fact, it is hard to distinguish between needs analyses and studies of language practice in businesses. The only perceptible difference concerns those cases where there is a patent discrepancy between need and practice, and hence a clearly unmet need. These situations are, of course, the most potentially interesting and those that most draw the attention of researchers and practitioners.

Likewise, interconnections and overlaps can be detected between language needs and language policies. One such is the strong but complex correlation between the need for certain languages and language competences, and the policy measures that assign languages their roles in public life, in education, in organisations and in companies. These roles may already have given rise to certain language practices, which policies will have to address – a step that often takes a considerable time. Conversely, language policies contribute to creating realities which may, once established, have an important impact on perceived needs. One example would be a company establishing English as its corporate language, and so creating massive new language needs.

In the context of this handbook, it is natural that business language needs have been considered mostly from an economic perspective. However, they should always be seen in the context of other political, social and cultural “needs”, for example, that of the much broader EU policy in favour of multilingualism. This is pointed out, among others, by the *Forum des entreprises sur le multilinguisme* (see Commission européenne. Direction générale de l'éducation et de la culture 2008), which adopts a clearly prescriptive stance.

We regard it as obvious that, especially within business and LSP contexts, language teaching and learning cannot and should not be conducted without taking language needs into consideration. However, in discussing needs, we must always clarify whether we are referring to the needs of learners, of companies, etc., or to all potential needs. Furthermore, we must be aware that we can never refer to “objective” needs in the strict sense, since language needs are always social-discursive constructs arising from, and closely linked to subjective ideological, language-policy-related and other positions.

It is a fact that the majority of needs analyses nowadays are based on questionnaires and interviews, which *stricto sensu* do not show respondents’ “real” needs, but only those they perceive. However, subjective perceptions may still allow conclusions to be drawn about real, “objective” needs. To put it in social-constructionist

terms: “objective” – if we remain comprehensive and reasonable – only means constructed in an intersubjective way. In order to explain why people think what they do about language needs, there is a need for studies of the connections between statements about such needs and personal language experiences, language biographies and other relevant factors. This would allow language needs analysis to be firmly anchored in sociolinguistics and cross-linked with neighbouring disciplines.

To sum up, we have sought to enhance the “objectivity” – in the sense mentioned above – of needs analyses, which should (also) apply methods that are not prone to so called self-report bias, and – a further research desideratum – attach more importance to non-participant observation, especially (video)recordings of real business communication activities and their transcripts.

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Susanne Lesk, Eva Lavric and Martin Stegu

13 Multilingualism in business: Language policies and practices

1. Introduction
2. Language practices in business
3. Language policies in business
4. Insights from other selected disciplines
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Today's working environments are often culturally heterogeneous and linguistically diverse. As a result, language-policy-related decisions affect employees in their daily work, whether directly or indirectly. The current research interest in multilingual business contexts, and in people working within them, is broad and highly interdisciplinary. Traditionally, multilingual phenomena have been an object of study for socio- and contact linguistics, but also for psychology, sociology, ethnology and anthropology, with researchers from these disciplines occasionally investigating linguistic contact situations in organisations through very different theoretical lenses and with very different empirical instruments. In this contribution we follow a linguistic approach, but we try also to think out of the box and learn from research done elsewhere.

In the business context, language-policy decisions emerging from multilingual working environments are a field of study within applied (socio)linguistics, but not only there. Other disciplines in which multilingualism in business is being researched are management and organisation studies, political science, and economics. In fact, researchers from all those fields have discovered a common research topic: language and languages policies in businesses and the economy. We therefore begin this chapter by introducing the concept of language practices in business and presenting some questions, research and findings from a (socio)linguistic perspective. Next, we define the central concepts in the realm of corporate language policies and present the related linguistic research. We then widen our scope to continue with some findings from the other disciplines mentioned above. Finally, we propose some further directions for future research based on the state of the art presented in this chapter.

Throughout, we try to link language policies and practices to – and, at the same time, demarcate them from – the topic of language needs treated in Chapter 12. In fact, language needs, policies and practices are all highly intertwined (see Fig. 13.1).

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-013

Attempting to separate the concepts is thus somewhat artificial. If companies strive for a systematic approach to language policy (e.g., the choice of a common corporate language, language-related declarations in the mission statement), they will have to base their considerations on a profound language needs analysis including the organisational and individual level (an example of the link between needs and policies). Lived linguistic practices reflect the language needs met within a company, whereas desired linguistic practices would address unmet needs (an example of the link between needs and practices). If companies do not have an explicit language policy, they will certainly have an implicit one (see Section 3.4 below) which impacts on language practices and vice versa (an example of the link between policies and practices). Of course, in specific businesses we may observe contradictions between the three areas, just as we may find cases where policies, practices and needs are perfectly aligned.

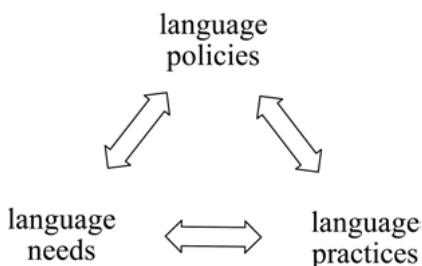


Figure 13.1: Triangular relationship between language policies, practices and needs

Moreover, much published literature on languages in business does not clearly separate needs, policies and practices. Research can focus primarily on only one of the three aspects, but it will inevitably touch on the three domains and produce closely related findings in them all. Therefore Chapters 12 and 13 are complementary, and the respective bibliographies are of potential interest for researchers interested in any of the three aspects.

Let us start here with a provisional distinction between language policies and practices, that is, some ideas about possible distinctions, with the aim of preparing the ground for further reflections. At first sight, one would be inclined to draw the line between language policies and practices on the basis of distinctions such as the following:

- Purposeful vs. unintended;
- Long/medium-term vs. ad hoc;
- Oriented towards the future vs. grounded in the past;
- Concerning a whole company vs. concerning an individual or a small group;
- Explicitness vs. implicitness;
- Coming from the management (top-down) vs. emerging from the staff (bottom-up).

As a first approximation, one could thus say that the more an action or a choice is purposeful, long-term, future-oriented, company-wide, explicit and top-down, the more it is policy; while the more it is non-reflected, ad hoc, individual, implicit, and bottom-up, the more it is practice.

But that is not the way the problem is being approached in current research about languages in business. As we will see below (Section 3), research about language policies in companies and organisations has already come to include all the non-purposeful, ad hoc, past-grounded, small-scale, implicit aspects of language choice and usage, and to define and analyse them as types of policy. This has made policies research more interesting and complex but left hardly any space for practices research, making it a subdomain of the policies realm.

Here we will suggest and adopt another type of approach that considers the policies-practices dichotomy mainly a difference in viewpoint. Under the title of practices (Section 2), we will present the descriptive aspects of sociolinguistic studies concerned mainly with the actual language use of people working in international business(es), and their explanations of that use. This will provide us with a large pool of empirical data giving a very concrete idea of the phenomena that policies-and-practices research is about.

Then, under the title of policies (Section 3), we will present research on the plans, motivations and ideologies being developed in the language sector by actors ranging from state to business, and from management to individual employees. These studies include a fine-grained discussion on terminological issues and an interesting ongoing debate on the limits of the policies concept in business language, as well as ethical and political considerations about the relationship of language and power, a central research issue of critical currents in applied linguistics (cf. Pennycook 2001).

Following that, we will call on other disciplines such as management and organisation studies and economics (Section 4), in order to consider the language question against alternative backgrounds with a view to shedding new light on certain issues. These perspectives could also considerably enrich the sociolinguistic approaches – just as, conversely, sociolinguistic concepts and findings could usefully receive greater attention in management and economics studies relating to languages (Section 5).

2 Language practices in business

2.1 The specific perspective of language practices research

It should be clear by now that many of the phenomena referred to as practices also belong, if seen from a slightly different perspective, to the needs and policies realms. So let us specify what this different perspective could be. Language practices in

companies are at once the manifestation and the concrete answer to language needs, as well as the empirical basis and the field of action of corporate language policies. Thus, they encompass, in our definition, all choices of language or linguistic variety involved in concrete communicative acts and habits (i.e., oral or written interaction among organisational members, or between these and the company's external stakeholders), but also human-resource management instruments (recruiting, training) dealing with language competences/resources.

What, then, are the questions to be posed by research into linguistic practices in business? Here are some suggestions (Lavric 2008c: 43): How do companies/organisations deal with the problem of language needs and use? Which languages and varieties are really employed in business life, by whom, with whom, in which situations and on which media? Why do companies possess, or lack the necessary competences? How do the different actors (management, employees) intervene in the design of daily practices? How far does real language practice in the company/organisation coincide with the official language policy (if there is one)? Does language use in companies/organisations follow meaningful patterns, and, if so, on what principles are these based? Is it possible to identify and describe something like "best practices", and what could be the criteria for doing so?

As regards methodology, language practices are, by their very nature, susceptible to study by observation or participant observation. Researchers can (i) observe the field, (ii) observe it while at the same time working in it, or (iii), they can ask participants – employees or other actors – to observe their own language practices and pass on their perceptions. The last is often done by means of qualitative interviews (or, sometimes, questionnaires). However, in this case researchers should be aware of the self-report bias inherent in the method, and of the fact that they are not accessing language practices directly, but rather self-perceptions and participant perceptions of such practices.¹ (See also Chapter 12 on language needs in business).

To the above discussion of practices and policies, we now add a list of areas of business communication with their corresponding actors. Menz and Stahl (2008: 136) distinguish five arenas of communication for a company: the internal arena, the market arena, the financial arena, the public arena and the media arena. The internal arena comprises all communication within the company or, for groups of companies, between headquarters and subsidiaries, and among subsidiaries. The market arena concerns not only sales – to sales agents and other distributors as

¹ The publications by Lüdi in the frame of the DYLAN project (e.g., Lüdi et al. 2009) do not speak of linguistic needs and practices, but of their representations and of the discourses and perceptions concerning language use. The same is true of Bothorel-Witz and Tsamadou-Jacobberger (2012), dealing with companies in Alsace, as well as Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012), whose title ("The perception of language needs in Danish companies: Representations and repercussions") makes it clear that deal with the issue of needs "from the perspective of social representation". For them, needs are "subjective constructions, being perceived and given substance by actors in context" (pp. 76–77).

well as to customers – but also purchases (the latter often neglected in language policies). The financial arena comprises communication with banks and financial markets. The public arena includes communication with state and regional institutions. Along with the media arena, it is also concerned with the company's positioning in society as a whole, its communication with politicians, journalists and the wider public. Indeed, the node constituted by the enterprise is surrounded by a veritable network of relations and structures, whose branches and links are determined by power relations, and hence by differing requirements for (linguistic) compliance and adaptation.

Language practices are influenced by this organisational environment and by their relationship with policies. They may sometimes merely represent employees' linguistic habits or they may follow and reflect explicit and/or implicit language policies (for the distinction, see Section 3.4). On occasion, they lead to the formulation of new goals for organisational language policy, and the implementation of new policy measures. Therefore, practices may either be shaped by the goals of an organisational policy – in such cases, they usually reflect language needs already met – or they may contradict policy goals, implicit or explicit. In the latter case, they could indicate needs perceived to be unmet. In either instance, language practices are ways to resolve problems in corporate communication situations, internal or external. They stem from more or less spontaneous linguistic choices in concrete linguistic contact situations between organisational stakeholders (e.g., employees, customers, suppliers).

2.2 Overview of language practices research

Research into language practices in business and economics has traditionally taken place in the field of applied linguistics, within a sociolinguistic framework. What is striking about this research is that, while the questions asked and methods used do not vary greatly, its objects are diverse. It investigates, with various thematic focuses, language policies and practices in businesses (and non-profit organisations) of all sizes and structures, and in numerous locations. Thus we find empirical language practices research focusing on:

- enterprises and/or languages in a particular territory (e.g., Schweiger 2009 on Czech and Slovak in north-east Austria, Bäck 2004 on Romance languages in Upper Austria, Minkinen and Reuter 2001 and Reuter 2003 on German in Scandinavian countries, etc.);
- small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) throughout the EU, involving major research projects such as the ELAN-Study (European Commission 2006) and the PIMLICO-Project (European Commission 2011), both funded by the European Commission;

- multinational companies and organisations (Ammon 1996; Coulmas 1996; Duchêne 2008; Bellak 2014);
- the non-profit sector (e.g., Steiner 2014 on football clubs), also in comparison with the for-profit one (Lavric 2009c, 2012a).

In contrast to the corresponding management literature on language policies, which concentrates *de facto* on Western Europe and the Anglophone world, linguists do not seem to be restricted to a specific geographical context. They are interested in businesses all over the world, also in African, Asian and South-American contexts, and they are working on bigger units and smaller ones, for example, continents, countries, regions and districts. Among research into European organisations, there is a strong concentration on those located in Central Europe (e.g., Austria, Switzerland, Czech Republic: Nekvapil and Nekula 2006; Bäck and Lavric 2009a–b; Nekula, Marx and Šichová 2009; Lüdi 2012) or in Romance-speaking countries (Bäck 2004; Mrázová 2005 and 2009). Recently, there has been greater research interest in the Russian context, with studies on language use and the management strategies of multinationals operating in Russia (Lechner 2010; Garstenauer 2017).

In terms of research topic and focus, we find empirical work about internal and external communication in enterprises (Vollstedt 2002; Harder 2009; Lavric 2012b). More recently, the topic of globalisation has entered academic linguistic discourse in debates about cases of linguistic standardisation (e.g., English only or French only) and non-standardisation, especially in relationship with the introduction of English as a corporate language in multinational companies. Some studies remain mainly descriptive (McAll et al. 2001). Others apply a rather critical approach towards the linguistic and social-economic impacts of language standardisation in organisations (see also Section 3.3). They try to question and reveal the often hidden power relations that underlie the implementation of hegemonic linguistic policies and practices (Heller 2003; Duchêne and Piller 2011; Piller and Takahashi 2013). Still others are merely prescriptive. For example, the PIMLICO-Project (European Commission 2011: 4) mentioned above, illustrates best practices for imitation (e.g., language training and cultural briefing schemes, the use of professional interpreters and translators or native-speaker recruitment).

This sub-section has provided an overview of specialist literature on practices. The next two (Sections 2.3 and 2.4) will report on the results of 30 case studies carried out by Austrian researchers under the guidance of Eva Lavric (see Lavric 2008a–c, 2009a–c, 2012a–b; Bäck 2004; Bäck and Lavric 2009; Mrázová 2005 and 2009; Lechner 2010). These will also be compared to other, related studies (e.g., Vandermeeren 1998 and 2005; Charles 2002; Poncini 2003; Leeb 2007; Truchot 2009; Truchot and Huck 2009; Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen 2012, Lüdi 2012; Bellak 2014). As regards the methods employed, these studies were mainly based on qualitative interviews with a number of people in each company, complemented sometimes by questionnaires (in order to reach a wider range of subjects) or linguistic

landscaping (cf. Waldthaler 2014; Stinger 2015). In certain cases, researchers had resort to participant observation or the language-diary method developed by Bürkli (1999). This consists of noting down, in the course of a whole working day (or more), all interactions in which a certain employee is involved, and the languages and variants s/he uses for different interlocutors, themes and situations. We will proceed from external to internal communication (the communication of a parent company with its subsidiaries being counted as internal), and finish with a sub-section on policies vs. “*bricolage*”.

2.3 Language choices in external communication – issues of adaptation

External communication, especially in selling – business to customer/client (B2C) – lies at the core of all reflections and preoccupations about language needs, policies and practices in business. The common adage is, of course, that you can easily buy anything in your own language, but to sell you must use the customer’s. This idea supposedly reflects the power imbalance in the buyers’ markets that predominate today, which puts sellers in a weaker position and forces them to adapt linguistically. It is not entirely erroneous, but certainly somewhat simplified.

In practice, things may turn out to be more complex, that is, there seem to be products and businesses that are so successful that they sell quite independently of the language strategy adopted. Such market dominance manifests itself in our case studies in two rather different ways. First, in line with expectations, it may result (at least partly) from a well-planned and constantly-refined distribution/language policy. Second, it may derive from the excellence of the product concerned: as we all know, some products simply sell themselves. The latter case is exemplified by one of our Austrian studies (Feurle 2009), which found that neither language policy nor, for example, the company’s webpage are taken very seriously because there is no perceived need to do so. However, we will leave aside such cases and turn to ‘business as usual’, that is, markets with strong competition where sellers must fight to win the customer’s favour.

Here, one of the main findings of studies such as Bäck (2004) is that the need to address the customer’s language issues is closely linked to the choice of distribution channel. Thus, use of a zero-stage channel, where contact with the customer is direct, will require provision to be made for the necessary language skills within the company’s own staff. If, on the other hand, the chain is extended, either by engaging a sales agent or by establishing a joint venture or subsidiary, the language problem is converted from an external to an internal communication issue, or something very similar. In fact, the linguistic power balance is simply inverted. While companies that deal directly with their customers/clients generally find themselves in the weaker position and are thus forced to adapt linguistically, companies that make

use of sales agents, joint ventures or subsidiaries will probably be able to force these to adapt – or at least to fall back on a lingua franca (in general, English). This shows how language issues in business are intrinsically related to the power balance between seller and buyer. Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012: 82) confirm this finding, describing in Danish companies they study the “outsourcing of language needs (with the exception of English) from the head office to native-speaking affiliates and agents, or to affiliates perceived as having linguistic expertise.” Of course, a large number of companies adopt a combined strategy, creating subsidiaries in the most important markets and working through commercial agents or sales managers in the minor ones. These intermediaries are in general very competent in the languages of the countries they cover.

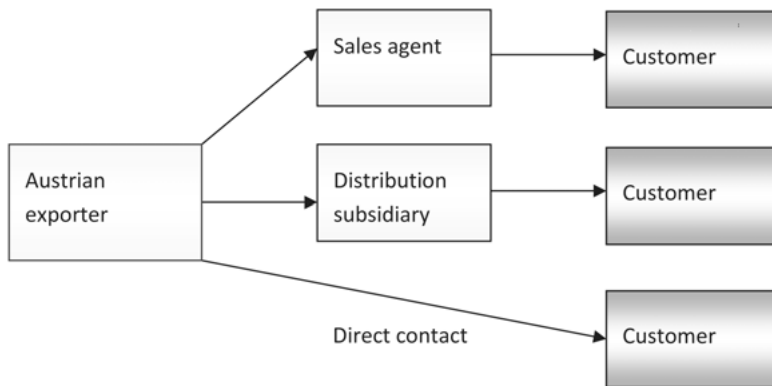


Figure 13.2: Distribution channels in exportation (cf. Bäck and Lavric 2009: 48)

An alternative to the view that “to sell you must adapt” is the conviction that “nowadays everybody speaks English, English being the universal language in business”.² This, too, is not completely wrong; under certain circumstances it is indeed possible to be successful with “English only”. Among our case studies, we find two pertinent examples. The first (Zipser 2009) is of a Tyrolean appliances manufacturer, with production sites in Hungary and China, that exports virtually worldwide. Its practice is to set up a subsidiary in every single new market and to require all communication inside the group to be in English and to pass through headquarters. Our second example is a small company producing drinks for children. It has achieved significant export success by cooperating in every foreign market with

² Among those who hold such a position, is Neely (2012), who is cited as a negative example in Bellak (2014: 299). Neely states that “English is the common business language of choice in the 21st century, regardless of company origin or headquarter location” (p. 236) and that “[t]here’s no question that unrestricted multilingualism is inefficient and can prevent important interactions from taking place and get in the way of achieving key goals” (p. 118).

a local distributor who speaks both English and the local language, and who is in charge of adapting the entire marketing strategy, including the product name, to the local situation.

The success of an English-only strategy is heavily dependent on the use of intermediated distribution channels. Moreover, this strategy is seen to be a fiction as soon as the whole system, for example an entire multinational company, is considered. For the language problem is not really solved; it is simply delegated to subsidiaries or distributors, who must make considerable efforts to provide language competences. Therefore, what constitutes a good solution for external communication can pose serious problems for internal communication. Truchot (2009) reflects critically on this practice, focusing on the power imbalance between headquarters and subsidiaries, and on the inequalities that arise through an English-only internal-communication policy.

Also relevant here is the study by Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012) of multinationals operating in Denmark. It investigates, not language needs *per se*, but the representations of those needs. For it soon becomes patent that nearly all participants share the idea that English is sufficient for all purposes, and attribute communication problems to the often poor English skills of their interlocutors (e.g. in French- and Spanish-speaking countries). In doing so, they ignore the possibility that the real causes lie in their own lack of knowledge of local languages and a failure to perceive their relevance. This result – a typical example of what Vandermeeren (1998) and (2005) would call an unconscious language need – can be explained by the sample of companies chosen, which mainly comprised a number of Danish groups, each with several foreign affiliates. Thus Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen's study reveals, not the language policies and practices of multinationals, but the nature of internal communication between head offices and foreign subsidiaries. Interestingly, their sample also included one Danish affiliate of a foreign company, which – not unexpectedly – reported communication problems with its head office.

Having dealt with these real or apparent exceptions, let us now come to our main point: the crucial importance of linguistic adaptation (“speaking the customer's language”) as a success factor in business. This applies particularly to certain sectors where standardisation (i.e., the adoption of a lingua franca like English) is only a second choice, while “compliance” has an overwhelming importance in commercial relationships (see Section 2.4). As a result, companies must provide in some part of their structure the language competences that are necessary for adapting to their customers' needs.

This is especially true for service companies, and even more for businesses working in tourism, who usually engage directly with their clients and can hardly outsource language skills. It seems to be in tourism that – unsurprisingly – we find the most versatile code-switchers. Two of our Tyrolean case studies investigate tourist information bureaus (Albel 2009; Reichl 2009), one using a language diary that shows a switching rate of one switch every two or three minutes. The best way

for a company to assure good external communication is, of course, to make use of its own personnel, which means recruiting staff with specific language skills (especially native speakers), or providing language training for existing employees (usually during employees' free time, but financed by the company). We can cite the case of one Tyrolean bank (Handle 2009) that opened a special office for Italian clients only, partly by employing Italian native speakers and partly by funding language courses for its staff. As for Mrázová's (2005, 2009) investment bank in Paris, it uses a special team of native (or near-native) speakers for every one of its important markets. And the case study of the timber industry in Tyrol (Steiner 2009) – a sector that depends to a very large extent on the Italian market – shows that highly professional companies do not employ just one specialist for the most important foreign language; they systematically ensure that other competent speakers are on hand should the specialist be unavailable.

Like other aspects of a business's operation, language needs are always subject to cost-benefit considerations with their corresponding trade-offs. Even if it is intuitively obvious that foreign language skills impact positively on business results, considerable problems arise as soon as it comes to measuring their benefits. For these are neither operational nor easily quantified, while the costs involved are concrete and readily quantifiable. In addition, they are incurred in the short term, whereas a good language policy will only bear fruit after a certain period of time. No wonder, then, that – despite fulsome declarations of the need for foreign-language competences – a very simple language investment in a certain market area can fall victim to cuts once its marginal utility is questioned (see Bäck and Lavric 2009: 58). What is more, companies are keenly aware of the changing importance of particular markets, which may lead to recruitment, but also to dismissals as soon as a market seems to lose significance. For example, one of the companies in Bäck's (2004: 281) study employed an agent for the Russian and Arab markets, but, as sales went down, it hired his services as a freelance instead. Finally, from the individual's point of view, language competences hardly ever pay off in salary terms, but they may be decisive in being recruited at all.

This rational interplay of supply and demand does not always apply, however, as it can be shown that some companies simply fail to take advantage some language skills already available among their employees. This kind of short-sightedness often occurs with very well integrated immigrants from Eastern Europe, who are seen as having fully assimilated to their host countries (see Mrázová 2005 and 2009). In fact, companies should have a detailed insight into the language skills of their entire workforce because one of the results of our case studies is that language competences to some extent create their own market opportunities. That is, a businessperson with a particular language competence will more easily come upon the idea of conquering the corresponding market(s), especially in small companies, where no overall language strategy can easily be implemented. Here the language

skills of the company's head or – more rarely – of a single employee can be decisive for entering a certain market.³

As we have noted, providing the necessary language skills in-house is often the first and best choice for companies (although not cost-neutral). It is true that, for certain types of documents or situations, it may be more convenient to resort to external translating and interpreting services. However, our case studies show that these are rarely used, and can be problematic because of the need for specialised terminology. Only big companies with a radical adaptation strategy report that they regularly use translation services, in general for web pages, leaflets, contracts and other written documents. This is the case especially for freight forwarders (cf. Klammer 2009; Mäser 2009), who are the absolute champions when it comes to multilingual homepages. But other companies, especially those with highly technological products, complain about the low accuracy level of translations done by professional translation bureaus. They tend to revert to their own personnel and/or have their translations checked by long-standing customers. Those who do turn to outside translators consistently use the same individuals, who thus build up a certain competence over the years (cf. Graber 2009; Zipser 2009; also Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen 2012: 83).

Another question is: where (i.e., in which positions) do foreign language competences tend to be found? The answer is that, while sales managers and secretaries generally possess language skills, these are much rarer – and would often be badly needed – among technical staff. Interestingly, it is not always the highest levels in the corporate hierarchy that are most linguistically skilled, a fact that may reflect the dominant role of English in top business negotiations. Instead, competences are found above all among those employees that deal with foreign customers on a day-to-day basis; in a hotel, for example (see Heis 2009), that includes nearly everybody, from the reception desk to the waiters and the tennis coaches. The same is true for a retail bank or an investment bank (see Mrázová 2005 and 2009). In manufacturing and commercial firms, competences are found among sales managers, who often spend a large part of their time travelling from customer to customer (or from subsidiary to subsidiary). They are important also for secretaries and executive staff who deal with foreign customers via email or phone.

One domain where language skills are almost always missing is that of technical assistance. It seems hard to find technicians with adequate competences, although

³ In one of the case studies (Stiebellehner 2009), a company had recruited a man with Japanese origins only for his English competences, but ended up confiding the Japan business to him. There is also the example (Feurle 2009) of the small company that had – by chance – recruited an employee with Latvian roots, which gave it the idea of exporting to Latvia. The same company sells its products in Bulgaria through the Bulgarian brother-in-law of one of its employees. Finally, one of the companies we studied (Graber 2009) was employing two Scandinavian women in production, but it was planned that they would change over to the marketing department as soon as the company started exporting to Scandinavia.

they are urgently required by many companies. However, especially if the product concerned is technically more sophisticated, we find a certain type of linguistically-competent engineer who acts as instructor and trouble-shooter. He or she interacts directly with technicians abroad (who themselves often lack language skills), relying on shared technical knowledge and refined specialist terminology. One such trouble-shooter, employed for the Latin American market (see Feurle 2009), affirms that language skills account for 80% of his job and technical skills only 20%. In the company studied by Lechner (2010), technicians sent to Russia communicated with their local colleagues through basic notions of Russian, gestures and drawings; as this did not work fully satisfactorily, the firm hired a translation student – the researcher – as a language expert.

A further aspect of external communication, much less remarked on than dealings with customers/clients, is that of communication with suppliers. Certainly, as we have already pointed out, the language issue is seen as much less relevant in purchasing. But it can be important there too, and the complacent attitude that companies often adopt as soon as they are in the buyer's position can be a little short-sighted. Thus linguistic competences relevant for alternative suppliers' markets might open up new possibilities and help to cut costs. This was the case for one of the companies studied by Bäck (2004: 259), which made use of Italian competences in its purchasing department. The point is definitely proven by the Tyrol fruit-importing company (Loretz 2009) whose whole corporate strategy rests on the excellent Spanish competences of its two bosses, which enable them to manage direct contacts with all their important suppliers. Ironically, for sales purposes this company employs its local dialect of German.

To conclude our discussion of how companies can best generate language skills, we want to add an interesting empirical observation. According to our studies, all (successful) managers think that their approach to the language issue is the optimal one. Thus managers who acquired their language competences at university tend to look for those with a similar educational background, while managers who learned a language during a stay in a country where it is spoken prefer staff with comparable experience abroad. And managers who themselves have done very well with English only (cf. Stiebellehner 2009) are convinced that their employees need no further language skills – in some cases, remaining blissfully unaware that their employees report regular use of a wide range of languages.

Finally, one type of situation which must be considered rather apart from the day-to-day language business is that of high-level negotiations, which form a very special kind of communicative setting with its own set of rules. There, the normal economics of language choice (in sociolinguistics: “*code choice*”) are overruled by a strong need to put both parties involved on an equal footing, which will generally exclude using the mother tongue of either and militate in favour of a lingua franca. Even language-friendly managers, who usually miss no opportunity to practice their other competences, report that they conduct negotiations almost exclusively in

English. However, small talk at the beginning or during pauses provides a good opportunity to use a partner's own language and thus score on the sympathy scale (see, e.g., Bäck 2004: 234, 282). It might be this role of English in top-level negotiations that contributes to the conviction of some top managers that English alone is sufficient in business, and that other language competences are superfluous (see also Truchot 2009).⁴ That conviction, in turn, will tend to lead them to implement an English-only language policy inside their organisation as well, and it is to such internal communication that we will now turn.

2.4 Language choices in internal communication: Policies vs. “*bricolage*”

To start this sub-section on internal communication in businesses, we want to report on a company studied by Mrázová (2005, 2009) that experiences a conflict between the provision of language competences for external communication and the ease of internal communication. For each of the important language areas it deals with, the international investment bank concerned employs a team of two or three, at least one being a native speaker and the others having near-native competence. So the question arises: which language will be chosen for inter-team communication? As the company is situated in Paris and most employees speak very good French, in general French acts as the workplace *lingua franca*. However, the members of the Scandinavian team speak very poor French, so that communication with them must be in English. As a result, internal language patterns are complicated significantly by the company's primary concern to provide linguistically adequate interlocutors for all of its clients.

This is an example of the local language acting as a workplace *lingua franca*, with only a small niche for the universal *lingua franca* English. But in general, when it comes to internal communication, the main question in international businesses is whether to go for English-only. According to Truchot (2009), multinational businesses have to make language choices between three types of languages: the language(s) of the country where their sites are located, the language of the country where the parent company is based, and English as a *lingua franca*. Certainly, we hold that other choices are possible, depending on the location; for example, a Brazilian multinational operating exclusively in South America might well choose

⁴ Truchot (2009) points out the link between the introduction of English-only as a corporate language (he calls it “vehicular English”) and the everyday linguistic environment of high managers. Increasingly, managers, who are often socialised professionally in English-speaking countries and follow a truly international career path, have the habit to communicate at work only in English, which might provoke alienating effects towards local employees at lower hierarchal levels, produce misunderstandings and even cause dangerous issues of security in production and service. See also a hint to the same problem in Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012: 91).

Spanish as its lingua franca. Elsewhere in the Western world, however, companies are increasingly introducing English, either as their company language or as a working language in certain predefined situations such as international or board meetings. In fact, an increasing number of (multinational) companies are introducing a one-language policy because they are convinced that this is the simplest communication solution in a world-wide organisation. Language plurality is seen as a drawback, not as an asset.

A number of authors, among them Truchot (2009) and Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012), view such policies with a critical eye, showing in their case studies that practices may be quite different from official policies. A number of our case studies, too, show that English-only does not work among employees with the same, non-English mother tongue. This truism is worthwhile asserting in view of the large number of multinational companies that have already introduced English as the official language for all internal communication at the expense of the original company language. This is even more likely to happen when mergers and acquisitions are involved, as English is a solution that in general privileges neither of the new partners. For example, in a merger between an Austrian and an Italian bank (Leeb 2007), English was chosen as the language of the newly constituted group, just as in the Nordea case presented by Charles (2002). Such a language policy appears simplistic and is hardly ever followed in practice by employees, who continue to weave their complex but meaningful language-choice patterns, a process referred to in Lavric (2012a) as *bricolage* (the French term for “do-it-yourself”). In their spontaneous choice of language, speakers follow four main types of motivation (cf. the language-choice factors developed in Lavric 2000, 2001 and Bäck’s 2004 “motivational factors”⁵):

- Natural choice: the use of a common native language or of the language for which the product of the competences of both speakers is greatest (cf. Myers-Scotton’s 1983 “unmarked language choice”);
- Language practising: the wish to practise a language one might not otherwise master so well;
- Prestige: the desire to impress through one’s language competences, and its opposite, the fear of losing face by making mistakes;
- Compliance: the selection of the code that speakers believe to be preferred by their interlocutor.

Only in e-mails, or and in written reports and papers, do employees tend to follow the official language policy, as they know that these kinds of texts may be disseminated

⁵ Here is a similar list of motives dressed by Bellak (2014: iii): “[P]articipants’ language choices are informed by (1) their language proficiency (first language and possible foreign languages), (2) their roles, role relationships within the employment domain, and politeness strategies, all shaped by relative status and power, (3) their attitudes to language and motivations, and (4) social forces external to the MNC community.”

more widely. Thus the medium may be an important factor in language choice, while in oral communication, it will be the level of formality associated with a situation that decides on the degree to which an official language policy is followed. In fact, the situations and circumstances in which employees are inclined or disinclined to follow such a policy (and the instruments the company might implement in order to impose it) would make a very interesting topic of investigation at the confluence between policies and practices research.

Be that as it may, and official language policies notwithstanding, in internal communication staff will generally tend to use the language of the country in which their workplace is situated (unless there are some members that do not speak this language at all, as in the Mrázová case in Section 2.3). In doing so, they follow the general rules of language choice in communities with different mother tongues and language skills: usually, a language will be chosen that allows all people present to participate in the conversation (cf. Myers-Scotton's 1990: 98 "Virtuosity Maxim": "Switch to whatever code is necessary in order to carry on the conversation / accommodate the participation of all speakers present."). The smaller or more homogeneous the group, the easier this can be done. Actually, in business as in any other linguistic environments, people do indeed tend to choose the most "natural" or "efficient" or "default" language. For example, in the Austrian subsidiary of a French company, the language of everyday conversation will usually be German, the common native language of the majority of employees. But in communication with the French headquarters, those of the staff who speak French will use this language as much as possible, either because it is natural or to practice their French and show compliance (cf. also Lüdi 2012: 147). This means that in dyadic communication, and in all situations other than official meetings⁶ or suchlike, individual code choices will tend to follow their own rules. And, should all participants share the same mother tongue, that is, of course, the most natural choice which no language policy will ever prevent them from making.

It may even occur that employees fight to keep their "natural" working language in the face of a corporate language policy. For a series of cases where the staff resisted an English-only policy introduced by the management (in France, and in favour of French instead of English) see, for instance, Truchot and Huck (2009: 15) who put forward arguments partly from a trade unionist's perspective. They cite, for example, the Inter-Union Campaign for the right to work in French in France (*Collectif intersyndical pour le droit de travailler en français en France*) and emphasise the imbalance of forces between a parent company and its subsidiaries, as well as the inequalities that arise from an English-only policy. They also stress that the

⁶ But even in official meetings, as Poncini (2003) shows, beside official discourses, a whole range of highly diverse and highly regular language choices occur, bringing together those participants that come from the same linguistic area, plus those others that associate with them through friendly and competent usage of their common language.

better employees know how to communicate, the better the company should operate. Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012) report a series of cases where an English-only corporate-language policy imposed by the head office had to be softened up or suspended for some of foreign affiliates owing to the poor English skills of staff there. These cases show how policies that fail to take account of the complexity of the language issue can – after a struggle – be overridden by practices, in the interests of good communication and good operation.

The alternative to defining an official language policy – and this is true for both internal and external communication – is to follow a strategy of linguistic *bricolage*, of laissez-faire and trust in staff's improvisation skills (see Lavric 2012a). We have seen in Section 2.3 the case of a company (Stiebellehner 2009) whose head believes strongly that English-only is sufficient, while his staff use a wide range of languages depending on the interlocutor and the situation. This is an example of what could be called “employees’ potential for self-governance”. It confirms once more the subversive idea that many aspects of a business may function, not thanks to, but in spite of top-down policies of the management. Sometimes it seems sufficient to hire the right people and let them act as they please without hindering them. Such a strategy of laissez-faire – a bottom-up language policy – may function very well in small and medium sized companies. It might also be worth trying out in large multinationals, although it seems that these tend to need a well-planned language policy that focuses on present and future needs with a view to conquering new markets systematically through careful consideration of distribution channels and well-budgeted language investments.

In any case it might be advisable, even for large multinationals, not to frustrate *bricolage* practices developed by employees and managers who use tried and trusted means to resolve challenges in new situations with the means to hand. Millar, Cifuentes, and Jensen (2012: 91) speak of “creative tactics of muddling through and making do” that derive from competences and experiences accumulated over years, which management should value because they usually function rather well – indeed, sometimes better than the official policies. In fact, language-policy researchers have already included such bottom-up strategies in their field of investigation. Suffice it to refer to Lüdi's (2012: 160) observations on multilingual practices in business, or Bellak's (2014) study of multinational companies in Austria and Denmark provocatively titled: “Can language be managed in international business?”

In the context of *bricolage* and code choice, we should also mention a very frequent communicative practice observable in interactions between multilingual individuals with (at least partially) corresponding language “repertoires” (on this concept see, e.g., Busch 2012). Here we seldom find exclusive use of a single language, but rather practices of “code switching” (Myers-Scotton 1990; Auer 1998b; Ammon, Mattheier, and Nelde 2004; Lavric 2009c; Stegu 2009). Code switching is defined as “the alternative use of two or more ‘codes’ within one conversational episode” (Auer 1998a: 1); a base language contributes the syntax and most elements, and some

lexical or idiomatic elements of one or more other languages are “switched” in. Should the interlocutors switch repeatedly and regularly between two (or more) languages, the practice is referred to as “code mixing” (Muysken 2000); this happens above all where migrant communities are involved. Issues of situationally-conditioned “code choice” arise, for instance, when small talk takes place in language A (e.g., the language of the customer), while more specialised topics are discussed in language B (e.g., English as a lingua franca). This can happen both in internal and in external communication.

3 Language policies in business

3.1 Definition of concepts and empirical fields

At the beginning of this section, we would like to return to the definition of “policies” (as opposed to “practices”) we gave in the introduction to this chapter. There we suggested that “the more an action or a choice is purposeful, long-term, future-oriented, company-wide, explicit and top-down, the more it is policy; and the more it is non-reflected, ad hoc, individual, implicit, and bottom-up, the more it is practice”. We stated, however, that current language policy research tends not to respect these criteria strictly and to include in “policies” research many aspects traditionally seen as “practices”. That is why we provisionally defined “language policy” as “the plans, motivations and ideologies developed in the language sector, by all actors ranging from state to business, and from management to individual employees”. Now, in this sub-section, we will give a more detailed outline of possible definitions of “language policy”, before stating our own position.

To do this, we will examine the specialist literature with its various approaches. In applied linguistics and, more precisely, in sociolinguistics, we can locate language policy as a field of study for various scholars, each of whom see the concept differently. Depending on historical traditions (Jernudd and Nekvapil 2012) and scope, the focus of the various studies and the definitions of core concepts may vary significantly. The German linguistics tradition usually distinguishes between two notions, the first being a language policy focused on a single language and therefore mainly concerned with the elaboration and establishment of linguistic norms for spoken and written language, such as orthographic standards and issues of lexis (*Sprachpolitik*). The second notion (*Sprachenpolitik*) is a policy which regulates the relationship between different languages and groups of speakers within a given territory (e.g., a state or region) or other socio-cultural unit (e.g., a profession, a sub-culture, a company). It attempts to control the actual social use of languages, defines the linguistic rights of speakers and fixes the official status of individual languages, with or without direct reference to others (Ammon 2010: 636, 650). Here, in this paper, we are concerned primarily with *Sprachenpolitik*, in the sense of a policy designed to influence the use of different languages available in a company/organisation.

(Of course, a focus on *Sprachpolitik* in business is also possible and relevant: scholars would then study, for example, issues of “correct” discourse or politeness; see Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003: 185.)

Next, following the French sociolinguist Boyer (2010), we can define language policy as the sum of choices, objectives and orientations adopted by states or other institutions in order to cope with linguistically-conflictive situations. Of course, if we look at organisations, we can observe linguistic contact situations which are not necessarily conflictive – at least on the face of it. However, in their work on multilingual workspaces, some sociolinguists too have recently detected imbalances in power and status among employees with different linguistic backgrounds and resources (Duchêne, Moyer, and Roberts 2013). Some of these studies analyse strategically important functions of human-resource management (HRM) – recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, staff development (comprising training, succession planning and career management) and rewarding, or compensation (Fombrun, Tichy, and Devanna 1984: 41) – with regard to language policy. When employees’ linguistic competences are taken into account in studies, the focus is often placed only on recruiting instruments or language-training activities (thus partly reflecting business practice) to the neglect of other areas of HR management such as career management, where criteria for promotion could also include language proficiency. Moreover, companies rarely compensate linguistic competences specifically, although they regularly benefit from the linguistic performance of their staff. For example, multilingual employees whose job has no particular linguistic requirements may also be required to work for their company, more or less regularly, as interpreters, even if they are not professionally trained to do so (Spolsky 2009: 59; Meyer et al. 2010; Duchêne 2011; Duchêne and Heller 2012; Piller and Takahashi 2013). Companies which act in this way might be criticized for being exploitative; but others that collect no information about their staff’s language competences are simply short-sighted. Such wilful ignorance not only shows a lack of respect for employees’ diversity and skills, but is also imprudent because it may lead to business opportunities being missed.

Switching now to the Anglophone/Israeli-American tradition, one author impossible to omit is Spolsky, who has worked on language policy and management in various contexts. Spolsky (2004: 5, 2009, 2012: 5) uses *language policy* as an umbrella term for three inter-related components: language practices in a community; values and beliefs attached to linguistic varieties, which might be assembled to shape ideologies about languages; and language-management or language-planning activities. Although Spolsky himself largely separates these elements for analytic purposes, we favour a more synthetic view of language policies and practices that highlights the interrelatedness of his factors. In the context of language management at the workplace, Spolsky (2009: 53) states: “Management decisions are intended to modify practices and beliefs in the workplace, solving what appear to

the participants to be communication problems.” It is noteworthy that only recently has he begun to use the currently fashionable concept of language management.⁷

In contrast, another school has worked extensively with a very different concept of language management. The group of linguists including, in particular, Jernudd, Neustupný and Nekvapil developed what they finally called “Language Management Theory” (LMT) out of “language planning theory” as early as the 1980s (Jernudd 1983). They broadened the scope of the term *language management* and constructed a theoretical model around it. We can find comprehensive depictions of LMT in this wider sense in Neustupný and Nekvapil (2003), Jernudd (2009) and Nekvapil (2009). It has come to constitute a well-developed and established theoretical framework that provides the basis for numerous empirical studies in the field (see, for example, the 2015 special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* on “Language Management”). However, it should not be confused with “language management” as used by other authors unless these explicitly cite LMT as very specifically defined by Jernudd, Nekvapil and Neustupný, in which sense it relates to a very broad range of “acts of attention to ‘language problems’” (Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003: 185). These authors distinguish between simple (individual) and organised (institutional) acts of language management. They view “language management [as] aimed at language or communication, in other words, at language as a system as well as at language use”, and are interested not only in language choices, but also, for instance, in the degree of politeness required in a certain (organisational) culture and situation (Nekvapil and Sherman 2015: 6). These scholars thus refer within LMT to both *Sprachpolitik* and *Sprachenpolitik* as defined above.

Linking LMT to our understanding of “language policies and practices” (see below), it is equally obvious that LMT scholars also include language practices in their concept of management. Strikingly, though, only lately and infrequently have they addressed questions of linguistic hegemony, of power struggles between different groups of speakers and of their potentially conflicting interests (Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003: 186; Jernudd and Nekvapil 2012: 35; Nekvapil and Sherman 2015). Nekvapil and Sherman (2015) now integrate the distinction between top-down and bottom-up aspects of language policy into their framework. Of course, sociolinguistics has already highlighted the importance of bottom-up considerations in ensuring that language policy goals are achieved (Boyer 2008; Cichon 2012). But, typically, the

⁷ Spolsky himself does not always fully respect his own quite clear distinction, especially when it comes to illustrate language policy in different social groups or domains. He seems to prefer, for instance, to use the notion of “language policy” when describing and analysing the work of governments, supra-national groupings or religious organisations, whereas “smaller” domains like the family or the workplace are more often referred to in terms of “language management”. Moreover, he views language management as representing the very explicit and often written part of language policy (Spolsky 2004: 11); on another occasion he states that: “it is management only when we can identify the manager” (2009: 6).

studies concerned do not assume language policy to be neutral, perfectly rational and plannable by actors belonging to superior levels of political intervention (see Section 3.3. below). Rather, they posit that individual speakers (“employee-speakers” in organisations) may also initiate political activities and influence language practices in different social domains (bottom-up view).

Regardless of the well-elaborated theories in the field, and the now frequently used term *language management*, we have chosen here to use *language policy* in order to place a different focus on the topic. All in all, we have the impression that it covers more explicitly the important aspect of unequal power relations in linguistic contact situations, in companies and elsewhere. It also emphasises the interests of employee-speakers in organisations. Moreover, the use of *management* evokes certain undesirable connotations. Even when it is conceptualised as being strategic and when it allows for adaptation (in dealing with implementation problems), “management” always implies planning and top-down decisions. Besides, it puts the lens on the maximisation of utility, efficiency (through effective communication) and profitability as the main objectives. As we will see below, this approach entails the risk of unseen and detrimental (side-)effects.

In other words, we will foster an understanding of organisations which emphasises the unplanned and bottom-up elements in a chosen strategy (e.g., a strategy that encourages multilingual practices and linguistic diversity in companies).⁸ We therefore advocate a more comprehensive definition of corporate language policy which allows inclusion of phenomena that may suddenly emerge in the process of implementing a chosen strategy, and that otherwise might be neglected. As opposed to language management, the notion of language policy encourages researchers to look beyond now outdated functionalist theories of management and to shed light on actors’ interests, on the political games played by speakers and groups of employees, and on the socio-cultural values and norms of speech communities. It therefore incorporates elements of organisational culture, micro-politics and social construction processes. Seen from our perspective, planned (and implemented) language management is usually part of an organisation’s explicit language policy, whereas micro-political activities and tactics can be regarded as part of its implicit policy (for the distinction, see Section 3.4). In many cases, implicit language policy

⁸ Other linguists have already detected this inherent tendency of simplification and one-dimensionality of the original concept of management, but nevertheless decided to use it (*gestion/traitement des langues*) in their research about languages in companies: “Les sciences de gestion d’entreprise proposent une conception unitaire de la politique de communication, perçue comme planifiable, voire comme résultat d’une planification consciente faisant partie de la gestion de l’entreprise [. . .]. Or, en réalité, les mesures d’intervention des entreprises ne sont pas monolithiques. D’abord, elles s’organisent souvent par paliers, les décisions étant prises par un ensemble hétérogène d’acteurs à des niveaux hiérarchiques différents. De ce fait, la distinction entre « mesures de gestion » et « pratiques » peut s’estomper.” (Lüdi et al. 2009: 39).

has a much greater impact on employees' (working) lives (e.g., on their social status and economic success) than explicit language policies and management.

Thus we advocate the use in future critical studies of the term *language policy* (in preference to *language management*) because it covers more thoroughly certain topics which are receiving increasing attention from interested scholars in linguistics, management studies, political science. These are: power imbalances in organisations; the interests of speakers with different linguistic backgrounds; the linguistic rights of employees; and the (socio)linguistic inclusion or exclusion of groups of speakers within an organisation.

In light of the above, we can now state our definition of language policy for the purposes of this chapter:⁹ a corporate language policy regulates the use and non-use of languages and linguistic varieties which employees and managers have at their disposal, whether actually or potentially. From the individual's perspective these include languages learnt at home, heritage languages and (foreign) languages learnt, for instance, at school or university, and other languages and linguistic varieties acquired in professional life (e.g., during a foreign assignment). Switching from the individual to the societal level, we can distinguish competences in languages and linguistic varieties (with different levels of status and prestige) deriving from nativeness, migration, education and professional training, and socialisation. Language policy in business therefore encompasses all measures aimed, explicitly or implicitly, at influencing the language practices of employees and managers, and at stabilising or changing the power relationships between different languages and groups of speakers within a company.

Armed with our definition, we now proceed, in Sections 3.2 to 3.4, to examine various aspects of language policy: policy levels, policies and power, and forms of implicit and explicit language policy. Our analysis is based on discussions in socio-linguistics beyond the organisational context. However, as we will show, these three core elements play important roles there too.

3.2 Levels of language policies

Language policy decisions and activities can be located at the levels of the supra-state and the state, as well as at regional, institutional and organisational levels (see Table 1 in Chapter 12 of this volume, as well as Truchot 1994 and Boyer 1997). In the workplace context, to cite Spolsky (2004: 52), “[m]any of the language-management policies come from a higher level”. Thus a state policy on bi- or multilingualism might influence language policies in businesses. At the same time, local adaptations of organisational language policy are very likely to play a role, as when products and services are sold in a foreign market, and customers do not share a common language with the seller. Similar conclusions were reached by the DYLAN

⁹ For elements of this definition, see Truchot and Huck (2009), Peltokorpi and Vaara (2012), Piekkari and Tietze (2012), Stegu (2012a) and Lesk (2016).

project, which sought to discover and “identify the conditions under which Europe’s linguistic diversity can be an asset for the development of knowledge and economy” (DYLAN 2006). Its results showed that corporate language management/policies and practices are permeated and determined by context factors set at higher levels. A specific regional or state language policy will strongly influence the design of organisational language policy by means of laws and other language-related regulations and decisions. Here, different histories and legal contexts play an important role. For instance, companies that operate in bilingual Wales or the bi-/trilingual Swiss cantons of Bern, Fribourg, Valais and Grisons) are very likely to develop linguistic practices and policies that differ from those of French companies in bi-/trilingual regions such as Brittany or Alsace (Lüdi et al. 2009: 3–4; Grin, Sfreddo, and Vaillancourt 2010: 123; Barakos 2014).

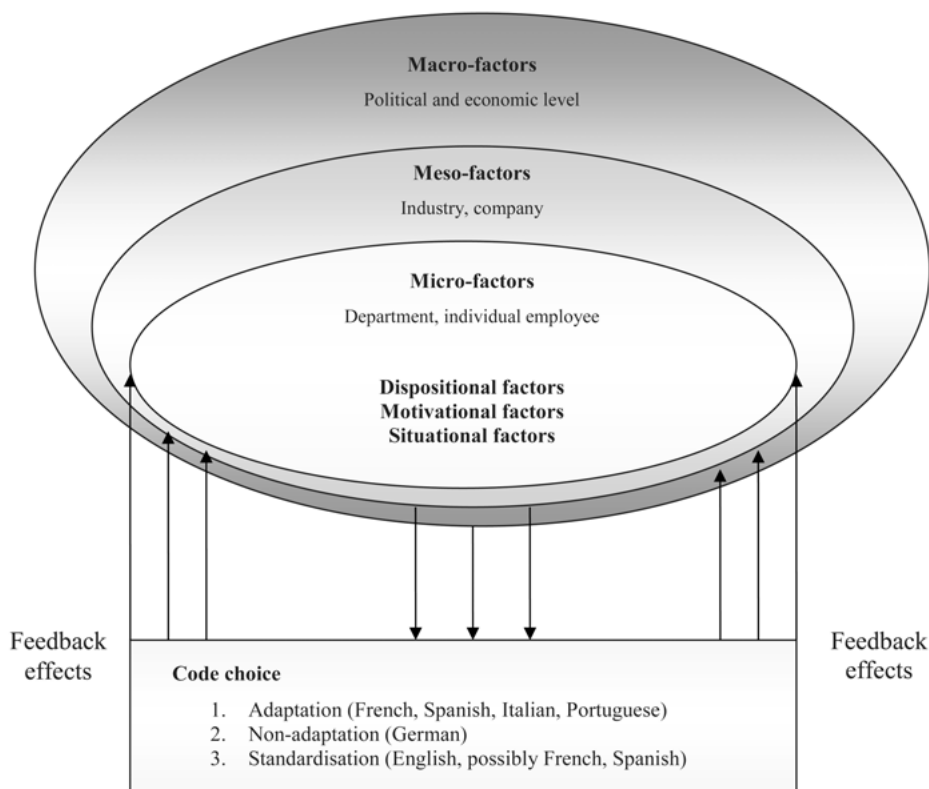


Figure 13.3: A three-level-model of factors affecting code choice (Bäck 2004: 126)

The notion of levels also plays a role in the code choice model developed by Bäck, which is illustrated in Figure 13.3. He applied it in his study of Austrian-based companies exporting mainly to the Romance-speaking world (which explains the examples

given of adaptation, non-adaptation and standardisation). The model suggests that language-choice factors operate at three different levels, all of which may influence choices in a specific organisation: a macro-level (e.g., state language policies), a meso-level (e.g., the activities and language policies of a particular sector or company) and a micro-level (e.g., individual employees with their language competences and preferences, the customer involved in the interaction, the specific situation: what Bäck calls “dispositional”, “motivational” and “situational” factors). For example, employees entering an organisation may possess foreign language skills previously acquired in the education system of the country concerned (macro level); they are recruited because they have certain language skills required in the sector in question (meso level); and in each individual situation, they choose their language according to the particular demands, their own preferences and those of their partner(s) (micro level). Bäck’s conceptual framework incorporates interactional and feedback effects between the different levels, and points, like our reflections above, to possible interferences between these. It posits that, provided information about all factors is complete and accurate, future code-choice behaviour should be predictable. As regards the main code-choice strategies, Bäck follows Vandermeeren’s (1998: 21) classification and distinguishes three types: adaptation (use of the customer’s or supplier’s language), non-adaptation (use of one’s own first language) and standardisation (use of a third language, i.e., a *lingua franca*).

3.3 Power relations and language contact

The topic of unequal power distribution resulting from different language competences and membership of linguistically diverse groups of speakers was taken up in distinct disciplines at various times. Thus the conflictual relationship between two or more languages within a given territory deriving from their speakers’ differing status and power resources (diglossic/polyglossic situations) has long been the subject of investigation by sociolinguists (Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1967; Kremnitz 1994: 32, 2004; Hudson 2002). In management studies, by contrast, research interest in the power relations between two or more languages in an organisational context has appeared only during the last decade (Vaara et al. 2005; Tietze and Dick 2013).

However, even in sociolinguistics, the concept of diglossia/polyglossia has as yet been developed and discussed merely at the supra-state, state and regional levels. Here, we will show how it can be transferred to the business context, where many different languages are often present (corporate languages, learned and used foreign languages, heritage languages and first languages). In such situations, we can easily identify (socio)linguistic patterns and functions similar to those pertaining to the higher levels of language policy. Thus in organisations too, linguistic contact situations raise the question of languages’ equally shared or limited functionality for their respective speakers. In most cases, we can expect contact situations in which

two or more languages divide linguistic and social functions asymmetrically. For example, in companies where a corporate language is introduced, official internal communication (email, appraisal interviews, meetings, etc.) will switch immediately to it. As a result, local or heritage languages will be used, if at all, only in (informal) day-to-day communication. It is true that this has its importance, for example in terms of identification. However, in official situations there will now be a power gap between native speakers of the new corporate language (often English) and others, which becomes evident in differing career prospects and other areas. In extreme cases, diglossic/polyglossic situations in organisations can lead to language conflict, overt or covert, and induce instability. Heritage languages are especially threatened by such developments; as they cannot be used in everyday working life, they lose functionality for their speakers, whose motivation to use them at all may well be reduced in the long run.

To sum up, and similarly to the situation at state level, diglossic/polyglossic functionalities of languages in organisations may indicate existing imbalances and a power gap between different groups of speakers or employees. The special focus on potentially unequal relationships of different languages in social interactions in the linguistically highly diverse business world (e.g., the hegemonic position of large vehicular languages over other languages) is nowadays addressed not only by sociolinguists, but also by management scholars (Vaara et al. 2005; Tietze and Dick 2013). What these imbalances often imply is a considerable conflict potential, of which decision makers/managers are not always aware. In this regard, we propose to transfer the concept of diglossia/polyglossia to the world of business and to the organisational context. In fact, we see a strong parallel between dominated languages and groups of speakers within a (multinational/international) company and equivalent situations in any other speech community.

In addition, linguists have recently established that, in a globalised world, jobs – especially those in the services sector – can be regarded as scenes where linguistic practices and organisational language policy choices are prone to be maintained, and hence to reproduce certain forms of social inequality. Unequal access to resources in organisations, constraints – more apparent than real – and structures legitimised by powerful actors, may be the result of underlying economic, market-driven, control-based, national or ideological interests. We might therefore ask: Who defines exactly which linguistic competencies are needed in a company and why? Scholars from different disciplines have diagnosed, in selected companies, an increasing hierarchisation of languages and speaker groups, which may have a tangible impact on employees' psychological condition. In addition, some of these researchers have detected a connection between the degree of linguistic standardisation and the strength of identity in organisations (Heller 2003; Heller and Boutet 2006; Bothorel-Witz and Choremi 2009; Duchêne and Piller 2011; Duchêne, Moyer and Roberts 2013; Piller and Takahashi 2013).

The underlying assumption in these studies is, obviously, that decisions related to organisational language policy (e.g., linguistic standardisation or non-standardisation of corporate communication) affect not only the everyday work of employees, but also their social identity constructions. The link between these latter and policy can be found in the concept of linguistic identity (Kremnitz 1995; Boyer 2008), which implies insights stemming from individual psychology (identity is basically seen as a person's self-concept) as well as from social psychology (Krappmann 2004; Petzold 2012). For businesses the performance of identities is crucial because processes of identification are closely linked to employee retention and organisational commitment. Additionally, they also have an impact on organisational performance through labour turnover, absenteeism and individual performance (Flynn 2005; Schmidt 2013).

It would seem, then, that managers and employees are largely dependent for their social identity construction on the power relations that characterize their working life, which in turn may be strongly linked to language issues. Such effects may arise not only from language policies in a strict sense, but also from measures intended to act primarily on other areas but which have a strong impact on the relation between language and power.

3.4 Implicit and explicit language policy in organisations

In considering the various effects of language-related decisions in companies, an important distinction must be made between implicit and explicit language policies. This dichotomy has been referred to earlier (see Sections 1 and 3.1), but here it will be examined in greater detail. It becomes relevant when, in practice, we are confronted with contradictions between the two types of policies. In order to understand how they arise, we will first examine the two types themselves, starting with the positions that can be found in various branches of the specialised literature.

Of late, implicit and explicit policies have been extensively discussed in combination, both in sociolinguistics (Cichon 2012; Ehrhart 2012; Stegu 2012a) and in international management studies (Peltokorpi and Vaara 2012). It is striking that different scholars have partially divergent views on the distinction between them. This confusion may be due to our everyday understanding of implicitness as something not directly expressed, possibly unclear or even unconscious, such as common prior knowledge that is taken for granted. In contrast, explicitness usually refers to that which is openly and directly communicated, and can be perceived clearly by everyone irrespective of any prior knowledge.

In the realm of language policy, however, the distinction derives from the work of some linguists in the early 1990s and relates to the nature of the goals at which policy is directed. In the case of explicit language policy, these are openly communicated and are concerned with directly influencing the use of languages in various contexts. Explicit language policy can therefore be understood as the sum of measures

openly and directly affecting groups of speakers and their use of languages (i.e., language practices). To sum up, the added element in the works concerned (Bochmann 1993: 14; Kremnitz 1994: 80) is the emphasis on goal-orientation of activities undertaken in pursuing language policy. For example, at state or regional level political actors such as (regional) governments, could concede an official status to a previously unofficial and unrecognised language by adapting the legal framework (for instance, the country's constitution) accordingly, and subsequently enacting detailed legislation to ensure the practical significance of the new status. In the business context, the official introduction of a corporate language is a measure of explicit language policy.

Goal-orientation is also a feature of implicit language policy, but here the underlying mechanism works indirectly rather than directly. In other words, goals are not made explicit. Instead, they are implicit in those of other policy areas (e.g., the economic development of a region, the education of children or adults) that are not necessarily or primarily concerned to influence language practices. Hence implicit language policy may well be the consequence of explicit political and/or organisational measures; its implicitness refers only to the language aspects involved. In practice, it can represent a powerful factor in encouraging the social use of a specific language, as we will see. Thus political actors – governments, non-governmental organisations, the media, employers, unions, economic, and cultural and educational specialists, as well as politicians with responsibilities in the fields of education, culture and the economy, etc. – could undertake measures to raise the social status of (a group of) speakers and their economic well-being. Activities which effectively empower speakers of certain languages in their social and professional life can be classified as operating implicitly on languages (Bochmann 1993: 14; Kremnitz 1994: 80; Cichon 2012: 18).

The same is true of the organisational context, where it is possible to empower certain groups of employee-speakers by promoting the possessors of particular linguistic competences to key positions. The primary purpose of such a promotion, as of any other, is to manage the corporate career system properly, but – as a quasi-side effect – it will upgrade the social status of employees who speak certain languages, and so perhaps also influence certain language practices in the future. Of course, like the explicit variety, implicit language policy – depending on the particular goals pursued – can also be detrimental to certain groups of speakers. Examples arise when multilingual competences are regarded as irrelevant for top management positions, or when quasi-native competences in a newly introduced corporate language are required for promotion.

It is surprising that few linguists (Truchot and Huck 2009; Franceschini 2010: 26; Ehrhart 2012; Stegu 2012a–b) have studied the economic and social success of speakers of particular languages that is emphasised in our definition of implicit language policy, and which plays a very important role in organisations. This lack

of research interest is even more astonishing from a management research perspective given that, in companies, implicit language policy in particular is often implemented using human-resource management tools. These might include leadership instruments such as employee appraisals, job interviews, job descriptions and profiles, and criteria used in deciding on compensation and promotion, all of which may, or may not, take linguistic competences and performances into account (see also Section 3.1). Moreover, according to management scholars, the sub-functions of HR management must be coherently aligned with each other, with overall HR strategy and with the strategy of the company as a whole. Such fine tuning calls for comprehensive investigation of the (inter)dependencies involved (Piekkari and Tietze 2012: 552–559).

Some recent linguistic investigations of the world of work deal with selected HR functions in the context of organisational language policies (European Commission 2006; Libert and Flament-Boistrancourt 2006; Lavric 2008a). Since the functions selected are mostly discussed in isolation from others and from the company's overall strategy, these analyses make only a limited contribution to developing a comprehensive implicit language policy covering all HR functions systematically. Their main focus is on the use, in recruitment and training, of instruments and strategies which incorporate language-sensitive elements. Further aspects of a global, systematic (implicit) language policy, incorporating other HR development tools, career management measures and instruments of performance management and compensation, are largely ignored. This shows that linguistic approaches to language policies in business alone do not adequately address this quintessentially interdisciplinary topic (see also Section 3.1).

Even if the distinction between implicit and explicit language policies remains useful and widespread, today the two can also be regarded as forming a fluid and dynamic continuum. To illustrate the point, let us consider the language policies of universities which educate students of economics and management studies. Such institutions are generally able to decide, more or less autonomously, whether or not foreign languages play a significant role in their courses of studies. Until recently, this role was usually a crucial one, but in many cases the situation has now changed. Either the number of foreign languages classes has been reduced consciously and explicitly, or other subjects have come to be considered more important and the number of classes offered in them correspondingly increased. The result – sometimes unintended – of this combination of implicit and explicit language policy measures is that foreign languages are now often marginalised in economics and management programmes, or even outsourced by them.

The complexity and interdependency of measures of both types is also evident in other ways. Naturally, some political actors have already recognised the “side-effects” of an implicit language policy on language use. For instance, providing financial support for economic development in a bilingual territory or a multilingual/multicultural city district will – hopefully, and at least to some extent – produce

positive effects on the income of the local residents, including those who are bi- or multilingual. Then, bi- or multilingual employees would rather stay in the area due to attractive employers and job offers. But if the responsible authority were one day to decide to take economic development measures primarily and expressly in order to maintain and encourage the use of locally-practised languages, the language policy in use will have become more explicit because its main purpose has changed. In general, implicit language policy (regardless of its level) has always existed; it is the explicit variety that is of recent origin and that, even today, does not exist in every context.

At this point, we wish to underline once more that there may be inconsistencies between the elements of a given language policy, between choices about both explicit and implicit language policy measures, and between language practices. Discrepancies and contradictions, where they occur, are often due to underlying, unequal power relations. Thus the mission statement of a company, a university or a political union might state that the organisation is a multilingual one – an example of explicit language policy. However, its job advertisements might ask only for competence in a single foreign-language, in practice usually English (implicit language policy), thereby hindering the employment of new multilinguals. Consequently, multilingual practices at work are likely to disappear more or less slowly. In this example, we would detect contradictions between explicit and implicit language policy, whereas language practices are increasingly aligned with the implicit measures. Also apparent is the power differential between the human-resource manager who determines recruitment policy (effectively “English only”) and the (multilingual) colleagues of new recruits, especially if they have no say in final recruitment decisions.

Other scholars view the distinction between implicit and explicit policy rather differently. Ehrhart (2012: 22–24) sees the two as somewhat complementary and augments the concepts by adding a time dimension. She distinguishes between short-term, medium-term and long-term perspectives, each of them involving strategic and tactical layers. Moreover, between these two she introduces an eco-linguistic layer incorporating activities that are neither as spontaneous as tactics, nor as reflected and planned as strategies. Comparing Ehrhart’s conceptualisation of language policies and practices to our own, it is noteworthy that her short-term activities correspond largely to our concept of language practices. In our view, the introduction of a temporal dimension into the discussion is definitely helpful and offers further opportunities for analysis.

Truchot and Huck (2009), like Currivand and Truchot (2010), switch in their research between the notions of language policies (*politique linguistique*) and language management in companies (*traitement/management des langues en entreprise*). They tend to use the term *language policy* when referring to what, on our definition, is explicit policy. They also prefer the term *language policies* in the business context whenever the upper levels of language policy are concerned, or if language issues

lead to planned interventions that are made explicit and so are easily observable by others. Such issues include language conflicts and language-related projects initiated by actors within the organisation (upper or middle management, staff representatives) in line with their own interests. In contrast, the same authors use the adjective “implicit” when language “strategies” occur spontaneously, or are introduced step by step without being identified as part of an organisational language policy. Similarly, they speak of implicitness when language choices reflect only common practice and are considered simply to be “normal behaviour” at work. This scenario corresponds closely to our definition of language practices and to the view of policies and practices as forming a continuum (as already mentioned above). In another study, Truchot (2009) deals with language policies in multinational companies, focusing on communication within them (e.g., communication between a parent company and its subsidiaries abroad or occasioned by mergers and acquisitions). He, too, distinguishes between implicit and explicit language policies. However, by adding a temporal dimension, he demarcates explicit policies which are ad hoc and punctual from those framed in the long term, and so takes up the idea of continuity.

Truchot’s (2009) concept of implicit language policies reminds us very much of what has been referred to here as *bricolage*. It is noteworthy that this kind of implicit language policy looks very similar to our own understanding of language practices as described and empirically captured by case studies in companies that employ participant observation (Lavric 2008b). In the case of explicit language policies, management intervenes in one direction or another, but the solutions adopted need not automatically become general rules for the future. An explicit and long-term language policy, according to Truchot (2009), is not necessarily better than *bricolage*, especially if it imposes English as a lingua franca. If anything, a well-reflected balance is needed between vehicular English, local languages (used in subsidiaries) and the language of the multinational company’s headquarters.

4 Insights from other selected disciplines

4.1 From applied linguistics to other disciplines: Towards interdisciplinary awareness

Up to now, we have covered the topic of language policies and practices in business and the economy from an applied (socio)linguistics perspective. Yet, as remarked in Section 1, related issues are also the object of study by various other disciplines, namely management and organisation studies, political science and economics. And, despite the interdisciplinary approach of applied linguistics, there is still a great lack of de facto cooperation, mutual awareness and reception between it and

these other disciplines. All could gain much from looking outside the box and bundling their efforts. That is why we place special emphasis on this last part of our chapter, which aims at building bridges between disciplinary approaches that remain barely related.

4.2 Management and organisation studies

It is true that sociological work on rhetorical issues, the social construction of meanings and discourses (in organisations) dates back to at least the 1960s (Foucault 1966, 1971; Berger and Luckmann 1967; Bourdieu 1977, 1982; for a comprehensive historical overview, cf. Deetz 2001). However, it was only around the turn of the millennium that the social and economic sciences experienced their “linguistic turn” (Alvesson and Kärreman 2000; Musson and Tietze 2004; Musson, Cohen, and Tietze 2007; Grosjean 2012 (*tournant linguistique*)). This development affected, in particular, critical management studies, and in the last fifteen to twenty years (international) management studies generally have shown heightened interest in (natural) languages and language-related topics. What seems to be new about this interest is a focus on the potentially unequal relationships of different languages in social interactions (e.g., the hegemonic position of vehicular languages over smaller regional or minority languages: see also Section 3.3) and on language diversity and multilingualism in organisations.

Additionally, it is quite recent that scholars have started to publish language-sensitive research in highly-respected management journals, such as the *Academy of Management Review* (Brannen 2004; Vaara and Tienari 2008), the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, and Welch 1999; Piekkari et al. 2005; Harzing and Pudelko 2014), the *Journal of World Business* (Janssens, Lambert, and Steyaert 2004), the *European Journal of International Management* (Tietze 2010), *Organization Science* (Neeley 2013) or the *Journal of International Business Studies* (Luo and Shenkar 2006). In 2014, this last journal published a special issue on “The multifaceted role of language in international business”, with the purpose of establishing “a new domain in [International Business] scholarship originating from an explicit focus on language” (Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze 2014: 495; see also the contributions of Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton 2014 and Janssens and Steyaert 2014). In the management literature produced since the late 1990s, therefore, we can locate more and more articles on employees’ linguistic practices, corporate language policies and organisational multilingualism.

Existing empirical studies on language practices and policies in organisations are primarily concerned with multinational corporations (Marschan, Welch, and Welch 1997; Barner-Rasmussen and Björkman 2005; Peltokorpi and Vaara 2012; Harzing and Pudelko 2013, 2014; Piekkari, Welch and Welch 2014) or with the linguistic challenges posed by organisational restructurings, such as mergers and acquisitions involving

global companies (Piekkari et al. 2005; Vaara et al. 2005). Frequently studied are the establishment of a common corporate language and the special training and qualification needs of expatriates (Puck, Kittler and Wright 2008; Ishii 2012). Only rarely do empirical studies stray away from the field of global companies, which implies that in management studies there is still little consciousness of, and knowledge about the language practices and policies of small and medium enterprises (but see: Williams and Chaston 2004; Collin et al. 2011; Pohjanen-Bernardi and Talja 2011). Some authors emphasise the necessity of aligning language policy decisions with the human-resource management function and/or the company's overall strategy (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, and Welch 1999; Feely and Harzing 2003; Piekkari et al. 2005). These studies again focus on multinational companies, even though small and medium-sized enterprises also engage in HR management activities, such as selecting, training, evaluating and compensating (multilingual) staff.

Some conceptually interesting works apply a specific theoretical lens to corporate language policy issues. The new institutionalism in organisational analysis, which originated in sociology, offers the concept of "institutional work" to describe "purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions" (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006: 215). Examples of such work are politically-motivated activities such as lobbying, and the imitation of best practices to create new institutions. Institutions in this context can be defined as habitualised and therefore quite stable expectations of reciprocal action, that is, socially-accepted practices and structures (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 72), as are, for instance, multilingual practices in organisations. Originally, the concept of institutional work was introduced to describe the political activity of social or regional language movements (e.g., Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008; Lesk 2014) and only recently was it transferred to linguistic issues in the business sector and used to explain the concept and role of "language nodes" (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, and Welch 1999; Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio 2011: 3–4). Language nodes could be expatriates, or middle managers in a company headquarters or subsidiary, who connects and mediates between different groups of employees through their institutional "translation" and bridging work. In this perspective, they are cultural and political actors in the international communication process, responsible for spreading particular values, meanings and discourses within the global company (Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert 2004; Tietze 2010; Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki, and Welch 2014). In short, these articles, which focus on translation and cultural bridging processes in international business, integrate insights from translation studies as well as from sociology and organisational studies (institutional theory).

Whereas language-sensitive studies conducted by international and HR management scholars have become increasingly common in recent years, there seems to be surprisingly little awareness of the language issue in studies on diversity management in organisations. There, language is rarely mentioned, and most studies do not

define it as a separate dimension of diversity, like gender, age, ethnicity or race (Hanappi-Egger 2006; Takagi 2011; Claes, Hanappi-Egger and Primecz 2012). Occasionally we can find in the management literature studies on language diversity carried out by researchers with a linguistic background (Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert 2004; Henderson 2005; Aichhorn 2015) or contributions to journals on business communication from affiliates of management / business administration departments (Lauring and Selmer 2012), but these remain exceptions. Consequently, integrating linguistic diversity into a comprehensive diversity management concept could be a challenging future project in research and practice.

Applied linguists working on language policies in organisations can profit from concepts and methods applied in, and findings derived from management and organisation studies in multiple ways.

1. Implicit language policies, which – according to our understanding – can be translated into human-resource management activities in the organisational context, may be studied systematically by including other human-resource functions apart from recruiting and training (see also Section 3.4). Hence political actors in companies (e.g., human-resource managers) can be recommended to implement a consistent organisational language policy which includes other human-resource functions (e.g., career management) and which also allows for bottom-up considerations (e.g., by covering individual linguistic needs of employees discovered in institutionalised career review processes).
2. The fruitful theoretical debate about the different focuses of the concepts “language policy” and “language management” can contribute to revealing and explaining contradictions between implicit and explicit language policies. In this context, we can reflect on the different interests of (groups of) speakers in organisations and on underlying power relations (see also Section 3.3). In particular, the relationship between language and power entered the academic discourse of organisational researchers decades ago (Clegg 1987) and was taken up by critical management studies.
3. Interference between different levels of language policies, the contradictions between them and the compromising strategies of actors could be investigated not only from a sociolinguistic perspective (see Section 3.2), but also within an institutional theoretical framework (new institutionalism in organisational analysis) in order to capture the “bigger picture”.
4. To complement the methodological repertoire of linguistics, researchers of language policies in businesses could also draw on methods from social sciences (and vice versa).

4.3 Political science

While findings stemming from management and organisation studies can be transferred with relative ease to (applied) linguistic research, transferring those of political

science research is much less so. However, we think it is worth trying because political science is relevant to our topic of “language policies and practices in businesses”, especially in the following four ways:

- It is clear that a discipline called “political science” can make basic contributions to the terminology required to conceptualise the notion of language policies.
- Political scientists usually have a comprehensive understanding of political processes at the upper levels of policy-making (e.g., the state, the region) and are interested in the economic outcomes of policies. These aspects are crucial to the study of language policies at the macro level.
- Political science deals with power relations in any area, and this perspective can and should be applied to the issue of language choices at all levels (e.g., to an overt discussion of resource allocation to different speaker groups). In particular, this perspective might inspire critical approaches to language(s) in organisations.
- Political scientists with a philosophical background usually come up with epistemological reflections in their studies, a practice that can be fruitfully applied to linguistic research on language policies.

Sonntag (1996b: 75), one of the political scientists particularly relevant for linguistic research, defines “political science” as “the study of authoritative decision-making of a sovereignty regarding the allocation of scarce resources”. In recent times, sovereignty has usually been wielded by the governments of states. Language-sensitive political scientists frequently consider states as more or less multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious units. Consequently, governments must decide on the resources allocated to linguistic minorities, on the status of languages spoken (mostly) within their territory and on the linguistic rights of their speakers. In political science, the choice by the state of certain language policies over others is usually termed the currently prevalent language regime. Such regimes always comprise language practices as well as the assumptions about languages and language use that underlie specific government policies (Sonntag and Cardinal 2015: 6). During the second half of the twentieth century, as Sonntag (1996b: 76) stresses, very little research was done by political scientists on questions dealing with language contact, language conflict, language protection, language diversity or multilingualism in contemporary societies. However, a minority of political scientists have become more and more aware of, and interested in the topic of language(s), especially, in the following areas:

- Language standardisation;
- Regional autonomy and language;
- The presence of a common language as a key factor for state-building theories;
- Language competences and their impact on the social order within a community.

These researchers have tried to contribute to a future theory of political linguistics (Laitin 1988: 289–290). In this regard, early work was done, among others, by Zolberg

(1974), Pool (1979, 1991), Laponce (1984), Laitin (1988, 1994), Sonntag (1996a) and Safran (1999). Analysis of how such authors link their theoretical constructs (e.g., linguistic standardisation and non-standardisation, linguistic identity, etc.) shows that their studies have two main foundations. On the one hand, they assume certain causal relationships between linguistic factors and politics, sometimes in simplified form. On the other, they acknowledge a more interdependent relation between the two, which allows for compromise on language issues and therefore offers a more realistic picture of politics in modern societies (Sonntag 1996a).

Of the scholars mentioned above, a number remain active in the field. Sonntag (2005a, 2005b, 2009) is currently working on language politics in the context of globalisation, focusing on how the use of English impacts on specific jobs (e.g., the offshore call-centre industry) and on other social-political issues in various parts of India. Laponce (2012), who has been publishing since the 1960s in the field of political linguistics, is interested in the relationship between languages and territory. And Safran (2004: 8) perceives the relationship of language and the state as reciprocal, which allows for political mobilisation in the realm of language policy. This bottom-up view of language policy is currently also adopted by many sociolinguists.

Moreover, the scholarly community interested in political linguistics has been growing fast in the last decade or two. Thus Liu (2015) is greatly concerned to justify the use of lingua francas in different contexts worldwide by quantifying the effects on measures of stability, efficiency, and inclusivity. Dupré (2013) is investigating the challenging topic of linguistic identities in the Taiwanese context, while Albaugh (2007, 2009) has worked on language choice and language preferences in education, and on policy outcomes in Africa. Among other scholars worthy of mention are Garcia, on linguistic nationalism in Luxembourg (2014) and on language issues and educational policies in France and Germany (2015), and Iacovino and Léger (2013) on the issue of integrating immigrants into the Canadian system of multiculturalism in a bilingual society. In summary, it is striking that political scientists, like linguists but unlike management scholars, are finding fields for the empirical study of language-policies issues all over the world.

Finally, we wish to emphasise the inspiration that applied linguists can draw for their own research into language policies in business from political science. Specifically, this discipline can show how to add a philosophical-political perspective to such research through a more intensive epistemological reflection on linguistic rights. In deciding whether employees may or should speak the language of their choice at work, we could start from two different assumptions. Either we believe that linguistic diversity is an end in itself and must be protected, or we hold that communication should be as inclusive and, at the same time, as simple as possible. This second view will lead us to make linguistic standardisation with the aim of creating a lingua franca our primary objective. It corresponds to the paradigm of rational choice theory that prevails in economics. In contrast, the first approach is founded on the notion of linguistic rights. Those who adopt it base their call for

tolerance and/or promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity on the linguistic dimension in other human rights, such as freedom of expression.

Take, for example, the context of immigration. If we consider language primarily as a means to communicate, the obligation to promote multilingualism exists only in the short term, until migrants have learnt the local language and are linguistically assimilated. But if we focus on the identity-related and expressive functions of language, and on its intrinsic value, we imply the existence of other, enduring claims; the preservation of heritage languages, for example, can be assigned a cultural and identity-related value. In practice, speakers and other stakeholders often have to make trade-offs between the two goals. Additionally, the decision to abandon the use of a language is ultimately one for its speakers themselves (another consequence of a bottom-up perspective). In theoretically conceptualising their work, researchers must choose one of the two approaches and make clear its basic assumptions (Kymlicka and Patten 2003; Sonntag 2009, 2010; Patten 2001, 2009; Réaume and Pinto 2012).

Such reflections, aired by political scientists in their own disciplinary context, might well enrich the perspective of other disciplines, e.g. philosophy, sociology or linguistics. Thus it could be highly profitable for researches in (applied) linguistics to keep in mind some philosophical and/or political background to their mostly empirical work. In other words, they could be inspired by political scientists to adopt an explicit epistemological and philosophical position.

4.4 Economics

Economic approaches to language policy, referred to as the “economics of language” (*Sprachenökonomie*, *économie des langues*), first appeared in the second half of the last century (Marschak 1965; for historical overviews, see Coulmas 2005 and Alcouffe 2013), and with greater frequency in its last decade. They represent an interdisciplinary and mainly quantitative view of language policies in the economy or in business. Studies focus either on the macro-level (the economy of an entire state or region, etc.) or on the micro-level (companies and other organisations). This classification should not be confounded with Bäck’s division of factors in code choice into macro-, meso-, and micro-levels (see Section 3.2). In fact, Bäck’s meso-level equates to the micro-level in economic terms.

Researchers in the emerging field of the economics of language have adapted and further developed quantitative models stemming from (micro)economics in order to assess different language-policy measures in terms of their internal or external efficiency. Internal efficiency is a question of whether – with the means available – an economic allocation of resources can be attained, whereas external efficiency takes into account superior goals, perhaps cultural or symbolic, and evaluates the coherence of resource allocation in relation to these. The goals themselves – the

meta-perspective – are not subject to assessment as they cannot be judged by means of economic analysis (Grin 2005: 9–11).

Studies embedded in the conceptual and methodological framework of the economics-of-language paradigm stress the influence of linguistic variables on economic ones (e.g., of linguistic competences on labour income) or, in rare cases, vice versa, and predominantly investigate the level of the whole economy (Grin 1994, 1996a-b, 2003, 2005). Such analyses often suggest the existence of unidirectional causal relationships between linguistic and economic factors, a finding we regard with suspicion since it greatly simplifies the complex socially- and historically-conditioned relations between interdependent variables. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the constructive contributions of economic approaches to language policy questions. In particular, the terminology and logic developed and applied by economists seem fairly accessible to decision-makers in business and politics. As a result, linguistic concerns enter into the considerations of politicians and practitioners. Generally pressed for time, they welcome, and can readily assimilate, hard data that might justify the perceived costs and benefits of lived multilingualism. Furthermore, models and studies derived from the economics-of-language perspective can help to legitimise language-policy measures, for instance by demonstrating the effects of linguistic diversity at work on (operational) value creation (Grin, Sfreddo, and Vaillancourt 2010: 105–122). Somewhat surprisingly, since greater linguistic diversity always appears to raise costs (translation services, simultaneous interpreting), the same authors even managed to establish an optimal level of linguistic diversity in a given social setting (a country, a region, etc.). Starting from the assumption that such an optimal level exists, they usually argue against language policies that strive only for linguistic homogeneity as the balance of costs and benefits is most favourable, not in a monolingual setting, but when a degree of diversity is permitted and promoted (Grin 2010: 39–41; Gazzola 2014: 67–73). Yet, to reach such a conclusion, the linguist-economist must have recourse to non-market elements in addition to monetary ones. The need for this conceptual trick, which introduces qualitative, soft factors into an intrinsically quantitative model, indicates once more the approach's limitations, of which its representatives and supporters are usually aware (Grin 1996b: 28, 2010).

Recently, though, scholars of the economics of language have discovered interesting new applications for their models. They have found that the (trilingual) language regime adopted by the European Patent Office disadvantaged applicants who were speakers of non-official languages, and they developed strategies to overcome such imbalances (Gazzola and Volpe 2014; Gazzola 2015). Moreover, they have conceptualised models to evaluate different language regimes in terms of the relative efficiency with which they achieve goals such as effective communication, fairness, or linguistic justice, this last assessed by policies' distributive consequences (Gazzola 2014: 73–84). Another research strand is trying to shed light on the role of translation in maintaining and developing linguistic diversity in the context of different language policies, and in comparison to other, more frequently investigated factors such as

foreign language learning, language rights or the use of a lingua franca. Grin (2010) discusses the impact of socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, as well as the dynamics of multilingualism, on translators' and interpreters' training, and on future demand for the services they offer. Burckhardt (2014) has studied the role of translation in fostering linguistic federalism under the Canadian and Swiss language regimes. In the Swiss case, he highlights the (vertically) asymmetric nature of the current public translation policy; whereas German and French translation services are widely available and integrated into all administrative levels, the same is not true of the country's two other official languages, Italian and Romansh. What is more, the latter has a lower status altogether, being officially recognised only in communicative situations involving Romansh speakers.

Thus we can see the potential and usefulness of the economic approach to language(s) and appreciate the contributions of the research done in the field. Yet applied linguists, of course, must still choose an epistemological and methodological foundation for their work, and this is unlikely always to be in alignment with a truly economic mind-set.

5 Conclusion

For various reasons, the relationship between language policies and practices is a very complex one. Of course, policies affect practices, which in turn have an impact on policies. However, the details of this interaction depend on how "policies" are defined. In particular, if we accept the existence of "implicit language policies", then the two fields merge into each other. Moreover, even allowing communication practices to develop completely free from language-policy constraints reflects, in a sense, certain policy assumptions. At the same time, widely-used practices always have potential normative power. Thus language policies and practices are inevitably intertwined, and both are closely connected to the notion of "needs" (see Chapter 12 and our Fig. 13.1).

Originally, certain social and applied-linguistic concepts, such as language policy, di- and polyglossia, were applied almost exclusively to political units (states, regions, etc.). However, for some time now they have also been increasingly applied to organisations and companies. Furthermore, discussion of the role of languages in business is no longer confined mainly to the export context. Instead, the "language(s) factor", including its power and identity aspects, is today given very serious consideration throughout internal and external communication – and in management research, which, thanks to the "linguistic turn", is now addressing the question of which languages are or should be used in companies. Some management scholars (as well as linguists) tend to use the term *language management*; others prefer the notion *language policy in companies*. As a result, the two concepts often describe

similar phenomena and can be regarded in some cases even as synonyms. Nonetheless, the connotation of *language management* may be primarily of economic efficiency, which is why in this contribution we have preferred to use *language policy* even in the business context.

Leaving aside these terminological or theoretical considerations, it is possible to identify a number of empirical studies of “language practices” that provide insights into how living and working with several languages actually functions in companies and organisations. Through a mixture of planning and *bricolage*, the choice of language is determined by a wide variety of internal and external factors (the participants in discussion, the situation, the discourse types concerned, the medium used, etc.). To date, exporting and communication with stakeholders have been the most researched areas of external language choice, while most studies of internal choice have dealt with the particular context of mergers and acquisitions.

In looking to the future, we wish to distinguish between theoretical aims and practical, or applied goals. Since this is a relatively young research field, the first priority is to continue investigating empirically which languages are actually used in which corporate settings. To that end, the means of capturing language practices already in use and set out in this chapter (questionnaires; qualitative interviews) must be supplemented by others, such as participant observation or audio/video recording. More detailed investigation of the role played – or not played – by explicit and implicit language-policy measures in actual corporate language use is also required. Here it would be interesting to know whether, and to what extent, companies’ language policies are influenced by the attitudes of their top managers towards multilingualism, be they positive or sceptical. Of course, “ideology” always plays a role. Researchers with a linguistic background, in particular, tend to favour cultural pluralism, and so to see multilingual language policies as preferable to monolingual ones (e.g., English as corporate language). Hence the crying need for empirical research that would provide a sound basis for evaluating different types of language policies.

At the same time, as we emphasised in Section 4, applied linguistics could gain much by taking into account the theoretical concepts, methodological approaches and empirical results of other disciplines – management and organisation studies, political science and economics – that deal with the same phenomena. We have presented the main approaches, perspectives and research interests of these domains, with the aim of fostering interdisciplinary reception and cooperation such as that increasingly apparent in some pluridisciplinary conferences, publications and research projects.

Finally, in line with the declared aim of applied linguistics to help in solving real-life language and communication problems, this contribution has implications not only for research, but also for business practice. Of course, we cannot at this point identify once and for all the “optimal” language policy, nor do we wish to. Rather, it is a question of persuading more and more companies, and their managers,

that the “language question” is crucial for both external and internal communication. Even if the “linguistic turn” is constantly referenced and invoked, it is by no means as widely accepted by society and business as might be desirable.

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14 English as a lingua franca in international business contexts: Pedagogical implications for the teaching of English for Specific Business Purposes

1. Introduction
2. Reconceptualising English in the age of (corporate) globalisation
3. Teaching English for Specific Business Purposes
4. Conclusion

1 Introduction

“Business is booming” reads the title of St John’s (1996) state-of-the-art article taking inventory of Business English (BE) two decades ago, which was then plagued by three ills: 1) The conceptualisation of English underpinning the notion of Business English; 2) The unavailability of data permitting the linguistic description of Business English, particularly the absence of a “common core” of business language; 3) The discrepancy between research and practice in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Twenty years on, it is surprising to see the stubborn persistence of these problems, even more so given that “[t]he teaching and training of English for business [has evolved into] a multi-billion-dollar industry” (Nickerson 2012: 1923).

There can be no doubt that the different waves of globalisation have left an irrevocable mark on the English language. Propelled by determining social, political and economic factors, globalisation gained new momentum after the end of World War II, giving rise to processes such as decolonisation and the rebuilding of Europe. Inevitably, the global spread of English has resulted in the increasing diversification of English-using communities, to the extent that it has become ever more difficult to conceptualise the English language. Consequently, current reconceptualisations of English, such as suggested by the English as a lingua franca (ELF) paradigm, testify to the conceptual broadening of the very notion of language, conceiving of it as a (virtual) resource characterised by plurality, fluidity and community-based interaction.

This perspective on language has been a source of inspiration and strong appeal to the Business English research community, where English as a lingua franca has been slowly, but steadily, embraced as BELF, that is, Business English as a lingua franca. The task of determining the properties of Business English has not become any easier in view of two factors: first, this new Business English as a lingua franca

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-014

seems to defy linguistic description; second, business practices are, by default, international, intercultural and multilingual. It is thus no surprise that the field of inquiry is very much in transition, an idea encapsulated in the phrase “the changing landscape of business communication” (Kathpalia and Ling 2014).

If business has been booming, so has research into business language. Cases in point are *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes* (Paltridge and Starfield 2013), two state-of-the-art volumes on ESP theory, practice and research (Belcher 2009a; Belcher, Johns, and Paltridge 2011), the special issues of *English for Specific Purposes Journal* (1996, 2005), the *Journal of Business Communication* (2010) or the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* entitled “Teaching ELF, BELF, and/or Intercultural Communication?” (2015). Not only do these publications testify to the great interdisciplinary interest in BE, they also highlight that the field is a composite of different research traditions. Influential scholars have recently revisited key concepts in this highly dynamic field (e.g., Starfield 2012; Nickerson 2012; Johns 2013). Thus Bhatia and Bhatia (2011) relate the dynamism in “English for Business Communication” to the influences of the teaching-led movement of English for Specific Purposes, on the one hand, and the language-centred focus of register and genre analysis on the other; a third influential field has been professional communication informed by management and organisational studies.

These highly prolific research activities have not only generated a voluminous body of literature, but have also somewhat diversified, if not fragmented, the research community. A case in point is the variety of terms used to denote the object of inquiry, including Business English (BE), English for Business Purposes (EBP), International Business English (IBE), Business English as a lingua franca (BELF), Business Discourse (BD) or Business Communication (BC). Each of these being representative of a specific research focus, the resultant “theory jungle” (Du-Babcock 2014: 72) reflects the co-existence rather than cross-fertilisation of the different strands. Admittedly, the interdisciplinary sources of inspiration may have contributed to a widening of horizons. Yet there has also emerged “a widening gap between classroom activities and the professional practices in which the corporate world has been engaged. Academic research has also been seen as lacking relevance and useful application to the world of work, which is particularly true given modern-day business practice and culture” (Bhatia and Bremner 2012: 436).

This chapter offers an overview of Business English as seen from the perspective of English for Specific Purposes. In doing so, I will use *Business English* as an umbrella term, except for describing uses of Business English as a lingua franca. For reasons to be located in the history of ESP, but chiefly on account of language pedagogy, this coverage includes communicative uses of the language, even in the sense of Business Communication. In addressing the three issues raised above, the chapter is organised as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the tight interweaving of (corporate) globalisation and the reconceptualisations of English, highlighting the repercussions of these developments on current conceptions of Business

English. Section 3 is entirely devoted to the teaching of English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP), paying particular attention to the roles of specificity and needs analysis in course design and development. The discussion is wrapped up in the final section, indicating directions for further research.

2 Reconceptualising English in the age of (corporate) globalisation

2.1 The waves of globalisation

It has become commonplace to assert that the global spread of English has dramatically changed the socio-political landscape in many parts of the world, with English predominating in important societal domains, particularly those bearing supra-regional and transnational relevance (Gnutzmann 2011: 517). Although, historically, various languages have served as *koinés* or lingua francas, the current role of English worldwide is without precedent, both in terms of its geographical spread and the array of its users from diverse linguacultural backgrounds (Dewey 2007: 333).

Developments beyond the linguistic provide an appropriate backdrop to this spread and functional range of English. Since the start of the modern period, the history of the English language has been closely interwoven with globalisation, providing we conceive of the latter more broadly as “the spatio-temporal processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organisation of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activities across regions and continents” (Poppi and Cheng 2014a: ix). It has become common practice to distinguish between three main “waves of globalisation” (Poppi and Cheng 2014b), with the first spanning the period from 1492 to 1800, the second covering that from 1800 to 2000 and the current wave being an ongoing process (but see Held, McGrew, and Goldblatt 1999 for a different threefold classification).

It was during the second wave of globalisation, fuelled by the onset of the Industrial Revolution, that the English language was to become increasingly associated with facilitating communications in relation to the exchange of goods. To this day, economic globalisation has been the major driver of the internationalisation of English, implying that “[i]n this context, international trade as an agency of this dynamic serves as an ‘umbilical cord of culture diffusion’” (Brinkman and Brinkman 2002: 732). Certainly, the notion of “culture diffusion” is suggestive of a hyperglobalist perspective on globalisation, ascribing homogenising forces to the spread of “Western capitalist market-type business practices” (Alexander 1999b: 1470) and conceiving of multi-national corporations as powerful governance institutions. Yet what is at stake here seems to be the dissemination of an often misguided belief in “modern economic growth, as a science-based (useful knowledge) technology, which may be material or social” (Brinkman and Brinkman 2002: 742).

Several influential factors, such as the impact of e-technologies, the increasing volume of international trade or the global integration of markets (Du-Babcock 2014: 68), have helped propel the transformation processes giving rise to enhanced communication practices and the need for a shared language in international business transactions. Another important vehicle for the international use of English is its adoption as a working language and language of publication by globally operating enterprises and by international organisations, such as aid agencies, the World Bank or the OECD. Crucially, this process is ongoing. It has already encompassed, for example, the BRIC political grouping made up of Brazil, Russia, India and China, as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose only official working language is English (Kirkpatrick and McLellan 2012: 662).

What is more, it is during the ongoing third wave of globalisation that the English-using individual has become a multiplying factor in the language's global spread. In the process, English has taken centre stage as the shared language of legal and private persons engaged in international business. As Alexander (1999b: 1470) notes, “[a] central feature of the overall internationalisation process sees business people becoming ‘facilitators of exchange’ of goods, services, capital and more obviously today ‘information’”. It is also the individual who has begun to act as a global player in cooperating through a multi-modal network of communication. The current wave has produced ever more closely-knit global communities, a “flattened world” (Friedman 2005), in which information exchange and knowledge transfer have become key activities helping to create new social and business practices and to reshape existing ones. Consequently, “English is an intrinsic part of communication in multinational settings and a fact of life for many business people” (Nickerson 2005: 367–368).

This begs the question as to how English as such a shared language may be conceptualised. According to Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen (2015: 138), it may be taken to mean “corporate language”, in the sense of a particular language to be used in company communication as the result of a top-down, strategic decision. Alternatively, it may also be considered a shared pool of linguistic resources – in the sense of Business English as a lingua franca – used by company employees from diverse linguacultural backgrounds, as appropriate, for both situative context and communicative purpose. This understanding involves community-based interaction and communicative events that “commodify” or even “virtualise” the language. Conceptualisations of English today therefore involve controversial issues such as plurality, fluidity and locality, all of which are encapsulated in the term *linguaging*, which “refers to the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language. [...] Linguaging about language is one of the ways we learn language” (Swain 2006: 98). Inevitably, it has become ever more difficult to model “that thing called English” (Seidlhofer 2011).

2.2 That thing called “English”

In what became known as the “Concentric circle model” or “Three-circle model”, Kachru (e.g., 1997) devised a classification scheme of English-using communities consisting of three concentric circles. Broadly, this tripartite model is organised in terms of demographic and socio-political criteria as follows. The Inner Circle includes users of English as a Native Language (ENL), the Outer Circle comprises users of English as a Second Language (ESL), while users of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are located in the Expanding Circle. Crucially, these circles are underpinned by acquisitional, sociocultural, motivational and functional aspects (Kachru 1992: 54).

Despite its wide currency and great merit, the Kachravian model has been critiqued as “a 20th century construct that has outlived its usefulness” (Bruthiaux 2003: 161). It incorporates several “conceptual inconsistencies” (see Bruthiaux 2003 for a more detailed account), such as the model’s inherent bias towards the post-colonial settings of the outer circle. But the most disturbing problem is that what has become the largest group of current users of English is not adequately represented. For there is no denying that “non-native speakers have come to outnumber native speakers, that in fact most interactions in English take place in the absence of the latter” (Dewey 2007: 333). Yet these users of English are chiefly grouped in the English-using communities in the Expanding Circle, which in fact now “constitutes the prevailing reality of English” (Seidlhofer 2009: 237).

Given the scope of the Expanding Circle, it is still unclear whether it encompasses countries, speakers or merely learners. In cases where an increasingly endo-normative local standard is likely to emerge, the variety status of such an emergent “Euro-English”, for instance, continues to be a vexing issue. From an acquisitional perspective, the model fails to take account of widely varying proficiency levels. In expanding-circle locations, proficiency typically “ranges from native-like ability in a few to the kind of receptive, test-oriented knowledge promoted through schooling, with many knowing no English at all” (Bruthiaux 2003: 169). Similarly, Sing (2007) warns against conflating the range and depth of functions that English fulfils in the Expanding Circle. This distinction is crucial with a view to the didacticisation of expanding-circle English, that is, its prospective development from norm-dependent to norm-developing models.

Nonetheless, the Kachravian model has enhanced awareness of the plurality of English. This, though, is not to be confounded with pluricentricity, yet another concept that is frequently invoked when theorising on English. Clyne (2006: 99), for example, sees it as “the most pluricentric and international of all languages, being a widespread lingua franca”. Since pluricentric languages are characterised by “several interacting centres, each of which provides at least some of (their) own (codified) norms” (Clyne 1992: 1), the very notion of language remains a geographic, if not nation-state-based concept. Instead, as argued by Dewey (2007: 349), English is best approached as “a set of virtual resources, [thereby] mak[ing] it possible to

untie the language from any geographical centre. English is in any case a hybridised language in the extreme, with a varied, complex trajectory of development". Viewing English as a "virtual language" (Widdowson 2003: 48–49) entails the notion of locality as its uses are very much bound to local contexts, which gives rise to localised forms of interaction. In other words, English "gets adapted as the virtual language gets actualised in diverse ways, becomes subject to local constraints and controls" (Widdowson 1997: 140).

In its local appropriations, English is increasingly used in transnational, border-crossing communicative settings that are essentially fluid (Wright 2015: 118–119). Invoking the notion of "linguaging", Wright goes on to explain that in these instances of transnational language interaction, participants rely on creative processes such as accommodation and negotiation rather than native-speaker norms. She (2015) concludes that, in a rapidly globalising world, the standard language ideology attaching linguistic norms to the standard variety of monolingual nation states, has very much outlived its usefulness. This perspective resonates with the ongoing debate about "standard NS [native speaker] English language ideology" (Jenkins 2007: 32–37), and with questions of ownership and agency in norm development. The debate about ownership of English is certainly not new. Nor are discussions about agency and authority in norm-developing settings (see Haberland 1989 for a refreshing, even if dated, perspective on the issue).

Arguably, such (re-)conceptualisations of English are a far cry from the inherent divisiveness of older models. Moving even further away from a monolithic concept of the English language, as already suggested by the term *World Englishes*, its pluralism is now frequently acknowledged by typographic markers, according to which "English" (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen 2015) is labelled as the multifaceted concept of a virtual language. In order to accommodate the communicative practices of these uses, the research paradigm of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has been proposed as an integrative approach to complement the Kachruvian model. "[T]he term 'lingua franca' [as understood in the acronym ELF] does not denote an 'impoverished', purely expedient and makeshift code for lack of something better, but a vibrant, powerful, and versatile shared resource that enables communication across linguistic and geographic boundaries" (Seidlhofer 2009: 242). Crucially, this means that ELF uses are not confined to interaction in the Expanding Circle; rather, ELF is used for communication across all circles. It remains to be seen how this will be reflected in uses of English in business contexts.

2.3 Revisiting English for business

The spread of English as modelled in the Kachruvian trichotomy has also permeated into Business English/Business Communication research, where, according to Rogerson-Revell and Louhiala-Salminen (2010: 376–377), it has raised important ontological

and epistemological issues. They assert that, in examining Business English, it is vital to unambiguously determine the object of study, that is, whether it is English as a lingua franca or English as an international language (EIL) that underpins our understanding of Business English. This distinction is ontologically meaningful as effective communication is benchmarked either against native English or against other target norms. There is, however, also an epistemological dimension to different conceptualisations of English. BELF, whether in its construal as “Business English Lingua Franca” or “English as a lingua franca in business (ELF-B)”, is suggestive of an understanding of language in its own right rather than a “performance variety” or even “interlanguage”.

Some authors have expressed the view that English “simply works” in business contexts (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010). However, that is by no means always the case (see Section 2.3.2). Moreover, it remains unclear whose English, what type of English, it is that “works”, let alone what the underlying mechanisms of effective business communication are (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010). Accordingly, “there is an urgent need to revisit and review not only the concept of Business English and the context in which it is learnt and taught today, but also the framework within which it has been conceptualised, developed, taught and learnt, and, ultimately, assessed and evaluated” (Bhatia and Bremner 2012: 410). With regard to the complexities discussed above, such a comprehensive review clearly seems to be an ill-starred venture. It is nonetheless possible to single out several landmark characteristics of Business English, so that a fuller picture, however patchy, can emerge.

2.3.1 Profiling uses and users of Business English

Business English (BE) occurs in two main communicative settings: 1) External communication used by (business) organisations to relate to public/external stakeholders: 2) intra- and inter-company communication (Gerritsen and Nickerson 2009: 180). While the former is governed by top-down, ordained corporate language policy, the latter is subject to considerable variation, including as it does English as a working language or language for communication used relatively informally among employees. Alternatively, as proposed by Babcock and Du-Babcock (2001) for expatriate-local personnel communication patterns, international business communication occurs in different communication zones which interactants form on the basis of their language proficiency. Communicators may use a linking language to connect with interactants from different zones. Alternatively, in the case of more limited communicative abilities, so-called “link-pin” channels of communication emerge, in which case mediators or “translators” help bridge the proficiency gap (Babcock and Du-Babcock 2001: 383).

As a corporate language, uses of Business English may be industry-related and/ or depend on such factors as the company's status in an international group of companies, that is, whether the language is used in the parent company or subsidiary. Du-Babcock (2014: 70) draws a distinction between English used in international companies and in transnational or global firms. In the former, native languages – local or regional – tend to be used as working languages for most business purposes while English would be restricted to international business activities only. By contrast, in global organisations English is, in this author's view, the only working language independent of the linguistic context in which the organisation operates. Finally, in so-called transnational companies, English functions as a linking language, that is, businesspeople use their first language to communicate in their subsidiaries or divisions whereas English is used to report to the parent, that is, when linking to the globally operating heads.

Focusing on international business encounters, Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009: 180) list four communicative settings, each involving a speaker A with a first language A and speaker B with a first language B: 1) Both speakers use language A; 2) Both speakers use language B; 3) Person A uses his or her first language, Person B uses his or her first language; 4) Person A and Person B opt for a third language C, a lingua franca. The four situations require different communicative strategies and highly proficient users. While scenarios 1) and 2) rely on accommodation, 3) and 4) presuppose users proficient in several languages.

These communicative settings emphasise the need to integrate both native and non-native speakers of English into today's conceptualisation of Business English. This approach breaks with research traditions which demarcate (International) Business English from uses of English as a lingua franca or English as an international language (EIL). The first of these “refers to situations where all communicators are non-native speakers of English, and EIL to communication in which both native and non-native speakers of English participate” (Rogerson-Revell and Louhiala-Salminen 2010: 376). In contrast, Business English as a lingua franca (BELF) is a neutral and shared resource, being “neutral in the sense that none of the speakers can claim it as her/his mother tongue; it is shared in the sense that it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community, whose members are BELF users and communicators in their own right – not ‘non-native speakers’ or ‘learners’” (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta 2005: 403–404).

The presence in the linguistic marketplace of various languages and/or varying levels of proficiency in one language does not exactly level the playing field. In a questionnaire-based study on the uses of Business English as a lingua franca amongst business professionals, Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) identified several characteristics of such encounters. They found that, in the European context, these interactions chiefly involve non-native speakers rather than native speakers of English. As to the users' attitudes towards English, about half the informants felt disadvantaged vis-à-vis native speakers in meetings or negotiations,

assuming that only native speakers are able to fully, and purposefully, exploit the pragmatic potential of English. Others felt more comfortable, using the native speakers as “instructors” whose language may be emulated. Interestingly, as reported by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010), the question of language proficiency in itself was not important; it became relevant only in concert with business (communication) competence and know-how. This can be explained by a focus on superordinate communicative goals, such as “getting the job done”, rapport management and the professional roles assumed by the business partners.

What does all this mean for users of Business English? It would seem that the prototypical user of Business English tends to be a non-native speaker of English. She or he uses the language in community-based interactions in international business contexts that involve users of different first languages and cultural backgrounds who agree on a shared repertoire. In other words, Business English users will be languaging, using adaptive communicative strategies, such as accommodation, in order to achieve a common communicative and professional goal. While users are likely to adopt various attitudes to the use of English in these settings, English is, by and large, seen chiefly from a content-based perspective, that is, as a “neutral”, shared set of linguistic resources.

2.3.2 Core communicative events and business genres

Research into Business English within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been inextricably linked to genre analysis, particularly “its ability to relate textual findings to features of the discourse community within which the genre is produced” (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 91–93). More precisely, such accounts provide an insight into how these genres are instantiated in specific communicative events, that is, activities in which language forms an integral part (Swales 1990: 45). In the pre-social media age, seven such events were identified in business settings: telephoning; socialising; making presentations; taking part in meetings; negotiations; correspondence; reporting (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 63–64). Although most of these events rely on the spoken mode, in ESP research the emphasis has traditionally been placed on written rather than spoken language (see Tardy 2012 for a detailed overview), with typical written genres including business letters, faxes and e-mail communication (Eustace 1996), as well as business reports (Yeung 2007). Research on written business genres is largely indebted to Bhatia’s (1993) seminal work on promotional genres, in which he studied the move structure in sales promotion and job application letters, establishing the distinction between “discriminative” moves that structure a genre and “non-discriminative” rhetorical strategies used to instantiate the genre.

Generally, little work has specifically addressed educational genres in business writing, particularly studies examining undergraduate student writing in English as

a second language (but see Sing 2016). Zhu (2004), by contrast, investigated assessed writing by native speakers on undergraduate and graduate business courses. The study revealed that the assignments involved both general academic and discipline-specific writing skills. It is, in fact, discipline-specific rather than business-specific writing that has generated considerable research interest. There are numerous corpus-based studies investigating disciplinary variation in lexico-grammatical patterns and their discourse functions, focusing on citation practices (e.g., Charles 2006) or shell noun uses (e.g., Sing 2013), for example.

Owing to the discursive turn in the social sciences and communication studies, on the one hand, and the communicative turn in language teaching on the other, a shift has occurred towards language in context, that is, business discourse, and communication skills and strategies, respectively. Typical communicative genres include negotiations or business meetings (see Handford 2010 for a comprehensive, corpus-based account, or Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997), although it can be argued that they overlap in their communicative functions (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 63).

As researchers of business language were able to draw on a wealth of existing literature on general language pragmatics, these communicative genres have been somewhat over-researched. Thus research into business meetings (see Chapter 6 of this handbook) has investigated speech acts (e.g., Bilbow 2002), the languages used in such meetings (Rogerson-Revell 2007) and meetings in multicultural settings (Poncini 2003; Ehrenreich 2010; Virkkula-Räisänen 2010). As regards negotiations (see Chapter 5 of this handbook), the emphasis has been placed on language and discourse in investigating communication strategies in business and management. A case in point is Charles's (1996) pioneering study, in which she found that the strategies used in negotiations depend on two main factors: the status of the business relationship between the negotiating parties (i.e. whether this relationship is well-established or new) and the degree of formality involved, which is evidently culture-bound.

In today's globalised business world, the very notion of business communication entails that multiple languages and cultures are, at least implicitly, almost always present (e.g., Planken and Nickerson 2009; Zhu 2015). This fact informs business encounters in terms of turn-taking, preferences for particular speech acts or rapport-building in negotiations. Hinner (2005) asserts that knowledge of intercultural communication is essential in international business contexts. "Members of diverse cultures may all recognise an organisational hierarchy, a specific brand, or a particular product, but the meaning they attach to that organisational hierarchy, brand, or product will vary from culture to culture" (Hinner 2005: 15–16). In terms of learning, this implies that "BE [Business English] students will encounter novel culturally determined concepts with new L2 [second language] linguistic, especially lexical realisations" (Alexander 2007: 212).

From a business communication perspective, numerous studies have examined the very nature of communicative strategies, that is, whether or not these are transactional rather than interpersonal, procedure- rather than message-related (Rogerson-Revell 1999). More recently, the so-called non-strategic or non-tactical moves in business communication have generated considerable interest in the business communication research community. The emphasis has thus been shifted from transactional communicative goals to relational or interpersonal talk in professional settings (Pullin 2010; Koester 2013). Social actions performed by business language include networking, establishing communities of practice (see below) and building rapport.

These findings have been extended from the explicit perspective of Business English as a lingua franca (BELF). Cases in point are mitigation strategies to manage conflict in negotiations (Bjørge 2012), written forms of negotiations (Jensen 2009) or facework in lingua franca sales negotiations (Planken 2005). Much of the literature of this theoretical persuasion has, however, focused on the highly relevant notion of accommodation (Jenkins 2006), the adaptation of linguistic resources to the communicative context. Accommodation forms part of listener-oriented strategies that are highly characteristic of interactions conducted in English as a lingua franca (ELF). “Speakers in ELF situations seem particularly aware of their listeners, and will thus adjust how they express an idea to maximise the effectiveness of communication” (Dewey 2007: 343). For example, “when speaking with a fluent NNS [non-native speaker] or a NS [native speaker], they fully exploited their English skills, but if the partner’s skills were limited, they simplified their language” (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010: 207).

However, such accommodation practices do not guarantee communicative success. On the contrary, given the complex nature of BELF interactions, misunderstandings (Mauranen 2006; Kaur 2011) are the rule rather than the exception. In that sense, English does not necessarily “work”. Communication failure may result from major lexico-grammatical differences in BELF encounters, diverging socio-cultural norms or stereotypes associated with some accents (Gerritsen and Nickerson 2009: 182–184). While communication failure or even breakdown seems inevitable in human interaction, the consequences of such miscommunication are arguably much costlier in business contexts (Hinner 2005: 17–19), in more senses than one.

2.3.3 Business English as community-based practice

From the beginning, the notion of community has been an integral part of English for Specific Purposes. Given the emphasis placed on communicative events and their purpose(s), the pragmatics of communication almost inevitably entails the notions of community and culture (see Widdowson 1998 for an early account of the importance of community in English for Specific Purposes). While this reflects both the

pragmatic and communicative turns in theorising on language and language teaching at the time, it also points to the important relationship between language and context. In Hyland's (2012a: 11) view, community "offers a way of bringing interactants and texts together into a common rhetorical space, foregrounding the conceptual frames that individuals use to organise their experience and get things done using language".

Swales's (1990) notion of "discourse community" reflects this new understanding of the mutual influence of language and the contexts in which it is used. In essence, in a discourse community "the communicative needs of the goals tend to predominate in the development and maintenance of its discourse characteristics" (Swales 1990: 24). Yet, useful as the notion of (discourse) community may have proved to be, it remains an elusive concept both in terms of its nature and composition. In particular, the eligibility criteria laid down for membership in such a community seem to be fluid rather than fixed. For this reason, Miller (1994: 74) has referred to the notion of (discourse) community as a "virtual concept", emphasising the centrifugal forces operative within such communities.

There is yet another important dimension to community, that of disciplinary belonging and knowledge-based practice, which has attracted considerable attention in the research community on business language and practices. In this context, several labels have been proposed to describe community-based interactions in professional settings: Apart from "discourse community", there are the rival concepts of "scientific community" and "community of practice" (CoP; Kwan 2014). The latter has gained wide currency, particularly in management and organisational studies. As originally defined by Lave and Wenger (1991: 98) it related to "a system of relationships between people, activities, and the world; developing with time, and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice". Later on, prioritising practice over community, Wenger (1998: 72–74) argued that practice assists in forming coherent communities in three ways: 1) mutual agreement; 2) a joint enterprise; 3) a shared repertoire.

A large and growing body of literature has investigated communities of practice in the context of organisational behaviour, where communities of practice are generally conceived of as networked structures within or across organisations. In terms of participation and membership, communities of practice are distinguished from other forms of community-based relationships, such as project teams or purely informal networks (for more details, see Bettiol and Sedita 2011; Probst and Borzillo 2008; Borzillo, Aznar, and Schmitt 2011). As the notion of community of practice has become an important knowledge management tool, it has been somewhat overused, to the extent of rendering it meaningless. Amin and Roberts (2008: 355) raise similar concerns, warning against increasingly more homogenising and instrumentalist uses of the term on the basis of its core meaning "knowing in action".

It is this learning dimension that is being exploited for the knowing organisation typical of the knowledge-based economy (e.g., Choo 2006). It appeals to those who

wish to adapt the notion of community of practice from the perspective of Languages for Specific Purposes/English for Specific Purposes (e.g., Kastberg and Ditlevsen Grove 2007), particularly with regard to knowledge transfer and management. Learning is conceived of as a dynamic process, in which one becomes an expert member of a given community of practice by participating in it, and acquiring professional competence along the way. This process is “very much about acquiring [a] new, enterprise-related as well as efficiency-governed notion of appropriateness concerning the use of English [...] and acting competently according to it” (Ehrenreich 2009: 138). Thus the notion of community of practice can be integrated with that of the learning organisation. Given the warm reception of the concept among business studies researchers, it may be of particular appeal to the (B)ELF community (e.g., Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2007), although it is not unproblematic (see Ehrenreich 2009: 134–135 for a critical evaluation).

3 Teaching English for Specific Business Purposes

Developments in Business English teaching parallel those encapsulated in the Kachruvian trichotomy. The field has been informed by two main traditions, which originated in two different “circles” and, in line with the developments described in Section 2, have subsequently been adapted by, and transplanted to, other English-speaking communities as demand for Business English continued to rise.

The first tradition, the teaching of Business Communication, originated in the inner-circle setting of American business schools, where it was viewed as an integral part of management and organisational behaviour studies, themselves an outgrowth of classical management theory and business administration programmes. From this perspective, Business Communication inheres in the management process itself and thus serves a primarily managerial function. Being anchored in the curricula of management programmes, Business Communication was originally designed to offer general communication training to American business students. In what Du-Babcock (2006: 254) refers to as the “formative period”, “the focus was on teaching Americans how to exchange business messages within the context of an American communication environment in which the communicators shared a common background context (economic, linguistic, social, political, legal, physical, and technological)”.

The second tradition, the teaching of Business English, is integral to the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement, which is very much an outer-circle phenomenon thriving in post-colonial settings. ESP teaching also caught on in post-Second World War Europe, part of the Expanding Circle, driven by the twin objectives of enhancing international understanding in a war-ravaged Europe and accelerating politico-economic transformations (Starfield 2012). Theorising in ESP frequently appears to have been guided by dichotomous thinking, which includes what is perhaps its

most important defining characteristic, the specific purposes served in ESP language instruction. ESP has focused on the learner's specific, chiefly utilitarian purpose of learning English, contrasting it with the "general, education-for-life, culture and literature orientated language course, in which language itself is the subject matter and the purpose of the course" (Robinson 1980: 6).

3.1 The ESP movement and specificity of purpose

3.1.1 ESP in the globalised linguistic marketplace

From the outset ESP was, and has remained, a somewhat scattered, localised phenomenon, both in terms of research activities and its adaptation to local contexts (Johns 2013; Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang 2013). In a globalising world, the repercussions of the reconceptualisations of English are felt particularly strongly in the field of ESP (also Csizér and Kontra 2012: 2). It is the ESP learning environment that has become the locus of bottom-up and top-down conflicts that arise from the attempt to cater for global and local language needs at the same time. Students may have a working knowledge of English and may thus feel well equipped for the workplace. But they will have to learn that, in this linguistic marketplace, linguistic competence has a different status from the pedagogic challenges in (higher) education since failure to master English is perceived as ineffectiveness or even a source of conflict (Bhatia and Bremner 2012: 430).

Invoking Robertson's (1995) notion of "glocalisation", Belcher (2006: 134) pinpoints the complexity of contemporary ESP as follows. "What once looked to many like a straightforwardly needs oriented, a- or pan-theoretical (aligned with no particular theory but employing many), and, some would add, ideologically oblivious approach, now, like the constantly changing learning targets it addresses, is itself becoming harder and harder to capture in anything like a single stop-action frame." In part, ESP's prominence results from the close and complex relationship between the promotion of language teaching and the political agenda of international organisations such as the British Council, particularly its English Teaching Information Centre (ETIC) (Robinson 1980: 2–3), or the Council of Europe. It would also seem that there has been a clear economic dimension to the expansion of ESP, as captured in the business sense of glocalisation as "micro-marketing", that is, "the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets" (Robertson 1995: 28). Crucially, as Robertson (1995) goes on to explain, it is not a question of merely adapting to local markets but rather of constructing ever more differentiated consumers.

Arguably, then, ESP comes equipped with ideological baggage, an aspect against which more critical voices (e.g., Phillipson 2003) have inveighed, considering English for Academic Purposes, in particular, as "accommodationist" (Benesch

1993), “assimilationist” (Pennycook 1994), “market-driven” and even “colonising” (Belcher 2006: 134; but see Swales 1997 for a discussion of these controversies). From a more moderate perspective evoking associations such as “cost-effective” (Stevens 1988) or “functional”, the spread of ESP may be seen as the result of increased market pressures passed on to the language teaching profession at the time (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 7). In response to the sharply rising demand for Business English resulting from global economic expansion, ESP was introduced as an efficient, innovative approach to English Language Teaching (ELT). In the process, English had itself become subject to the interplay of supply and demand, evolving into a strong currency in the linguistic marketplace. This “commodification” (Cameron 2012) of English entailed that, in order to be maximally effective and achieve other goals, teaching methodology was to be tailored to these emergent needs of ESP students. One powerful way of identifying learners’ needs is so-called needs analysis (see Section 3.2.1).

3.1.2 Learning English for specific purposes

Aligning ESP more closely with “acquisition planning” (Ferguson 2010), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 4–5) distinguish ESP teaching from general English classes in terms of teaching methodology. The authors define ESP on the basis of a set of characteristics, some absolute, others variable. The former include needs-based course design, teaching methodology and activities that cater for target disciplines/professions, and language and skills amenable to these activities and contexts. Variable characteristics relate to the learners for whom the courses are designed; these tend to be adults enrolled at higher-education institutions or business professionals, thus chiefly intermediate or advanced students. Furthermore, variable characteristics indicate that ESP may involve discipline-specific teaching situations, in which the methodology applied differs from teaching English for general purposes.

As shown in Figure 1, there are several levels of ESP, each with different degrees of specificity in course design (see Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 17 and Robinson 1980: 7 for alternative classifications).

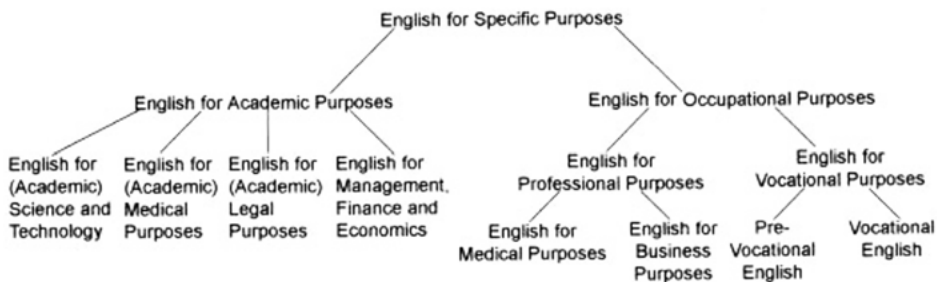


Figure 1: Classification of ESP (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 6)

Apart from the broad division into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), the above classification in terms of professional domains branches into ever more fine-grained distinctions. Cases in point, while not represented in Figure 1, are the distinctions between English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) vs. English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), on the one hand, and English for General Business Purposes (ESBP) vs. English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) on the other. The latter distinction is useful, blending as it does professional criteria, such as pre-experience, in-service or post-experience training, with pedagogic ones, such as course duration (intensive or extensive), participants (in-company or open-registration courses), group size (one-to-one or small groups), location (in-house, residential, non-residential courses), trainers (employed by company or external) or mode of learning (class teaching, self-study). Placing English for Business Purposes within English for Occupational Purposes rather than English for Academic Purposes is problematic, though, as “[t]he academic business English required by students on courses in disciplines such as business, finance, accounting and banking has more in common with the study of other EAP disciplines” (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 53).

To quote Upton and Connor (2012: 3151), the “level of specificity called for in ESP instruction has been a controversial question that has simmered for a long time”. The debate has centred on two extreme, mutually exclusive, positions. Broad definitions of specificity imply that language pedagogy rests on a shared pool of linguistic resources that should be taught to students across the board, assuming that there is a common core of language shared by academic disciplines. This view has appealed to scholars (e.g., Dovey 2006) highlighting the importance of “transferable skills”. On the other hand, conceiving of specificity in a narrower sense (e.g., Hyland 2002) entails that the language needs in specific subject areas and disciplines differ from those in more general academic areas and contexts. The first approach is characteristic of a so-called wide-angled approach to ESP, while the latter is referred to as narrow-angled (Basturkmen 2010: 37).

The explanatory power of narrow-angled approaches, in particular, has been called into question. First, from a pragmatic perspective, it seems natural that speakers generally accommodate to both addressee(s) and communicative contexts. Thus, “in one sense *all* uses of English, as of any other language, are specific. All uses of the language serve particular purposes. Whenever I indulge in utterance, I fashion the form of my message according to communicative requirements” (Widdowson 1998: 3: italics in original). Second, from a learner-centred perspective, the distinction is artificial, if not meaningless, since it suggests an *a priori*, top-down classification, disregarding the real learning environment. “To many ESP practitioners [...] the wide versus narrow approach debate is a nonissue because instructional decisions should have more to do with the learners themselves than with instructor preference or beliefs” (Belcher 2006: 139). A third concern about narrow-angled approaches has arisen from considerable corpus-based evidence for the existence of

a general academic vocabulary (e.g., Evans and Green 2007), and hence an increased need for general English for Academic Purposes rather than English for Specific Purposes.

A lot depends, of course, on the conception of specificity itself. Rather than as a yes-no variable, specificity may be construed as a continuum. According to Basturkmen (2010: 57), the cline of specificity ranges from wide-angled, general ESP courses such as “Business English”, focusing on a broad scope of Business English skills across business fields and subfields, to more specific, narrow-angled courses such as “English for Financial Auditors”, or the even narrower option of English for Financial Auditors at a particular accounting firm, for example. ESP courses such as “English for Accountants” / “English for Financial Accountants” would occupy the middle of the scale. Designing courses on the basis of their specificity of purpose is, however, not without problems since this approach appears to impose external requirements – institutional, political or purely linguistic – on course design, giving rise to teaching “language for other people’s purposes” (Belcher 2009b: 1). Instead, the students’ language learning purposes should be in focus, that is, the student roles carved out in a particular instructional context or learning environment.

3.2 ESP course design

Course design or course development relates to the planning stage that precedes processes such as curriculum design or materials development. It typically involves collecting information about the students concerned, the features of the teaching situation and the language to be taught. ESP course design is thus informed by needs analysis, theories of learning and linguistic description.

3.2.1 Needs analysis

While not unique to language teaching, needs analysis (NA) (see also Chapter 12 of this handbook) has been pivotal in implementing ESP programmes, both in education (see Bhatia and Bremner 2012 for the role of needs analysis in course development in English Business Communication programmes) and the workplace (e.g., Cowling 2007). Two landmark publications (Munby 1978; Richterich and Chancerel 1980) moved needs analysis to the centre stage of ESP instruction (e.g., Robinson 1980 or Flowerdew 2013 for more recent, comprehensive overviews of needs analysis in ESP). NA typically involves gathering various types of information about learners, whether concerning the future professional setting or workplace in which they will use the language, their current language abilities or more personal information about conditions of learning, such as their motivation for learning the language for specific purposes concerned. Correspondingly, there are three main tools in NA,

which tend to be combined in practice (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 124). The first, target-situation analysis (TSA), includes objective, perceived and product-oriented needs. The second, learning situation analysis (LSA), relates to subjective, felt and process-oriented needs. Finally, present situation analysis (PSA) identifies strengths and weaknesses in language, skills and learning experiences.

These traditional approaches to needs analysis, in particular target-situation analysis, have been increasingly challenged from a variety of standpoints. First and foremost, considerable criticism has been levelled at the very concept of needs itself. Addressing the fact that needs constitute a fairly elusive concept, several taxonomies have been proposed. Cases in point are Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998: 125) "current concept of needs analysis" or Hutchinson and Waters' (1987: 55–58) distinction between three types of needs in target-situation analysis: necessities, wants and lacks. In their learning-centred approach to English for Specific Purposes, the authors conceive of "necessities" as the language skills required of learners to function in a specific target situation. Their notion of "wants" relates to the self-awareness of learners, that is, how they themselves perceive what they need to know, while "lacks" refer to the gap between the learners' current abilities and the target proficiency.

Target-situation analysis, in particular, is suggestive of the potentially ideological nature of needs analysis, which, once "politicised", may serve as a powerful policy instrument "in the name of so-called authenticity, realism and pragmatism" (Benesch 1996: 724). Similarly, Belcher (2006: 143) proposes "rights analysis", which seeks to recognise learners' needs as autonomous and self-regulated rather than imposing institutional or expert expectations on course development. One way of addressing the problem is to opt for a learner-centred rather than language- or learning-centred approach to needs analysis. This way, the learners themselves become needs analysts, since, as shown by Liu et al. (2011), students have their own perceptions of necessities, wants and lacks. What is more, from the more subjective learner perspective needs will prove to be an iterative concept, being "in constant change in respect of the target they identify" (Holme and Chalausaeng 2006: 404).

A second point of criticism relates to the methods used in NA to gain the necessary information. While in traditional approaches the questionnaire was the method of choice, there is now a greater methodological awareness of data collection and analysis (but see Long 2005 for a critical view of needs-analysis methodology). Thus, contemporary approaches to NA include a range of qualitative methods using ethnomethodological data (interviews, participant observations, diaries), as well as quantitative (corpus analysis, statistical surveys) or mixed methods approaches. For instance, in order to discriminate more clearly between learners' needs and wants, Holme and Chalausaeng (2006) employ "Participatory Appraisal", combining participant observation and semi-structured interviews, which are then triangulated with the quantitative analysis of questionnaires collected over a longer period of time. Lately, with the availability of corpora of languages for specific purposes, corpus

analysis has also become an important tool in identifying language needs and in addressing these needs in materials development.

Finally, new approaches to teaching and language education have also challenged (traditional) needs analysis. These frequently require greater consideration of contextual factors, including localised modes of learning and the situatedness of learning in particular. For example, West's (1994) pleads for greater faithfulness to pedagogical requirements, including students' learning needs and what is termed "means analysis", that is, "information about the environment in which the course will be run" (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998: 125). These insights typically include classroom culture, staffing and other resources. Critical movements, such as Critical English for Academic Purposes (Benesch 2012), have also highlighted the importance of context for NA to be efficient, focusing particularly on the role of change agents in institutional practices. For this type of "critical needs analysis" (Benesch 1996), NA is clearly a policy tool, geared to critically assessing the target situation rather than merely describing it. The extent to which change can actually be achieved in a given target situation depends on local conditions. These include four levels of student needs based on academic hierarchy (university, college, departmental, and classroom), which implies that "every academic situation presents a different set of hierarchical and sometimes contradictory needs" (Benesch 1996: 726).

Talking of contradictory needs, the gulf between target genres in education and those in the workplace continues to be a vexing issue. Accordingly, Lung (2014) advocates the combination of needs analysis and critical genre analysis. In what she terms "blended needs analysis" (BNA), Lung (2014: 267) intends to provide a fuller account of professional communication at the workplace. To this end, blended needs analysis integrates three perspectives – the individual, the institutional and the societal – and shifts the focus from a predominantly language- and genre-based target-situation analysis towards the inclusion of community-based practice and the attainment of institutional goals. This focus on workplace skills seems called for, given that localised educational practices do not invariably meet the demands of professional settings. For example, Tardy (2012) reports that the written genres required in the workplace differ tremendously from the educational genres taught in business schools.

If we examine needs from yet another perspective, namely "task-based needs analysis" (Lambert 2010), the gap between business and education seems narrower. Lambert found that the tasks required in these domains do not diverge as greatly as expected. On the contrary, five tasks were relatively high priorities for both education and business: locating information, translating documents, summarising information, editing documents, and interpreting between speakers (Lambert 2010: 107). Thus, while in language teaching, particularly English for Specific Purposes, it has been common to select lexical items, grammatical structures or discourse functions as units that can be taught, Lambert proposes tasks around which learning can be organised.

3.2.2 Models of learning

Theories of learning are needed to determine the most suitable teaching methodology for the target course content. Arguably, approaches to teaching are subject to shifting pedagogic fashions and English for Specific Purposes is no exception here. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 14) critique previous approaches to ESP for their language- rather than learning-centredness.

Generally, learning can be understood in terms of two conceptual metaphors that have informed our thinking (Sfard 1998). In fact, the so-called acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor form part of competing discourses on learning. The former instantiates human learning as the accumulation of knowledge, implying that the human mind is a container that is gradually filled with knowledge. Accordingly, “[c]oncepts are to be understood as basic units of knowledge that can be accumulated, gradually refined, and combined to form ever richer cognitive structures” (Sfard 1998: 5). More recently, the discourse hegemony of the acquisition metaphor has been challenged by the participation metaphor, which maps learning “as a process of becoming a member of a certain community” (Sfard 1998: 6).

Table 14.1: Metaphorical models of learning (adapted from Sfard 1998: 7)

Acquisition metaphor	Participation metaphor	
Individual enrichment	Goal of learning	Community building
Acquisition of something	Learning	Becoming a participant
Recipient (consumer), (re)constructor	Student	Peripheral participant, apprentice
Provider, facilitator, mediator	Teacher	Expert participant, preserver of practice/discourse
Property, possession, commodity (individual, public)	Knowledge, concept	Aspect of practice/discourse/activity
Having, possessing	Knowing	Belonging, participating, communicating

It would seem from Table 14.1 that, apart from the fundamental understanding of what learning is and what it is to achieve, the roles assigned to student and teacher and what is conceived of as knowledge are particularly relevant to ESP language learning. Each of these points will now be addressed individually.

In ESP instruction, particularly for Business English, “learning entails learning more than the linguistic system” (Alexander 2007: 211), as it clearly also involves developing, for example, intercultural competence. Given the interplay of globalised and localised practices in ESP settings, the syllabus should be attuned to “localised learning” in that “[t]he teaching of English as a subject, [...], crucially involves localising the language in accordance with particular conditions of learning” (Widdowson 2003: 158).

More specifically, ESP instruction has recently accommodated social theories of learning according to which literacy as social practice is historically situated (Barton and Hamilton 2000). In their pioneering work, Lea and Street (1998: 157) assert that “[a]cademic literacy practices [...] constitute central processes through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study”. Drawing on this approach, Hyland (2013) has made a case for the integration of academic literacies approaches to writing. Similarly, Sing (2015) proposes a corpus-based study of the construction of writer identities in the ESP writing of business students, which is loyal to the participation metaphor of learning as well as conceiving of student writers as apprentices in a craft-based learning process.

What is more, ESP settings were also among the first to embrace new media, such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), in teaching and learning (see Chapter 16 of this handbook). The advent of corpus linguistics has given rise to new forms of learning, in which students may adopt an active role in the pedagogic process. In Data-Driven Learning (DDL) students use concordances derived from specialised or general language corpora as a source of learning. The DDL approach “suggests that corpus work can be introduced in the classroom and language learners can examine concordance material to work out features of language use on their own” (Gavioli 2005: 28). Corpus-informed learning is also particularly compatible with the ESP learner’s profile as “corpus consultation calls on more learner-centred, individualised and autonomous methods of learning” (Boulton, Carter-Thomas, and Rowley-Jolivet 2012: 2).

Turning now to teacher and student roles in the pedagogic process, traditional conceptions foresee a clear division of roles and labour in the classroom. This may well not be the case in ESP teaching, where students often know more about the subject content than their instructors. This situation, in which “teachers often find themselves having to deal with specialised areas of knowledge in which they have not been trained”, is referred to as the “subject-knowledge dilemma” (Upton and Connor 2012: 3152). According to Gnutzmann (2011), the LSP teacher fulfils a role somewhere between a foreign language teacher and a subject specialist. Crucially, however, in actual teaching situations, the teacher of languages for specific purposes is required to teach a lot more than language skills, “since students are presumably more in need of comprehension strategies and techniques not only for language details but also for a text as a whole including methodology, aims, structure of argumentation” (Gnutzmann 2011: 531).

As mentioned in Section 2.3.1, the prototypical student of Business English is a user of English as a second language (L2). In teaching ESP to non-native speakers, the learning process is additionally burdened by the heterogeneity of the students, equipped as they are with quite different levels of proficiency. Coming from diverse educational backgrounds and systems, they have highly divergent needs. While some of these students may have academic literacy skills in their first language and need help to transfer these into English, others may require assistance in even basic

grammar issues (Gnutzmann 2011: 527). This means that undergraduate ESP students from a non-native English background face a twofold pedagogical challenge, which gives rise to linguistic and conceptual issues (Peters et al. 2014: 743–745). These students are linguistically challenged in that they are struggling with language competence and skills at the levels of general English, academic English and the specialist language of the discipline concerned. Their language difficulties are frequently compounded by failure to grasp the basic concepts underpinning the body of knowledge in question.

The goals of leaning in Business English teaching clearly consist in community building rather than individual enrichment. For business students, learning to know involves becoming participant members of disciplinary communities or central participants in a business community of practice. Not only does this presuppose an understanding of knowing as participating and communicating, it also requires an understanding of language as a resource. Language knowledge means recognising the landmarks of distinct practices, and languaging involves “epistemological, ontological, social and discursal border-crossings” (Hyland 2002: 389).

3.2.3 Describing business language for teaching purposes

In order to define the language as subject content, ESP course design has predominantly drawn on two schools of thought: language variation and register analysis, and discourse/genre analysis. Whatever the theories lay down, “they are all, in one way or another, concerned with the same central pedagogic problem [...] of deciding what formal or functional features of the language as a whole are to be focused on as appropriate for learning” (Seidlhofer 2011: 176).

In Business English teaching, this decision resulted in focusing primarily on lexical resources, with the aim of familiarising students with business-specific vocabulary. For pedagogical purposes, English vocabulary tends to be subdivided into various (sub-)classes, each of which is prioritised at particular stages of the acquisition process. Vocabulary building in a second language typically begins with general, high frequency vocabulary or core vocabulary and then moves on to more specific areas (Schmitt 2000: 144). To date, the best known classification of English vocabulary is perhaps that proposed by Coxhead and Nation (2001: 252–253), who distinguish between four major vocabulary categories: high frequency words, academic vocabulary, technical vocabulary, and low frequency words.

Of particular interest and relevance to Business English teaching are the classes of academic and technical vocabulary. The former is in fact an elusive category that has been referred to by a number of different terms, such as “sub-technical vocabulary” (Baker 1988) or “semi-technical vocabulary”. Crucially, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 83) refer to “semi-technical vocabulary” as “core business vocabulary”, that is, “vocabulary that is used in general language but has a higher

frequency in a specific field” (see Konstantakis 2007 for a Business English word list). Technical vocabulary, by contrast, includes “vocabulary that has specialised and restricted meanings in certain disciplines and which may vary in meaning across disciplines” (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 83). From a teaching perspective it is doubtful whether pedagogical distinctness should be attributed to technical rather than semi-technical vocabulary. It is equally unclear whose responsibility it is – the language teacher’s or the subject expert’s – to teach technical vocabulary. Another much contested issue is the pedagogic utility of vocabulary lists, corpus-derived or other, in general. In Alexander’s (1999b: 1468) view, terminological data banks, and specialist dictionaries of economics and business terms would have a necessary but limited role to play.

More recently, the emphasis has shifted to discourse rather than sentence-level phenomena. With the advent of corpus linguistics and the availability of large corpora, Business English can now be analysed in terms of usage patterns, for example collocation (Walker 2011) and semantic prosody (Nelson 2006). Moreover, Berber Sardinha and Barbara (2009) adopt a corpus-driven perspective in their analysis of the DIRECT business discourse corpus, in which they investigate patterned language use in business meetings.

While a substantial body of research has focused on business genres, both written and spoken, surprisingly little has been derived that could provide an adequate linguistic description of business language for educational purposes. In part, this paucity of input can be accounted for by a research focus that prioritises expert/professional practices over apprentice practices or educational genres. Admittedly, most researchers in the field draw pedagogical implications from their studies (e.g., Handford 2010; Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen 2015). In general, however, there is clear scope for research either to adopt an explicit teaching-led perspective (e.g., Bjørge’s 2012 analysis of Business English textbooks in terms of business negotiations with English as a lingua franca) or to offer a contrastive analysis of student and professional practices (as showcased by Planken’s 2005 corpus-based study of facework in business negotiations).

In the light of this situation, the gap between research and practice is unlikely to be closed any time soon. Practitioners, including materials developers and textbook writers, have long since found a *modus operandi* in accommodating to classroom situations in which they must make personal, intuition-led decisions about how to address target situations for which no suitable descriptions are available. “In lieu of an explicit representation of reality they must often make do with ‘simulations’ of that reality, or at the least, pedagogically balanced samples of the reality of business communication which they need to present” (Alexander 1991: 588).

Still, practice-focused research is clearly the way forward, with the important caveat that the language which is the object of description for linguists never equals the language taught in the classroom (Widdowson 2003: 111). However, “Business English is difficult to define and limit in linguistic terms” (Dudley-Evans and St John

1998: 54), which accounts for the absence of a common core of business language invoked initially. Given that the parametric framework of language teaching is informed by variables in two domains, language and education, it may be worthwhile shifting the emphasis in favour of education.

3.3 ESP practice

Following the stage of course design, curriculum development includes syllabus and materials design as well as the development of suitable teaching methodology. The rationale behind these stages is that information gathered in each of them will be fed back into the processes of course design and development. Business English has witnessed two major interrelated paradigm shifts in the approaches to language teaching and learning (Nickerson 2005: 369). First, as a result of the so-called “discursive turn”, language use beyond the sentence level has been foregrounded rather than decontextualised language items. Second, the “communicative turn” in language teaching (Allen and Widdowson 1978) has contributed to de-emphasising formal aspects in Business English instruction, as well as a move away from functional-notional curricula in favour of communicative strategies that, more recently, have also taken on board non-native speaker communication as a benchmark for effective business communication.

3.3.1 Syllabus design

Munby’s (1978) proposal of communicative syllabus design marks a sea change in determining the content to which Business English students will be exposed. Subsequently, syllabuses have been “concerned with the specification and planning of what is to be learned [. . .]. They are concerned with the achievement of ends, often, though not always, associated with the pursuance of particular means” (Candlin 1984: 30–31). Following Nunan (1988), syllabuses can be subdivided into two main categories, depending on whether their design is primarily concerned with learning outcomes or with the means by which these outcomes are generated. Product-oriented syllabuses, such as the functional-notional syllabus, define the course content as the end-product of instruction. Process-oriented syllabuses, on the other hand, integrate the learning process with the content (which may blur the difference between syllabus design and methodology). Cases in point are task-based and content-based syllabuses, the former being organised around, not language items but tasks, such as making arrangements, attending meetings, buying and selling, reporting or dealing with information (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 87). In content-based syllabuses, by contrast, content is to be derived from a well-defined subject area, for example, management, finance or accounting.

The novelty of Munby's (1978) communicative syllabus, by and large, consisted in offering an alternative to purely linguistically-oriented syllabuses, which are invariably product-oriented. Whether or not product- and process-oriented syllabuses are indeed polar opposites is a matter of controversy. In fact, it would seem that, similar to the narrow- vs. broad-angled approaches to English for Specific Purposes discussed above, they are best placed on a continuum. This view echoes Alexander's (1999b: 1469) observation that all Business English teaching has oscillated between product- and process-oriented approaches: "Where once register analysis dealt with lexical density and quantitative analyses of the probability of use of certain structures in specific text types, there has been a shift to discourse – to a dynamic view of text involving the reader's interpretative strategies."

As to the underpinning learning theory, the product syllabus is more closely aligned with learning as entrenched in the acquisition metaphor, although it need not be. Generally speaking, there are few research-informed approaches to curriculum development (but see Pullin 2015). Zhang (2007) proposes an interdisciplinary Business English curriculum consisting of three interdependent modules. The first, containing courses in the area of "business studies", is primarily concerned with acquainting students with disciplinary knowledge and assisting them in becoming proficient members of the disciplinary community (Zhang 2007: 407–408). Courses in the second area, "business practice", are intended to help students gain first-hand experience of key business procedures and activities. Finally, the "business discourse" module integrates discipline-specific study skills, business skills and language awareness.

3.3.2 Materials, methodology and contents

Nickerson (2005: 375) observed that "the market [for teaching materials] has remained somewhat static over the last two decades". She took issue with then existing materials, arguing that they were outdated, catered to intermediate rather than advanced students and, above all, failed to reflect authentic business interactions. To this day, the materials used in Business English instruction are still often self-produced partly because English for Specific Purposes, as localised practice, accommodates localised forms of learning, partly because published materials tend to be standardised, wide-angled and neutral with regard to a specific field (Gnutzmann 2011: 529–530).

Ideally, of course, materials should adequately represent the target contexts, preparing students for professional practice in the workplace. This plea for "authenticity" and for "bringing the real world into the classroom" (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2010: 208) resonates with a long-term trend in English Language Teaching. However, it is a somewhat unfortunate one. For "what is real or authentic to users is not authentic to learners. It is not real to them if they do not know the conventions of use that makes it real; and they do not know them, by definition,

if, as is commonly the case, they are not yet members of the discourse community concerned” (Widdowson 1998: 10). There are several reasons for this.

First and foremost, identifying Business English uses in the workplace can only give rise to descriptive claims. These, however, “carry no implication for the definition of English as a subject” (Widdowson 2003: 94). The latter would be a pedagogical claim that cannot be made on the basis of linguistic description alone. Even if “real” business language is derived from corpus data collected in the world of business, it will consist of “*samples* [emphasis as original] of real language data [that] do not of themselves serve as *examples* [emphasis as original] of language to learn from” (Widdowson 2003: 102). Similarly, emphasising the priority of learning over description of language use, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 14) assert that “[w]e cannot simply assume that describing and exemplifying what people do with language will enable someone to learn it. If that were so, we would need to do no more than read a grammar book and a dictionary in order to learn a language”.

The “real” language debate is misguided for another reason. The context of the business world is arguably a far cry from the classroom context, the latter being imbued with a sense of pedagogic purpose that creates a “reality of its own” (Widdowson 2003: 133). This important point has been succinctly illustrated by Esteban and Cañado (2004), who reported on the advantages and drawbacks of the case method in teaching Business English, describing it as rewarding and challenging for teachers and students alike. Interestingly, one of the challenges they identified was the physical learning environment itself, where the classroom proved to be incompatible with the teaching content of a meeting. Staging the classroom as a boardroom required too great an effort of imagination from both teachers and students. Nonetheless, the case method, alongside follow-up simulations of “genuine” cases adapted for the Business English classroom (Zhang 2007), has proved a viable method of teaching Business English. Other proven approaches include team teaching, ideally combining a language and a subject expert.

Even without research-based input, practitioners are required to “adjust [their] teaching methods to better suit the realities of an ever evolving and more complex, globalised, and multidisciplinary communication and teaching environment” (Du-Babcock 2006: 255). In this process, Business Communication and Business English offer two different perspectives on teaching business language, although it should be noted that ESP-led Business English has fared better due to its teaching- and learning-centred perspective. In order to improve teaching methodology in English for Specific Purposes, the content and language integrated (CLIL) approach would be a viable alternative since it “avoids confronting students with specialised texts they are not yet able to understand, but prepares them to meaningfully apply their new, subject-embedded linguistic knowledge in class” (Gnutzmann 2011: 531).

As regards what is taught, the emphasis in ESP instruction was traditionally placed on lexical issues. It prioritised, on the one hand, reading skills such as textual analysis and reading comprehension of technical language (see Gablasova

2015 for a recent overview of vocabulary learning from reading) and, on the other, genre-based/register-based writing skills. More recently, as the result of a shift towards competency-based instruction, communicative competence (CC) has become central to ESP instruction. Some of the most commonly cited models of Communicative Competence are Canale and Swain's (1980) and Celce-Murcia's (2007), both of which also include discourse competence.

Given that business encounters frequently involve speakers of different linguistic-cultural backgrounds, they involve intercultural communication, which can be seen as “a system of shared or contested values, attitudes, beliefs and ways of doing things across cultural contexts” (Bhatia and Bremner 2012: 430). Communicative competence in business thus presupposes intercultural competence. In research on Business English as a lingua franca (BELF), several competencies have been merged into what is either referred to as “BELF competence” (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010) or, in an even more integrated form, as “Global Communicative Competence” (GCC) (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen 2015). GCC is conceived as a multi-layered model consisting of three interrelated layers, namely multicultural competence, competence in BELF and business knowhow. Crucially, these layers are intertwined and highlight the importance of contextual knowledge for language competence and use (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen 2015: 130–131).

All in all, one of the main competencies to be imbued in business students today seems to be that of being flexibly competent. This implies that the educational purpose of Business English instruction should be “prospective”, i.e. preparing the learners to cope with the unpredictable (Widdowson 2003: 20). This way, “BELF is perceived as an enabling resource to get the work done. Since it is highly context-bound and situation-specific, it is a moving target defying detailed linguistic description” (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen 2015: 129).

3.3.3 Policy factors and institutionalisation

The interlocking processes of course and curriculum development precede the implementation of Business English programmes. Although these processes also apply to Business English teaching designed for intensive, in-company courses, the focus is placed here on Higher Education, where the implementation of such programmes is constrained by several factors. Business English is an interdisciplinary endeavour that has to accommodate the demands of a great variety of stakeholders located at different levels of the academic hierarchy, as well as being accountable to policy-makers outside Higher Education. This complex interplay among the globalising forces of today's market-based education generates a dynamics of its own, touching on fundamental issues such as the nature of the Business English programme, its status within the business school curricula or the discipline behind the programme.

Most fully-fledged, English-taught Business English/Business Communication programmes are situated at (post-)graduate level, at least in Europe. Here the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries are top-ranked in the provision of English-medium

instruction in Higher Education (Wächter and Maiworm 2015). BA programmes, by contrast, are mainly minor study programmes (earning between 30 and 60 ECTS points), service programmes or modules branching out from a common-core element such as International Business Administration. It is not always clear whether the core curriculum as a common body of knowledge involves English-medium instruction throughout or is to be delivered in several languages, including the students' first language.

Above all, these programmes tend to be anchored in social sciences departments or schools of management rather than schools of language and communication, which minimises the chances of implementing a linguistically-oriented syllabus. More likely, Business English will be one of several sub-competencies in an overall business-centred curriculum. This positioning, however, may give rise to conceptual inconsistencies that can be pedagogically challenging, particularly for undergraduate students. More often than not, content and language are not sufficiently integrated, let alone carefully orchestrated (Peters et al. 2014). This runs counter to the view expressed by Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, and Karhunen (2015: 137) that, "as in all education, it is crucial to design the curriculum, courses, and assignments in such a way that they support each other and that the particular learning outcomes are achieved".

This debate goes to the heart of what is at stake here, namely the crucial question as to where Business English is to be anchored in the framework of English for Specific Purposes. As illustrated in Table 14.1 above, the classification of Business English is ambivalent as Business English may be classed as English for Academic Purposes or English for Occupational Purposes. Since it is used in both Higher Education and the workplace, neither linguistic description nor context permits any more straightforward classification. But the educational purpose will. Surely, Business English courses anchored in English for Academic Purposes are to be seen as incorporating broader educational purposes than those defined as target needs in the workplace. This view would be in accordance with the original definition of English for Specific Purposes/Languages for Specific Purposes as "a distinctive approach to language education that focuses on the particular linguistic features, discourse practices, and communicative skills used by target groups" (Hyland 2012b: 2281). While education and skills training – the sort of thing done in English for Occupational Purposes in Business – need not be mutually exclusive (Alexander 1999a), both would be integral to a new learning-centred approach to English for Specific Purposes.

4 Conclusion

This overview has been built around three main issues: 1) The (re-)conceptualisation of English underpinning the notion of Business English; 2) the difficulties involved in providing a description of linguistic, pragmatic and communicative properties of

Business English; 3) the widening gulf between research and practice. While far-reaching implications are not to be drawn from such cursory examination, it is nonetheless possible to indicate some directions for further research in terms of more general observations.

Perhaps the first point to be made is that the large-scale reconceptualisations of English, in concert with the internationalisation of business practices, have clearly outpaced the development of an integrated theory. In the light of this, it could be argued that the disciplinary interests of applied linguistics are ill-served by merging traditions and approaches in Business English research. It may be tempting to believe that accommodating a larger range of competencies within Business English/Business Communication curricula, particularly those including business know-how, may eventually yield a better return on investment. However, not only does this trend towards supplementing communicative competence with ever more additional competencies overburden curricula, it also prevents more sustainable pedagogical models from being developed.

Therefore, unless applied linguists expressly wish to subscribe to an assimilationist point of view, the way forward appears to be placing the emphasis on the “L” rather than the “B” in BELF (Business English as a lingua franca). Surely, it is in this domain that the core competencies are located, while the added benefits of exploiting to the full one’s professional expertise seem rather obvious. It should be recalled that applied linguists are in fact masters of several trades, including both research and practice in the realm of English language teaching.

It would thus be advisable if linguistic descriptions of Business English took as their point of departure research-based accounts of current reconceptualisations of English. Corpus-based evidence of stable configurations of English as a lingua franca is readily available for exploitation as a basis for further explorations. These data allow for emergent descriptions, phonological, pragmatic and grammatical, of lingua franca interactions in various domains including academia and business (e.g., Jenkins 2000; Seidlhofer 2004; Cogo and Dewey 2012; Mauranen 2012).

Such a concerted research effort would certainly contribute to narrowing the gap between research and practice. As stated above, there is clear scope for research-led, empirical work on Business English practice, particularly in the context of Higher Education. There also seems to be an increasing demand for analyses of the educational setting(s) in which Business English/Business Communication is taught. These would allow for more detailed, comparable insights into what is taught and in which context. In short, needs analyses are called for, using the bulk of research on expert practices to feed into target-situation analysis. Recent accounts of needs analysis, particularly “blended needs analysis” or “task-based needs analysis”, could lead the way towards integrating professional and educational factors with such needs-based approaches from the beginning.

While the parametric setting in each of the domains of language and education requires careful balancing, it is essentially also a trade-off within a wider policy-

dominated framework. The educational affordances of needs analysis are definitely worthy of further exploration so that, wherever necessary, more suitable pedagogical models can be developed. This change in perspective may also put specificity back on the map, albeit in a different, broadened sense. In order to avoid unfocused instruction, so-called “teaching of English for no obvious reason” (TENOR), specificity could be taken to apply to English language teaching by default. English language teaching, whether for general or specific purposes, has apparently yet to live up fully to the challenges imposed by the changing face of “that thing called English”.

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15 Teaching and learning foreign business languages

1. Introduction
2. General trends in foreign language teaching and learning
3. Specific aspects of teaching and learning foreign business languages
4. Conclusion

1 Introduction

(Foreign) language skills have always been seen as important or even crucial for an internationally oriented economy. Multilingualism plays an important role both in export-oriented activities and, for many (“multi-national”) businesses, in internal communication, a role further enhanced by the trend toward globalisation and increased mobility. In this chapter, I will first review (in Section 2) general trends in recent research on second/foreign language learning and teaching, as well as on related areas such as second language acquisition, insofar as these are relevant to teaching language for professional or business purposes. Section 3 will then present and discuss specifics of teaching and learning foreign business languages and communication. In this context, I will address the question of whether such languages can be seen as “specialised” in the traditional sense. Next, the discussion will turn to the role of “(Business) Languages other than English” and their relationship to English in its undisputed role as the most important international lingua franca (“Isn’t English enough by itself?”; “Is it still worth the effort to engage with other business languages?”). Finally, I will briefly examine the relationship between “business knowledge” and “language/communication skills” as well as evaluation and testing.

This chapter does not aim to offer tangible, normative recommendations, but to illustrate where the various discussions stand at present – and to point out potential contradictions – in order to give both teachers and learners something to orient themselves by. The goals, therefore, are to increase readers’ “language learning and teaching awareness” and to highlight the opportunities of, and limits to learning and using foreign languages in business life.

2 General trends in foreign language teaching and learning

2.1 Relevant disciplines

The academic (sub-)disciplines that concern themselves with the teaching and learning of (foreign) languages, like their self-denominations, are numerous and varied;

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-015

they emanate from a wide range of communities and cultures, and adopt a wide range of perspectives. Both editions of Eli Hinkel's (2005, 2011) handbook are titled *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*. In English-speaking contexts, *second-language acquisition* is often used as an umbrella term (see Ortega 2013). Even so, a distinction is sometimes made between *acquisition* as language acquisition in an informal, non-institutional context (as always in the case of an L1), and *learning* as that form of acquisition more closely linked to institutions such as schools and to language courses (Krashen 1982; Königs 2003).

Similarly, a distinction is made – for example in the German-speaking countries – between a “second language” [*Zweitsprache*] and a “foreign language” [*Fremdsprache*], the former being “acquired” in “natural” environments (e.g., by migrants or members of a minority group acquiring a majority language), while the latter are “learned” in schools, universities and other similar institutions (Henrici and Riemer 2003: 39). This distinction seems reasonable. Yet it involves certain dangers given that the boundaries between first language (L1) and second language (L2), like those between second and foreign language(s), are often fluid and indistinct. At the same time, terms such as *native language* or *mother tongue* are seen – at least “officially” – as outdated in academic discourse (see Holliday 2006); in this chapter, I will use quotation marks around “native”. Additionally, qualifying a language as “foreign” may come with undesirable negative connotations. Nonetheless, in German-speaking countries, the term *Fremdsprache* [foreign language] is more commonly used than *Zweitsprache* [second language], sometimes as an umbrella term for all language classifications from L2 to Ln. For example, the largest German association for L2 topics is called *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Fremdsprachenforschung* (DGFF) [German Association for Foreign Language Research].

Terms such as *didactique des langues* [language didactics], *language teaching methodology* (both Holtzer 2000), *Sprachlehrforschung* [language teaching research] (Grotjahn 2000) and *Fremdsprachendidaktik* [foreign language didactics] (Nold 2000) seem to imply a relatively strong emphasis on teaching. However, today more than ever before, learning and teaching languages are to be seen as two sides of the same coin (Cook 2009), especially given the increasingly pronounced emphasis on learners (see Section 2.2).

In linguistics, the field most closely associated with language learning and teaching is Applied Linguistics. Originally applied exclusively to language teaching and learning (as a well-established and – now as then – central field of research), *Applied Linguistics* is nowadays used mostly as an umbrella term for all areas of research that seek to solve real-world language and communication problems (see Brumfit 1997: 93). Meanwhile, the hope, or illusion, that linguistic theories might be applied directly to specific areas of application (“linguistics applied”, Widdowson 2000) has largely been abandoned. The prevailing idea is rather that we need specific, application-based theories (Wodak 2001; Stegu 2011: 100), and that these theories must often be highly interdisciplinary, especially in the area of language and communication (Widdowson 2005). For example, there are particularly strong areas of

contact with psycholinguistic (Segalowitz and Lightbown 1999; Butzkamm 2002) and – a more recent development – with sociological or sociolinguistic research (see also the “social turn” in Second Language Acquisition, Block 2003). It goes without saying that pedagogical approaches (general theories of learning, etc.; Chardenet 2014) also have a central role to play in this interdisciplinary field.

2.2 Trends in theories about L2 teaching and learning

Here is not the place for a detailed historical overview of the development of foreign-language teaching and learning. Instead, I want to focus on pointing out trends, progress that has been made, and issues and contradictions that have arisen (see Byram 2000; Bausch, Christ, and Krumm 2003; Knapp and Seidlhofer 2009; Balboni 2012; Blanchet and Chardenet 2014; for more detailed descriptions).

The first trend to be noted is the move away from one of the first methods often mentioned in relation to learning foreign languages, that is, the “grammar-translation method”, which does not usually provide learners with skills that can be applied in real communicative situations. Broadly speaking, this change is representative of a more general trajectory: the move away from approaches focused on language systems toward others that are much more strongly concerned with communication, which has been accompanied by an increasing emphasis on oral skills. It is generally assumed that direct exposure to a language is crucial, but also that people cannot acquire languages in a similar way to L1s once they reach a certain age. As a result, additional methods are required.

This hints at a more general phenomenon: the fact that the choice of method in language teaching is rarely a matter of either/or. For example, the question is not whether the best solution consists in listening to an “authentic” oral L2 text without adaptations and explanations *or* listening to an adapted L2 text, helped by explanations of complex lexemes and structures. Instead, both methods can be useful depending on the specific situation. It is often emphasised that more recent methods and approaches (see Rodgers 2009: 349 and Balboni 2012: 7 on the difference between these two notions) need not completely supersede older ones. Rather, diverse types can co-exist, at least in part, (although the “eclettismo didattico”, according to Balboni 2012: 54, should not result in a “glottodidattica d’Arlecchino”, a too colourful “harlequin-esque” language didactics). Additionally, as part of the increased orientation towards learners mentioned above, account is taken of a wider variety of different learning styles (see Wong and Nunan 2011), including different socio-cultural starting positions. Finally, some combinations of methods and learning styles work better than others. Kumaravadivelu (2006) interprets this phenomenon – the absence of a single teaching and learning method that dominates the field – as a sign of “post-method thinking”. Meißner and Reinfried (2001), on the other hand, introduce the idea of what they call “neo-communicative” teaching and learning,

which is characterised by the combination and interaction of *Lernerzentrierung* [learner-centredness], *Ganzheitlichkeit* [holism], *Handlungsorientierung* [action orientation], *Interkulturalität* [interculturality], and *Mehrsprachigkeitsdidaktik* [multilingual didactics].

Learner-centredness and the idea of autonomous learning (Little 1991) are part of a “constructivist turn” which argues that learners can only effectively remember and, by extension, apply what they have acquired in self-referential or autopoietic cognitive systems (i.e., those they have “autonomously constructed”). Autonomous learning also plays an important role in lifelong learning (Mackiewicz 2002; Holford 2008) as the latter often takes place outside regular (language) courses. However, enthusiasm for autonomous learning need not lead to an *a priori* rejection of teachers’ presenting rules and explanations. While, from a constructivist perspective, these cannot be applied directly, they do enable re-constructions that can speed up learning processes. Consequently, “Instructed Second Language Acquisition” (Loewen 2015) has re-gained some esteem, although, again, it is seen as complementing rather than replacing autonomous learning.

Action orientation, mentioned above, can also be found in the “task-oriented approach” (Ellis 2003; Van den Branden 2009), which is particularly relevant for the learning and teaching of business and specialised languages. In task-oriented approaches, learners are asked to carry out tasks that are similar to real-life communication situations – meaning that, unlike traditional grammar exercises, these tasks are not focused primarily on language structures. Additionally, the idea of action orientation is closely linked to an increasing emphasis on pragmatics, which in turn often features an intercultural orientation in the context of teaching and learning second and foreign languages (see Byram 1997; Roche 2001; Trosborg 2010). On the one hand, pragmatic and intercultural skills can be seen as an extension of other, more formal language skills. On the other, they may be regarded as serving a compensatory function: From this perspective, such skills are more important for successful communication than adherence to so-called “native” standards in terms of pronunciation, grammar, etc. It is thus aligned with the above-mentioned decreasing importance of “native” norms as an absolute requirement for second-language acquisition/foreign-language learning. It should not be forgotten, though, that deviations from dominant L1 norms may hamper understanding or lead to other undesired confusion. This issue concerns not only L2/Ln users, but also their (often “native”) audiences, who could be better prepared for “non-native” language performances.

The requirement to adhere to linguistic norms continues to be stricter in the training of language specialists (teachers, interpreters, etc.) than in that of individuals who are not expected to attain such status (e.g., future managers). However, even when training non-specialists, it should be kept in mind that real communicative situations will occasionally involve encounters with people who, for various reasons, have more traditional understandings of norms and who do not subscribe to the

more “liberal” approaches to language didactics common today. Learners should be made aware that problems might arise in such situations. In this respect, there may be significant cultural differences. Non-native language performances will probably be evaluated differently in France, with its very purist language policies, in countries whose languages are rarely ever learned as foreign languages, and in the US, with its long history of immigration. Moreover, English is generally in a unique situation because of its wide use as an international lingua franca (see Section 3.4). In any case, “near native” ideas of language norms still tend to prevail in the area of written language, or at least in official documents and academic texts.

We should also ask whether it is possible, or even desirable, to assimilate completely the (behavioural) norms of a target culture with regard to skills and competences of a pragmatic or intercultural nature. Of course, there are always special cases. Some learners may be able to adapt phonetically, grammatically and pragmatically even to foreign languages acquired late in life – especially if they spend a significant amount of time in a specific cultural context. Yet we cannot expect this to be a general goal for teaching and learning, not least because people whose self-image is based on a relatively static and homogeneous understanding of identity rather than a dynamic and plural one may become confused about their own (see Norton 2000; Morgan and Clarke 2011). Pragmatic and intercultural competence, therefore, means being able to mediate between two or more cultural poles in order to guarantee that participants can communicate in a (conversational) atmosphere based on mutual respect (see also Chapter 11 on intercultural business communication). This is all the more true if there is no clear source or target culture, as, for example, in negotiations in a lingua franca involving participants from multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds (and perhaps individuals with mixed/plural cultural “roots”).

One goal of teaching and learning foreign languages and intercultural (meta-) competence should therefore be to encourage reflection on terms such as *communication*, *culture*, etc., and, especially, their limitations (see Hu 1999). Culture, in particular, is often interpreted in an exceedingly essentialist way, particularly in folk conceptions (“All XYZ are like this or that.”). Yet cultural identities are always socially constructed, while formerly homogeneous cultures are becoming increasingly plural and fragmented, at least in large parts of the world (see the concept of “transculturality”, Welsch 1999).

The notions of learner-centredness and autonomous learning are also reflected in the area of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning; see Kohn 2009). While new media can be used in classroom contexts, they are especially helpful for individual learners, who can use them to find, and work with language and exercise material suitable for their own requirements. However, individual learners vary in their enthusiasm for the use of new media (Trinder 2006; also Chapter 16 on new media). As a result, the didactic mainstream is particularly interested in combining

more traditional and IT-based methods in holistic, so-called blended learning (Kohn 2009: 584; Nicolson, Murphy, and Southgate 2011).

Tandem learning is an additional method that has enjoyed increased popularity recently (and that is ideally used in a complementary manner). The term refers to a situation in which two learners with different L1s teach their respective L1s to each other using conversations, written materials, shared activities, etc. Tandems can also be organised and implemented via the internet (e.g., through Skype or similar technologies). Worthy of mention in this context is the EU-funded L3 TASK project, which is focused especially on learning “Languages other than English” in a manner conducive to their use in professional contexts (<http://www.l3task.eu/en>).

Given that engaging directly with authentic (oral) L2 texts is considered especially beneficial, recent decades have seen a great rise in interest in CLIL approaches (Content Language Integrated Learning; Coyle, Hood, and Marsch 2010; Lyster 2011). Used particularly in secondary and tertiary education, these involve students using a foreign language in a non-language class, for example, history or geography, and concentrating on field-specific “contents” while simultaneously practising the L2. CLIL can lead to particularly positive results if coupled with dedicated language support. The increasing use of English as a language of instruction at universities presents an opportunity for CLIL, although language instructors are rarely involved in planning and supporting such “content” courses (see Unterberger 2014).

Attitudes towards multilingualism in didactics have also changed in recent decades. Scholars and teachers used to assume that a learner would proceed from a single “native” language and add one additional “foreign” language. If further languages (L3, Ln) were learned at a later stage, their teaching would not generally refer to previously acquired (foreign) languages. Only the (majority) L1 would sometimes be included in a contrastive way – implicitly or explicitly. However, it has now become clear in theoretical terms that multilingualism is not a mere sum of skills in individual languages, but a complex system (see Herdina and Jessner 2002). In a globalised world, an ever-larger proportion of learners are already multilingual (e.g., members of migrant families), and multilingualism is often regarded as a public good that should be preserved and promoted (e.g., in the EU; see van Els 2005). All of these factors have (or at least should have) a bearing on foreign language didactics. In this connection, particular mention should be made of tertiary language and intercomprehension research and didactics (Cenoz, Hufeisen, and Jessner 2001; Ollivier and Strasser 2013). Without doubt, this multilingual-friendly attitude is confronted by the growing hegemony of English (or rather specific forms of English; see Section 3.4) to be examined in more detail in the next, more business-oriented section.

Seen in this way, multilingualism is a positive value that a pluralist, democratic society should strive for. However, it is also the subject of criticism (see Maurer 2011;

Dahlet 2014: 83). For example, people may consciously decide to abandon languages that they used to understand and speak (e.g., in the case of emigration).

For some time now, the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001), originally launched by the Council of Europe, has played an important role in language learning and teaching. Many courses and language exams, as well as the institutions behind them, use the CEFR as a guideline. Its aim is to transform earlier, essentially impressionistic descriptions of skill levels such as “basic knowledge”, or “advanced” into a six-step scale from A1 to C2 that can be regarded as more objective. The CEFR offers descriptors that define “can do” goals, which means that the focus is moved from “mistakes” or “what a learner can’t do yet” to an appreciation of “what a learner can already do” at a certain level. However, various voices have questioned both the extent to which the evaluation criteria set out in the CEFR are actually “objective” and the soundness of its academic foundation (Cook 2011: 146; see also Bausch et al. 2003). In view of this criticism, the CEFR should be seen as a practical guideline for orientation rather than a “holy text”.

When it comes to the goals and methods of teaching and learning foreign languages, opinions vary among scholars and experts (see Wilton and Stegu 2011: 5–8 for the difference between these two groups). Furthermore, there are differences between academic/expert and folk convictions regarding, for example, the role of “native speakers or the notion of “correctness”. Applied linguistics must seek to strike a productive balance between accepting “folk beliefs” and attempting to “educate” those who hold them. Likewise, language teaching should be concerned with more than practical skills (an idea I will return to in Section 4). It should also convey certain theoretical meta-information (suitably adjusted, of course, to accommodate different target audiences) that can contribute to increasing language (learning) awareness (Edmondson 2009: 176; see also James and Garrett 1992 and Knapp-Potthoff 1997), and thereby to understanding and appreciation of the opportunities afforded by, and the limits to communicating in a foreign language.

Even so, the main goal of foreign language learning remains mastering specific skills relevant to communication. Insofar as we can distinguish between “critically oriented” and “effectiveness-oriented” schools of thought (Stegu 1998: 180), scholarship in this area is clearly oriented towards effectiveness. Nonetheless, I want to point to some critical voices. For example, Cameron (2002: 79) asks, “Effective communication – effective for who and for what?” She argues that “the ideal of ‘good’ or ‘effective’ communication bears a non-coincidental resemblance to the preferred speech-habits of educated middle-class and predominantly white people brought up in the USA”. Another interesting development is the “advocacy turn” that Bigelow and Ennsner-Kananen (2015) put at the centre of their *Handbook of educational linguistics*.

On the other hand, Mitchell (2009: 99) argues for “the integration of both linguistic and non-linguistic goals in FL [foreign-language] curricula, teaching materials and

assessment instruments (interdisciplinary subject content, intercultural understanding, citizenship, criticality ...). The last two of these goals are very general educational aspirations that, at first glance, do not seem immediately relevant for business-related language skills. I am going to return to this facet of teaching foreign languages in a business context in the next section. Fundamentally, there need not be an insurmountable obstacle separating “critical” and “effectiveness-oriented” approaches in Applied Linguistics. In the end, a higher degree of effectiveness can be achieved through deeper, more critical, and more reflective approaches than through those approaches that rely on “recipes” for easy implementation.

As we already know, recent foreign-language research has focused very strongly on learners. In this regard, a particular point of contention is the contradiction evident in discussions about such learner-centredness. On the one hand, these appear to advocate a stronger focus on the learner as an individual; on the other, they must contend with demands for standardised outcomes (see Krumm 2011: 80). Moreover, the focus on learners should not lead us to forget the role of teachers, who are all (or should all be) interested in questions of language learning. In doing so, I suggest a distinction. Many teachers take a strong interest in research results both during and after their studies – and indeed may even take part in research themselves (e.g., in action research, see Burns 2010). Others, though, are very sceptical of scholarship, research and theories; more “practically” oriented, they teach, more or less successfully, using their “instincts” and “personal, practical experience”. We should try to convince this latter group that there are many points of contact between their experiences and theoretical considerations. Of course, not all teachers have the opportunity to engage with research in their work environment, while many are unable to apply newly acquired ideas because of prescribed methods, curricula and teaching materials. Still, it may often be possible within one’s environment to promote ideas about re-orienting language teaching and learning, even if only in a small way.

3 Specific aspects of teaching and learning foreign business languages

3.1 Similarities to, and differences from teaching and learning general language

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 4) write that Specific Purpose English teaching “makes use of a methodology that differs from that used in General Purpose English teaching”. Leaving aside the question of whether business languages can be regarded as “specialised” in the traditional sense, there is no implication here that all teaching and learning of specialised language adheres to principles completely different from those of all teaching and learning of general language. For sure, at

first glance a course concerned with specialist knowledge or technical/specialised language may look very different from a more general one that touches on technical or business language only peripherally. Nevertheless, technical and business languages are, above all, “language”, which means that we can apply the same fundamental deliberations and principles to teaching them as to teaching general language. Having said that, there will be a need for certain shifts in emphasis depending on the specific goals of a particular course. Thus, in areas other than training specialists, teaching and learning of specialised languages often proceeds from the assumption that the various sub-skills – talking, listening, writing, and reading – are not equally important. For example, purely receptive abilities are often seen as sufficient, especially in relation to more complex source materials.¹

In the area of teaching and learning specialised communication, the didactic focus tends to be tighter. It is no more than a tendency because – as I will show below – the distinction between specialised and, even more so, business language, on the one hand, and general language on the other cannot be drawn precisely. Yet, even so, we can discern that particular technical terminology, formulaic phrases and syntactic structures are more common in (prototypical) specialised languages than in everyday text types and genres (Sing, Peters, and Stegu 2014: 4). This difference should be considered in the respective didactical approaches.

Courses on business language used to put a strong emphasis on specialised business vocabulary and business correspondence. However, there has been a move towards asking which concrete language and communication requirements learners have (or will have) in their professional environments. Such needs relate to oral as well as written skills, with special concern for constantly changing and newly emerging text types and genres (e.g., in new/social media, etc.). In general language learning and teaching, so-called “needs analyses” already play an important role (Long 2005). In business contexts, they can be particularly useful if analysis of learner and organisational needs is combined (see Chapter 13 on multilingualism in business). The salient question is: How do the communication needs of businesses and those of language learners (school and university students, language course participants, etc.) relate to, or conflict with, each other?

In both cases, “real” and perceived or expressed “needs” may not always correspond. Leaving aside the fact that communication needs can never be objectivised, it is possible that both learners and business representatives hold certain traditional ideas about specific skills that they perceive as important but do not feature prominently in real communication. Nonetheless, it is fair to assume that a sufficient number of interviews and participant observations can lead to results that are at least reasonably close to “reality”. Again, it should be noted that opinions on what

¹ Of course, similar thoughts can also feature prominently in approaches to learning and teaching “general language” such as, for example, in a course that is oriented towards multilingual intercomprehension and aims to provide speakers of a specific Romance or Slavic language with reading skills in other Romance or Slavic languages (see Klein and Stegmann 2000).

the learning and teaching of general or specialised language should look like may vary widely between and among experts and laypeople.

3.2 Business language(s) and business communication

Typically, business language acquisition involves school or university students, or company employees, learning skills considered relevant for business contexts, in certain foreign languages considered to be important. In this case, the aim is to give learners certain advantages in their professional lives, not all of which may be communicative in nature (e.g., simply possessing certain foreign language skills can positively influence a job interview). However, it is also relatively common for firms to hire speakers of languages rarely learned and taught locally (e.g., Turkish or Arabic in Central and Western Europe), and that these languages then become useful as “business languages”. Since such employees often have only oral, general language skills, the goal is to supplement these with additional training in genres and skills of specific relevance for business contexts.

For many, the idea of “business language” may well summon up the term LSP (Language for Specific Purposes; previously also: for Special Purposes). One of the questions fundamental for LSP research is: How, if at all, can we distinguish between specialised language and general language (see Hoffmann 1987: 48)? One reason why this question cannot be answered definitively and conclusively is that definitions and perspectives can differ widely. For example, consider the following sentence taken from the Internet: “With low price inflation serving as a reminder of the euro zone’s delicate health, the European Central Bank is having to reassure market investors that it can do yet more to help the economy.” Are all elements of this sentence specialised language? Or are there both specialised (inflation, market investors, ...) and general (reminder, to help, ...) elements? And what is the status of the metaphorical “health”?

Whatever distinctions may be drawn, crossovers between more “general” and more “technical” topics are extremely frequent, especially in business-related communication. For example, negotiation involves transitions and breaks during which small talk plays a central role. Similar points can be made about factory tours or business dinners. In fact, traditional research into specialised languages sees them as layered into different levels, from academic texts at the top to communication with clients at the bottom (see von Hahn 1980: 391; Hoffmann 1987: 65). The lower a genre is situated, the more features of general language it will exhibit. This implies that course planners should consider carefully the particular skills relevant for learners. For example, secondary school students will not require active skills in writing academic texts. In general, we can assume learning and teaching will never have as its goal the acquisition of a specialised language in its entirety, or – in our case – all partial aspects of “business language”. Rather, teaching and learning is

always about specific segments and skills that can be considered relevant in a given case.

A term that can help resolve difficulties in distinguishing between different “kinds” of language is *Language for Professional Purposes*. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 6–7) regard English for Business Purposes as a sub-category of English for Professional Purposes, which in turn belongs to English for Specific Purposes. If we do not want to adopt this taxonomical hierarchy, we can use the term *Language for Professional Purposes* to focus on the interactions between elements of general and of specialised language – without having to define beforehand what exactly constitutes specialised language and how the two concepts differ. A similar argument is advanced by Vogt and Kantelinen (2013: 62), who use the term *Vocationally Oriented Learning* and remark that: “Vocationally Oriented Language Learning (VOLL) is often seen as a part of English for Specific Purposes/Language for Specific Purposes (ESP/LSP), which it is not in every case.” In the same spirit, this chapter is primarily concerned with examining which specific skills or sub-skills are necessary or useful in (specific) business contexts; it does not attempt to distinguish unambiguously between specialised and general language.

By including “communication” in this discussion, I point to the tendency – already mentioned in Section 2.2 – for teaching and learning nowadays to be less concerned with formal systems, and more with achieving a certain level of *communicative* competence (see Piepho 1974 and Canale and Swain 1980 for more on this term). This means that I see *business communication* as a very wide term that goes beyond the realm of strategic “corporate communication”, marketing, public relations, etc. Especially in Anglo-American countries, many business communication courses in the tertiary sector are not primarily geared towards communicating in a foreign language (e.g., Bovée and Thill 2010; see also many conference papers of the ABC / Association for Business Communication, available at <http://www.businesscommunication.org>). Instead, they often aim at levels of competence rarely achievable by “non-native” speakers. On the other hand, learners are often confronted with fundamental skills such as negotiation and presentation skills for the first time in the context of foreign language courses. Teachers of foreign languages should therefore consider learners’ previous experience in specific business-related genres and skills, in their L1 as well as in other L2/Ln (Aguado 2011: 112). In these areas – for example, presentation skills – it may be useful to distinguish language- and culture-specific skills from those that are (more or less) transferable between cultures and languages.

As well as being layered “vertically” as described above, specialist languages can also be described along a horizontal continuum made up of different subjects, disciplines and vocational/professional fields located on the same “vertical” level (Möhn and Pelka 1984: 34–35). Again, the concept of “language (competences) for professional purposes” serves as a useful point of orientation because it does not require a clear distinction between different fields, the boundaries between which

may be permeable. For example, there are numerous intersections between business topics and law, sociology, psychology, etc. Similarly, there is a close affinity between “business” and “economy”.

3.3 Languages for General Business Purposes vs. Languages for Specific Business Purposes

In order to illustrate the difference between languages for general and specific business purposes, let us compare a Business Administration student taking (business) Spanish with an employee of a German-speaking company wishing to prepare for a placement in its Buenos Aires office lasting several years. The latter can prepare very specifically for the communicative situations they expect to encounter in their new position. The student, by contrast, cannot know whether they will ever need Spanish in business contexts, still less the circumstances under which they might do so. In their case, teaching and learning goals will be much more general. In fact, these will mostly concern skills assumed to be more or less relevant in all business-related contexts (talking about oneself, one’s company, one’s country or its economic situation; making phone calls, writing emails, giving presentations, engaging in negotiations, etc.), as well as knowledge relevant to regional/intercultural contexts (in our case, the Spanish-speaking world). In order to go beyond very general skills, it is possible and advisable that such activities be supplemented with work on specific topics (e.g., assessing a business report, developing a marketing campaign for a hypothetical product), even though these exercises can never be comprehensive.

Of course, if the aim is merely to provide students with basic “survival skills” in Spanish (or another language in addition to English), then little of the above will be necessary. It becomes relevant only if teaching proceeds from the assumption that the language studied will truly be needed in a professional context. In that respect, the distinction drawn by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 55–56) between English for General Business Purposes and English for Specific Business Purposes is helpful. As I prefer to talk of “languages” rather than of “English (only)”, I would say that learners in secondary and tertiary education are primarily confronted with “Languages for General Business Purposes (LGBP)”. However, they should also acquire the ability to expand their knowledge in this area to “Languages for Specific Business Purposes (LSBP)” if their later professional development requires it – and ideally be able to do so independently.

3.4 Business English vs. Business English as Lingua Franca vs. Business Languages Other than English

People used to believe that internationally-used English (which means English used not only between, or with the participation of “native speakers”) should aspire to mimicking certain prestigious “native” varieties – de facto primarily (imagined

homogeneous versions of) “British English” and “(US-)American English”. Now, attitudes amongst linguists and language educators about these norms have changed significantly (see Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2011; see also Chapter 14 on English as a lingua franca). As mentioned in Section 2.1, “the native speaker” is no longer necessarily seen as an absolute authority, nor complete formal “correctness” as an important goal. Instead, what matters is the highest possible communicative effectiveness in specific situations. For example, it can be more pleasant for the individuals involved, and better for the overall atmosphere of the conversation, if someone with limited expressive abilities in English negotiates with a partner whose English skills are at a similar level, rather than with one significantly more proficient in English – whether “native” or not.

Nonetheless, some criticism of the current didactical mainstream (meaning general scepticism regarding formal “perfection” and “native speaker” norms) is in order, especially given the “quality” concerns often to be found in business contexts. Thus, confusion may arise if speakers unused to relatively low levels of proficiency in their language are confronted in conversation by linguistic peculiarities, which in turn may lead to a less than ideal atmosphere. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that, if a job interview is conducted in English, someone with more convincing language skills will be preferred to candidates who are otherwise similarly qualified (see also Kuo 2006: 219, who sees English as “the language for international, and in fact intra-national competition”). So high language competence may well be helpful – except if it is used to dominate a less proficient language user. This does not mean that we should return to the utopian (or dystopian) goal of “native speaker” norms. However, learners should be made aware that their skills have limits, as well as the possible consequences of these.

Business Languages Other Than English can only be usefully considered in relation to Business English. In general, learners either attempt to achieve a level of proficiency in these “other” languages that is similar to their level in English, or they content themselves with a lower level of proficiency. Only in special cases, such as a prolonged, business-related stay in a country where English is not commonly used in professional contexts, may they aspire to a particularly high level of proficiency in another language, irrespective of any previous training in English.

It is therefore of great importance to consider which skills or competence levels should be targeted in Business English and in Business Languages Other Than English. For example, schools with business specialisms that offer multiple foreign languages may seek to provide negotiation and presentation skills in English, while considering “survival” or small talk skills sufficient in other languages. Such decisions and goals are influenced in part by real “needs” (“What do businesses need?”; see Chapter 13 on multilingualism in business). But they are also partly the result of ideological decisions (in the sense of “language ideology”, see Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998) and of specific attitudes towards multilingualism. This is all the truer of the decision whether to teach – or offer as an option to learners –

languages other than English in the first place, and if so, which languages these should be, for instance widely used languages or those used in neighbouring countries. (see Stegu 2008).

Indeed, both learners and teachers are located in a system of convictions and language-political frameworks (amongst them curricula for study programmes and individual courses) from which they can break out only with great difficulty. For example, if a school only offers specific languages, or has specific, central regulations concerning the topics to be covered or the evaluation of “errors” (in pronunciation, grammar, etc.), it is difficult for individual teachers or learners to pursue fundamentally different directions.

3.5 The multiplicity of aims in teaching and learning (business) languages

As I have indicated above, learning and teaching “(foreign) business languages” are primarily concerned with the ability to communicate in business contexts. Nonetheless, I want to point out that other kinds of “educational goals” are also relevant. These goals are not only “true” from a general-education perspective (see Section 2.2), but can also have an impact on later professional lives, at least indirectly. Learning foreign languages contributes to putting one’s own positions and opinions into perspective because the world is often “seen” and categorised differently in different languages. In addition, it can help expand learners’ intercultural competence – even if they do not actually use a specific language in their professional lives. That is because every new language, and the (inter-) cultural knowledge that comes with it, increases general intercultural sensitivity, including potential sensitivity to completely different, unfamiliar cultures. What is more, learning additional languages becomes easier the more experience someone has of language-learning.

Many attempts have been made to measure the economic value of languages or language skills, and also that of mono- and multilingualism (see Grin 2003; Grin, Sfreddo, and Vaillancourt 2010). However, the meaningfulness of such calculations is questionable in light of the many factors that may influence them. Additionally, economic reasons for learning foreign languages always come “pre-packaged” with other motivations not primarily of an economic nature, be they cultural, ideological or related to language-policy (e.g., EU policies on multilingualism). In pluralist worldviews, attitudes that are friendly towards multi- and plurilingualism will prevail, even though there may be pragmatic or – see Section 2.2 – personal resistance to them. Yet Applied Linguistics should keep in mind that an official language policy friendly towards plurilingualism can be nullified by lived practice, for example, through the *de facto* use of English as the only lingua franca – not only in politics and business, but also at events such as academic conferences *about* multi- or

plurilingualism. In any case, teachers of business language should be aware that no matter how strongly their courses are oriented towards business purposes, they will always – implicitly or explicitly – touch other educational goals as well.

3.6 Business knowledge vs. LSP competence

One particular feature of teaching and learning foreign languages in the widest sense is the importance of knowledge in the field concerned. For example, “language” skills alone are insufficient for understanding a business report: indeed, they cannot be separated from content knowledge. Of course, the same applies to learning so-called “everyday language”. The difference is that knowledge on everyday topics such as saying hello or good-bye, buying groceries, ordering a coffee, etc. is not usually considered “specialist” because we are all supposed to be specialists in such basic activities – although from an intercultural point of view that may not always be the case.

In a best-case scenario, for sure, courses on business language will be taught by instructors with both business and foreign language training, or by teams of two experts. Yet such ideal cases will remain exceptions. One reason is that many teachers of language classes to subject-specialists will not need a particularly high level of specialist knowledge. Rather, these situations will involve a complementary process of learning and teaching in which teachers give up their position of authority and infallibility, and serve as tutors instead (compare Stegu 2007). It is true that teachers will always require basic knowledge and a degree of openness to the specific field (e.g., business administration, economics), especially if they are the first to convey certain specialist content to their students. However, any insecurities they might have about their perceived lack of specialist – or in our case – business knowledge should not lead them to forget their role as “language and communication specialists”. Consider the following critical comment in Reuter (1997: 11; author’s translation), responding to Buhlmann and Fearn (1987):

[I]t cannot be the primary responsibility of foreign language teaching to anticipate a curriculum’s field-specific content by requiring students to learn specialist knowledge by heart. Instead, their most important purpose is preparing students to engage in specific forms of specialised oral and written communication likely to be encountered in training and on the job.

There cannot be any absolute guidelines on how to weigh specialist knowledge and language and communication skills. Again, learners’ needs and interests, institutions’ requirements and other factors are part of this process. Moreover, different relative weights may be preferred in different languages. For example, learning and teaching Business English may be very strongly focused on business and economic content, while courses on other languages (see Section 3.4) may be less geared towards specialist knowledge. In any case, a stronger focus on specialist knowledge should never replace the primary one on language and communication skills.

At the same time, it would be unwise to underestimate the importance of small talk especially in establishing a positive atmosphere for communicating and negotiation. Additionally, attempts to communicate at least partially in one's partner's L1 (and thereby to understand that language and the culture associated with it) can be highly valuable on a relational level (see Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1967: 1 – their “second axiom”). After all, communicating does not simply mean exchanging “hard facts”.

In the increasingly internationalised area of tertiary education, students can often engage with specialist content in foreign languages at their home universities, but also, and perhaps to a greater extent, during exchange semesters in other countries. Exchanges can lead to great advances in learning foreign or business languages. However, courses on specialist content taught in a foreign language can only supplement, rather than replace, courses that focus specifically on the teaching and learning of foreign languages (see my comments on CLIL in Section 2.2). If students spend time at a university in a different country, languages other than English often take centre stage, both in one's studies and in everyday communication. Sometimes, though, exchange students socialise exclusively with other exchange students or students from their own country. In these cases, they often communicate primarily in English or in their L1, and do not attempt to acquire even survival and small talk skills in the local language, especially if it is not a “world language” such as French or Spanish.

3.7 Evaluation and testing: a brief review

As I have already mentioned, standardising and quantifying skills runs counter to an interest in individual learners in various ways. Additionally, standardised tests can only partially reveal specific skills. Nevertheless, these tests are taken very seriously, especially in business contexts, for example, in awarding places on Master's programmes, internships and even regular positions.² No matter the integrity of many test providers – who also offer preparatory courses and materials –, they are entangled with strong economic interests. This prompts another question, answerable only on an ideological basis: To what extent should more or less autonomous educational institutions (as well as learners) subject their educational aims to the requirements of external testing centres?

Without going into too much detail here on skill and competence evaluation, the topic leads us back to the issue of weighing “specialist knowledge” against

² Some particularly important tests for English: <http://www.cambridge-exams.de/>; <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/business-certificates/>; <http://www.etsglobal.org/Global/Eng/Tests-Preparation/The-TOEFL-Family-of-Assessments/>; French: <http://www.ciepf.fr/en/delf-dalf/>; <http://www.centre-delauguefrancaise.paris/diplomes/> etc.

“language and communication skills” (see Forner and Habscheid 2006). Should specialist knowledge be evaluated in the same way as language skills? How should a learner be assessed if they give a presentation that convinces on the language level, displaying very few “errors” in pronunciation or grammar, but does not use specialist terminology correctly? And: How would this performance compare to another satisfactory in terms of content and terminology but riddled with traditional “errors” on the language level and/or pragmatic failures (see Krause 2014)?³ The European Framework of Reference cannot help answer these questions. Again, the decision made by the assessing person or institution will be an “ideological” one that cannot be based solely on “objective” research results.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have been unable to provide a comprehensive overview of the whole spectrum of learning and teaching foreign (specialised/business) languages, far less to mention specific guidelines for the development of curricula or teaching materials and their practical implementation. Nonetheless, I have attempted to highlight certain important facets of current discussion. These include:

- the tension between specialist knowledge and language skills;
- the tension between formal language skills and the ability to communicate successfully in business contexts;
- the difference between “general” and “specific” business language skills;
- the role of language teachers who possess less specialist knowledge than their students;
- the role of English and other business languages;
- the different attitudes towards norms and linguistic “correctness” in business communication.

To conclude I wish to emphasise a core term in language learning research and Applied Linguistics. That is *language awareness* (in this context, particularly as “language learning awareness” or “foreign business language awareness”/“foreign business communication awareness”). It points to the idea that learners – especially more advanced learners or mature students – should not simply be exposed to foreign languages or specialised language as such. They should also be offered access to a degree of meta-knowledge about the opportunities that their foreign language learning offers, and the hurdles or limits that they may encounter. And

³ We would also like to mention here some other studies dealing with “errors” in LSP or business-language learning: Lavric (in print); Stegu and Wochele (2007); Fischer, Lavric, and Stegu (1994); Lavric (1988).

they should not only learn basic communication skills, but also be led towards an understanding of such questions as where partial skills can be an advantage and where they still remain an obstacle.

After all, providing a foundation for “lifelong learning” is one of the aims of teaching foreign (business) languages. Current and future “language (learner) needs” can only be determined with any degree of realism if learners manage to overcome out-dated “folk beliefs” (e.g., “Above all, I need perfect knowledge of terminology and good pronunciation.”). Instead, they should become aware of the complexities of communicating in a foreign language in professional contexts. For example, “language needs” can differ from situation to situation, and from conversation partner to conversation partner, and “research” offers contradictory opinions on some (or maybe all) topics. I will end with a comment that is also the closing point for Martinez (2014) – and with it, the edited volume Blanchet and Chardenet (2014): “*Eureka – j’ai trouvé – ne se dit guère en langue didactique.*” [Eureka – I have found [the definitive answer/approach/method] – is almost never pronounced in the language of didactics.]

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16 New media in teaching and learning business languages

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1 Introduction

Despite the ubiquity of the so-called new media in business life, the extent to which they are employed in the service of (business) language teaching and learning varies greatly. This contribution explores developments and research in the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), where the introduction of second generation Internet-based applications (Web 2.0) has redefined the concept of interactivity and created completely new affordances for foreign language communication and practice. Blogs, webinars and podcasts, for instance, not only facilitate exposure to up-to-date, authentic language and business skills such as meetings and presentations, but also allow learners and native speakers to interact across borders. Integration into (business) language courses accordingly takes any number of forms, encompassing in-class use as well as blended and distance learning environments; and a wealth of technology solutions are available that promise to meet the most specific learning needs. Yet despite the unprecedented opportunities that technology undoubtedly offers, a number of caveats also need to be addressed. The new learning spaces such as the Internet or video-conferencing tools are not replications of conventional face-to-face contexts, but pose different challenges for learners in terms of independence and self-regulation. What is more, the characteristics of a technology application need to be considered and tasks carefully devised to make it a valuable tool for language learning in a specific context and for particular types of learners.

2 Main terms and issues

Historically, the field of research that is concerned with technology in language learning has been referred to as computer-assisted language learning (CALL). CALL

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-016

is still a current, and perhaps even the most commonly used acronym amongst researchers (Motteram 2013), despite the exponential advance of technological capabilities and the concomitant emergence of newer sub-fields such as mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and Web 2.0. English being the dominant lingua franca in international business contexts, much of the literature that deals with the teaching of business languages – whether technology-mediated or not – tends to focus on that language. Given that the author's expertise also lies in the field of business English, a propensity towards English-language examples will be noticeable in this contribution. This, however, should not convey the impression that technology is less relevant for other languages; on the contrary, some might even argue that teachers of lesser taught languages have to rely more on new media in order to source appropriate input and communication opportunities. The promises and constraints of using technology in language learning, as discussed in the following, tend to remain the same across languages.

The principal reasons for using information and communication technologies (ICT) in today's fast-changing professional and educational contexts are generally considered to be access to authentic as well as discipline-specific language, and the opportunity to interact with native speakers or other learners in distant locations. With regard to teaching languages for specific purposes (LSP) it has even been argued that, given the need to devise material and communicative situations relevant to students' professional needs, Web 2.0 applications have proven particularly appropriate (Uber Grosse and Voght 2012; Arnó-Macià, Soler, and Rueda 2006). Kern sees the strengths of Web 2.0 in "allowing ESP [English for Specific Purposes] learners to collaborate and engage in authentic communication in their professional discourse community, to access up-to-date information relevant to their profession, and to publish their ideas" (Kern 2013: 92).

So what exactly is Web 2.0? The term refers to the development of the Internet beyond its original 'Web 1.0' guise as a tool used primarily to retrieve information and authentic materials from real contexts – of itself invaluable for language teachers – to a platform that facilitates and encourages interaction and collaboration. In this new form it allows teachers without specialist computer knowledge to introduce projects which focus on language production and involve participants in different geographical locations. Travis and Joseph (2009) put the beginnings of Web 2.0 at around 2004. Since then, it has evolved into a technological platform that supports a multitude of social media applications enabling users to create, share and manipulate content (Zourou 2012). Communicative pedagogies, in particular, value the Internet's transition from a mainly "read-only resource" (Rüschhoff 2009: 45) to a truly "participatory platform" (Freedman 2006: 13) which enables users to "interact through blogs, collaborate through Wikis, play multiplayer games, publish podcasts and video, and build relationships through social network sites" (Thomas 2009: xix).

Amongst the range of Web 2.0 applications used in education today, there are a number that seem of particular promise to language teachers as they provide

excellent opportunities to train productive skills (such as speaking and writing). These include:

- Chat, discussion forums and instant messaging (i.e., applications facilitating one-to-one or one-to-many conversations between Internet users);
- Social networking sites (i.e., websites structuring social interaction between members);
- Blogs (Internet-based journals or diaries allowing users to post text and digital material while others can comment);
- Wikis (Web based services that allow users unrestricted access to create, edit and link pages) (Crook et al., 2008).

In addition to the above, a multitude of dedicated websites and online language learning communities have sprung up that make use of the new interactive affordances of the Internet.

This “second wave of online learning” (Kern, Ware, and Warschauer 2004) has been made possible by the ubiquity of Internet access via portable, mobile and desktop devices, often owned by students themselves (but see Warschauer and Matuchniak 2010 on “the digital divide”). It constitutes a huge contrast to the early days of computer-assisted language learning, when students had to visit multimedia language labs or share one computer in the classroom. Broadband connectivity and wireless access have led to a dramatic surge in independent, out-of-class engagement with the target language. As Thomas, Reinders, and Warschauer (2013: 3) put it:

Whereas only two decades ago language learners would have to access CALL [computer-assisted language learning] applications and foreign language tutorials on CD-ROMs, the growing centrality of digital media to people’s everyday lives, both within and outside formal teaching and learning contexts, has put thousands of language learning applications, dictionaries and e-books within reach of everybody’s pockets.

Interestingly though, the questions that are being asked about the effective use, integration and constraints of technology are much the same as in the 1990s. In other words, though technologies have evolved and many have become normalised (Bax 2003) in daily and professional life, if not always in language education, the main concerns and issues have remained largely unchanged. Thus, one of the “oldest” central tenets of the field is that use of a new technology must be driven by pedagogy rather than by the technology itself (e.g., Levy 2009; Blake 2013). Researchers and practitioners have long agreed on the importance of the learning context and its main stakeholders when it comes to choosing the most effective technological support. And support is the operative term here, since the use of technology does not in itself constitute a language teaching methodology: rather, if used judiciously, it complements and enhances what can be done in the traditional classroom. Garret (2009) expands on this theme by revisiting her seminal article on technology trends

(Garret 1991). She reminds us that, now as then, any investigation of efficacy needs to take a number of learner and context-dependent factors into account:

The need to explore the “interrelated and complex research variables” that I posited then is equally urgent now: *What kind of technology-based learning activities, integrated how, into what kind of syllabus, at what level of language learning, for what kind of language learners, is likely to be effective for what specific learning purposes?* (Garrett 2009: 721; original emphasis)

In the following pages, specific attention will be paid to the variables identified by Garrett when weighing the benefits of particular technology solutions.

3 Languages for specific (business) purposes, technology and globalisation

In university-delivered courses on languages for specific purposes (LSP), the syllabus and learning aims Garrett (2009) urges us to consider are defined within the context of a specific discipline such as engineering, medicine or business studies. However, “specific languages”, and in particular business languages, are also taught in other settings, for example in the form of in-company courses and one-to-one tutorials (see Section 4). Rather than pre-experience university students, the “customers” or “target-groups” are frequently job-experienced professionals who need to be able to participate – nowadays more often than not, via digital means – in discourse that is relevant to their particular work situation and their professional community. This constitutes quite a different context to that of universities, and may well be accompanied by a completely different set of communicative requirements. As needs-relevance, authenticity, and specificity are key concepts not only in languages for specific purposes (e.g., Dudley-Evans and St John 1998), but also in the field of online language learning, the new media appear to be well placed to cater for specific as well as diverse demands. “Languages for specific business purposes” (LSBP) has been defined as “an approach to language teaching based on the learner’s need to participate effectively in the target academic or professional community” (Armó-Macià 2012: 90). Moreover, for pre-experienced (i.e., non-professional) students, it involves “the acquisition of content knowledge of a specific field” as well as the development of field-specific language skills (Butler-Pascoe 2009: 1).

Arguably, the teaching of business languages has been particularly affected by the twin drivers of globalisation and advances in networked technologies. Uber Grosse and Voght (2012: 191) comment on how the growth of languages for specific purposes, manifested in more varied and more deeply entrenched offerings of specialist courses in university language curricula, has been contingent on socio-economic and political changes:

Globalization, the tightening of the job market, internationalization of education, immigration, multiculturalism, technology, and academic social responsibility have all contributed to increased demand and subsequent growth and development in LSP [languages for specific purposes]. [...] Globalization has increased the demand for LSP courses and programs at universities around the world. As a result of globalization, local economies have become transformed so that knowing more than one language and culture is needed to be competitive.

Globalisation and the Internet have thus not only “transformed the contexts, means and uses of foreign language learning” (Kern 2014: 340), but also those of professional/business communication, generating new possibilities and new needs. Networked technologies have come to play a central and routine role in the workplace; the same technologies, if wisely exploited, may offer solutions for specific language needs. Examples of such technology solutions in different teaching/learning settings will be presented in Sections 5 and 6.

4 Focus on the setting: Technology in four types of learning environments

Any attempt to learn a foreign language today, whether for business or other purposes, will likely incorporate some or all of the following elements:

- didactic as well as authentic materials (e.g., course books and company reports) sourced by the teacher or the learner and accessed/presented on old as well as new media (on paper and digitally);
- engagement with the target language in and out-of-class, in formal and informal contexts (e.g., doing exercises vs. chatting to a native speaker);
- time spent on self-study and independent learning;
- time spent with a teacher/native or a more expert peer.

The development of foreign language skills is a time-consuming process which depends crucially on the nature and extent of the language input and interaction (see Ellis 2008). Today’s technologies can play a significant role in increasing such exposure to the target language.

Depending on the relative balance between technology and face-to-face instruction in university and professional contexts, we can differentiate between four main types of settings for the teaching/learning of business languages. The first two of these settings relate to formal, often tertiary, education: teacher-delivered business language courses at university and technology-mediated distance learning. The other two settings, independent self-study and in-company courses, involve learning in professional rather than pre-experience, educational contexts.

Starting with instruction delivered by/in educational institutions, we can distinguish between two formats according to the predominance of classroom or online tuition. Business English courses taught at university with a strong face-to-face

teacher presence are located at one end of the scale, distance learning formats at the other. The latter are defined by the fact that they are technology-mediated, but even courses held entirely in “brick-and-mortar” classrooms are resorting more and more to technology. Bringing technology into the classroom is nothing new; as Salaberry (2001) points out, “old media” such as audio cassettes or video tapes have long been a staple in language classrooms and are now simply being replaced by their digital reincarnations. What has changed is the degree of convenience of working with audio-visual materials: digitalised film-clips can be accessed, played and reviewed in class, they can be uploaded on learning management systems, so students can work with them independently; or they can be created in class, with students’ role-plays or presentations being recorded and the results made digitally available. What also certainly enhances business languages classrooms around the world, even if they lack advanced technological infrastructure, is the wealth of opportunities the Internet offers the teacher for sourcing appropriate, authentic and up-to-date input. Examples of technology use in this type of setting will be discussed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2.

The second educational/institutional environment is distance education. Distance learning formats, defined as technology-delivered instruction to remote (off-campus) sites (White 2003), have proliferated in recent years. Distance learning is an option that places heavy demands on the learner in terms of self-direction; it is, however, sometimes the only realistic choice for people with busy work schedules, home responsibilities or no other access to tertiary education (Blake 2009). Since autonomy, defined as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning” (Holec 1981: 3), is a learner-internal quality rather than a by-product of the situation, purely online courses tend to suffer from higher drop-out rates than conventionally-delivered formats – particularly if learners lack the necessary self-management strategies (Hauck and Hurd 2005; White 2003).

What these two settings have in common is that they are forms of planned learning according to a curriculum designed by an educational institution or a teacher. In fact, they rely strongly on teacher support (even if it is mainly online in the case of distance learning) and teacher-selected materials (authentic and didactic). What distinguishes them is the role technology plays in the delivery of content and communication opportunities, the amount of direct contact between teacher and student, and the emphasis on self-organisation (scheduled class meetings vs. geographical and temporal independence). Increasingly, both formats are offered by universities, either as alternatives (“dual-track approach”) or as “integrated blended learning courses” (Motteram and Sharma 2009: 91). In fact, facilitated by the recent advances in technology (and generally promoted by university administrations intent on reducing contact hours whilst attracting paying students with “cutting-edge resources”), blended and hybrid learning environments have become the rule rather than the exception. White (2006: 259) observes that “the boundaries between distance education and conventional education are fading, as more and more teachers move parts of their curriculum and learning tasks to the Web”. Students’ perceptions of the

relative pros and cons of online and face-to-face modes, as evidenced by a number of empirical studies, will be discussed in Section 5.3.

As already mentioned, the other dimension of this taxonomy focuses on learning in and for professional contexts. This kind of learning tends to be motivated by very concrete goals: it can and will be shaped much more by individual requirements and language needs than the institutional dimension referred to above. Yet in the professional context, too, it makes sense to differentiate between solutions that rely strongly on face-to-face teacher contact (e.g., in-company tuition in small groups or one-to-one formats) and individual self-study.

The third setting to be discussed, in-company tuition, tends to comprise instances of personalised learning and to be tailored very much to the needs of the “students”. Very often client-provided materials such as company websites or reports constitute some of the authentic language input. To accommodate the schedule of busy professionals, these courses are also increasingly offered in more flexible, blended formats, e.g., incorporating Skype rather than face-to-face sessions. Section 5.4 focuses on this kind of environment.

Finally, independent (autonomous, informal) self-study is the vaguest and least clearly demarcated of the four formats proposed above. For the purpose of this particular classification, however, the absence of face-to-face teaching and a formal programme are considered its defining qualities. Consequently, individual preferences and goals will determine whether the focus of the mix (and a mix it almost invariably is) of resources is virtual or traditional. Technology offers for this learning environment will be presented in Sections 5.5 and 5.6.

Admittedly, the amount of technology use varies between settings (and, of course, in accordance with a variety of other factors such as learner/teacher preferences and tech-savviness, accessibility and reliability of technological resources, availability of time, expertise to create technology-integrated solutions, and so on). However, ICT is playing an increasingly important role in all of the environments described above. And, what is more, technology promises to deliver all of the factors driving the increasing demand for personalised and individualised language learning (convenience, flexibility, access to resources, self-selection of material, skills focus) that, according to large-scale surveys, is causing more and more adults to move between formal and informal, in and out-of-class, and content and communication-based learning (e.g., EACEA 2009).

5 Focus on the “technology solution”: Examples of technology use in different settings

This section deals with the potential and the perils of various technologies in specific learning environments. Where available, stakeholders’ views of the benefits and challenges of the technology experience are offered.

5.1 The Internet as a source of authentic language input

The Internet provides searchable access to enormous collections of texts, websites and videos as well as the tools to make language input comprehensible (i.e. online dictionaries, glossaries, grammar sites, etc.). These possibilities are of particular interest to business language teachers, who will trawl the web to find appropriate, needs-relevant and authentic materials for use with their students. And whilst company websites, annual reports and market analyses already yield rich pickings, there is, of course, more visual and auditory input waiting to be discovered and redeployed.

In what is now called the Web 1.0 phase, the majority of potentially useful online materials tended to be written texts, enhanced by the teacher or course developer with interactive quizzes to test knowledge, and perhaps providing some kind of automated feedback. Videos and films in their old, analogue form have long enriched language teaching; what is new in Web 2.0 is the convenience of delivering and sharing huge amounts of sound, graphics and video data at no or very low cost. Many would agree with Butler-Pascoe (2009: 3) that “web-based videos related to a particular field are especially effective for modelling the social and functional uses of the language” as they represent an opportunity to enhance awareness of intercultural differences – body language, business etiquette – as well as praxis-relevant discourse patterns.

A word of caution though – as noted by Conole and Alevizou (2010: 42), there is often “a gap between the expectations/promise of the use of technologies and the actual experiences and uses”. To give an example of how the reality of Internet-sourced (free) video may fall short of expectations, let us suppose a teacher wants to enhance a class on negotiation skills. She/he intends to present authentic spoken language by selecting an appropriate video, and decides on *YouTube* as the biggest searchable free video sharing platform. In August 2014, using the search term “business negotiation” in *YouTube*’s gigantic archive yielded 101,000 results – impressive, but only at first glance. The vast majority were recordings of “communication experts” holding forth about the importance of negotiation skills or sharing their “top ten negotiation tips” via so-called tutorials. A number of sites necessitated registration and payment; and some clips were dramatized scenarios created by trainee teachers as part of a university assignment. Hardly any of them seemed appropriate for the purpose.

As we will most likely not come across the chance to watch a real company conducting sales negotiations on *YouTube*, we may well have to settle for the second best, such as scenes from films set in business contexts. The fact that a large percentage of Web 2.0 is made up of user-created content, it being “a platform in which content is created, shared, remixed, repurposed and passed along” (Downes 2005: 21), means that vast quantities of materials will have to be sifted, only to be discarded in an often frustrating search for the one pedagogically usable nugget.

Uber Grosse and Voght (2012: 191) observe how advances in technology appear to have transformed the teaching and learning of specialist languages:

Twenty years ago, students suffered from a lack of LSP [languages for specific purposes] pedagogical materials and from limited possibilities for communicating with native speakers in their chosen professional fields. [...]. The ubiquitous presence of the Internet [...] has made it possible for LSP teachers and learners *to access instantly rich resources of authentic language materials in their content field.* (emphasis added)

This comment reflects reality in so far as the potential of the more recent Internet tools and services for specialist languages is concerned. Still, as mentioned above, it shows only one side of the coin. On the one hand, the ease of creating content, of publishing and sharing speeches, sound bites, film clips etc. via social networking spaces and other platforms creates lots of exciting opportunities. Internet users can showcase their own learning, and comment on each other's work. They can collaborate on projects and exchange ideas. On the other hand, as argued for instance by Keen (2007), the affordances of Web 2.0 encourage the “cult of the amateur” – with the possible consequences of downgrading expertise and advancing self-promotion (Conole and Alevizou 2010).

Consequently, the promised “instant access to rich resources of authentic language materials” is offset by the necessity to carefully filter content. The identification of useful, reliable and sound resources that can be turned into pedagogical material to be effectively integrated into a class at an appropriate point in time may constitute an extremely time-consuming and often frustrating process, requiring a certain type of digital literacy skills. It places a different kind of burden on teachers, who need to evaluate the relevance, accuracy, and attractiveness of resources. Benito-Ruiz has coined the term “Infoxication 2.0” to refer to the problem of information overload infinitely aggravated by “the barrage of Web 2.0 plethora”. Indeed, she sees “the massive abundance of fragmented Web 2.0 informational and communicative resources” (2009: 60) as one of the main potential problems for language learners. Likewise, Conole and Alevizou (2010: 24) cite “death of expertise/everyone an expert” as one of the paradoxical effects of the “expansive knowledge domain” the Internet represents.

5.2 Published business courses with extra digital material

Publishers of educational resources have long reacted to the demands of the market and invested heavily in supplementing course books with a multitude of digital extras. In pre-Internet times, the media that accompanied books were audio and video cassettes; these were followed by DVDs and multimedia CD-ROMs. Today, a typical package aimed at the business-languages market (see, for example, elt.oup.com) contains the following core elements:

- Student’s book with interactive workbook (including video), on DVD-ROM or online; “skills for business studies” pack;
- Teacher’s book pack with teacher training DVD & Class DVD.

Multifarious downloadable online resources aimed at teachers and learners, respectively, are also available. They include every imaginable kind of artefact for the teacher to exploit in class, from writing files (“Writing lessons covering different types of documents that students may need to write in their jobs, such as short reports, memos, and minutes of meetings”) to class DVDs, worksheets, progress reports and quizzes. Learners have their own site where they find “lots of interesting activities” to be done online.

According to the above-mentioned website, this particular Business English package “features video clips for every unit, including documentary clips, authentic interviews and dramatized scenarios showcasing business communication skills”. In terms of input material, this is much the same as we used to encounter in the “old” video cassettes some twenty to thirty years ago. In fact, despite some progress in terms of possible individualisation and self-pacing due to the sheer multitude of downloadable extras, the basic pros and cons of using a course book remain much the same. Tomlinson (2001: 67) provides this succinct summary of the debate:

Proponents of the course book argue that it is the most convenient form of presenting materials, it helps to achieve consistency and continuation, it gives learners a sense of system, cohesion and progress, and it helps teachers prepare and learners revise. Opponents counter that it is inevitably reductionist in its coverage of language points and in its provision of language experience, it cannot cater for the diverse needs of all its users, it imposes uniformity of syllabus and approach, and it removes power and initiative from the teacher.

To the list of justifications for having recourse to the old-fashioned course book, albeit in its new guise with extra digital frills, should be added the fact that a reputable publisher and well-known authors provide a certain guarantee of quality (perhaps in contrast to much user-created content). Moreover, any classroom situation – with the possible exception of a one-to-one environment – which hinges on teacher-selected language input, whether course book-based or otherwise, will be reductionist and unable to fulfil *all* needs of *all* students. If it is taken as given that instructed, as opposed to naturalistic/autonomous, second language acquisition has its value, then it seems that the combination of (multimedia) course book input coupled with the flexibility of individual choice of supplementary online resources represents a workable compromise.

5.3 Blended learning courses in educational/tertiary settings

Blended, or hybrid learning involves the combination of traditional classroom instruction with online learning. As mentioned in Section 4, blended learning is rapidly gaining popularity and pervasiveness throughout higher education institutions

as well as in professional settings; indeed, as Leduning and Wah (2013: 25) state, it may well have become “one of the leading 21st century learning approaches”. Owston, York, and Murtha (2013: 38) point out that it offers mainly benefits to the stakeholders in question: “Institutions see it as a model that makes efficient use of classroom space; faculty benefit from increased flexibility in their teaching schedules; and students appear to be more satisfied and achieve higher grades than in either fully face-to-face or fully online classes”. However, studies that have addressed the question of preferred class modality in blended learning contexts have found that, although respondents appreciate the flexibility of deciding when and how to engage with online course materials outside traditional classes, very few would opt for a course delivered completely online. In fact, this alternative proved to be significantly less attractive than courses delivered entirely face-to-face (Leduning and Wah 2013; Owston, York, and Murtha 2013; Trinder 2016). Furthermore, there appears to be a link between course achievement and satisfaction in blended learning environments, which has been attributed to weaker or less experienced students’ inability to cope with the increased level of autonomy required to regulate independent forms of learning (Trinder 2006; Castle and McGuire 2010; Owston, York, and Murtha 2013).

The latter claim is supported, first, by Palalas’s (2011) study, which describes the blend of in-class, online and mobile components in the context of a specialist language course for international students of accounting in Toronto. The hybrid format was introduced in answer to two previously defined needs: students’ insufficient language proficiency in view of the requirements of their college programme and present/future workplace; and their exceptionally busy schedule, which necessitated greater temporal flexibility. In this well-integrated approach, the in-class component of the course focused on speaking competencies. Supplementary individualised practice was available online and via mobile phones, with the majority using the mobile environment for aural practice (*iPod Touch* devices were loaned to students, giving them access to in-house produced audio-video podcasts) and the online component for writing. Listening to audio, watching video and browsing the Internet were the most frequently cited mobile activities students engaged in. Barriers identified were mainly related to cost or technical aspects such as cost of connectivity, lack of hotspots, difficulty of typing on small screens and short battery life. The author concludes that it was the “blend of the appropriate content, method and technology that produced successful learning” (Palalas 2011: 21).

Yet, once again, it was in no small part due to learners’ characteristics that the blended learning format was so positively perceived. The respondents in Palalas’ study were “internationally trained immigrants”, adults who worked part-time while attending college, and who were highly motivated to become more proficient in the language of their new country and workplace. The “on-the-move” flexibility afforded by the mobile solutions was crucial to them, as it allowed productive utilisation of any chunks of down/dead time, such as time spent commuting. It stands to reason

that these subjects differ from the “typical undergraduate” in several important respects, including age, perceived needs, learning aims, self-efficacy and study skills.

By contrast, Leduning and Wah (2013) report on a blended business English writing class in Malaysia in a much more typical college environment. In a context where temporal and spatial independence was far less of an issue, the introduction of an online component (*Schoology.com*, a social network-based tool that facilitated discussion threads, responses to relevant articles and videos, and sharing of information, thus allowing interactive communication and academic information exchange) was embraced less enthusiastically. Amongst the disadvantages of the digital classroom identified by students were feeling “overwhelmed by information”, experiencing a “lack of direction”, and the belief that they would “need to be self-motivated and highly disciplined” to fully exploit the online offer (Leduning and Wah 2013: 30). Results suggest that respondents lacked experience in finding their own learning path and the necessary self-direction to benefit from the dual delivery mode. This is also evident from their preferred class modality: 40% favoured instruction delivered entirely face-to-face over a blended format, and 27% would have liked only minimal use of the Web to supplement traditional classes. Results such as these underline that in any learning context that integrates an online component, renewed emphasis must be placed on the role of the learner as an independent and autonomous participant “for whom self-direction is both a requisite for participation in such courses and a learning goal, for which they need training and support” (Arnó-Macià 2012: 93).

5.4 Blended learning in professional settings

As noted in Section 4, “classes” that take place in companies, particularly with small groups of higher-ranking managers, tend to be customised very much to the clients’ specific needs. Teachers are expected to devise activities that are relevant to their clients’ job-related communication requirements.

Kern (2013) describes several case studies of the use of technology to enhance such professional settings. One of them illustrates particularly well how a mix of technology tools can be used to practise different skills in exact alignment with learner requirements. In this particular course, the “students” were three managers who had limited time to devote to English practice and wanted that time spent profitably. As well as meeting face-to-face with their teacher, they were encouraged to do work online. The technologies employed were those they used in their workplace (e-mail, Skype, virtual conferencing rooms), plus an educational platform. The activities emulated real-life tasks such as delivering presentations and negotiating. For instance, participants were recorded giving presentations in class; students and teacher together watched the performance later to give feedback. Alternatively, as suggested by Motteram and Sharma (2009), it would also be possible to use software such as *Audacity* to edit in feedback and to mail the digital recording of the presentation to students.

In Kern's case study, participants accepted the use of technology because it helped "them with their real-life tasks". Interaction via Skype conference calls and e-mail, for instance, are commonplace work-related activities; the educational platform provides practice activities for both forms of communication. The technology-mediated tasks thus correspond to two key concepts of business languages teaching, specificity and needs-relevance. Participants showed positive reactions to this goal-relevant employment of technology, even if they "valued human interaction" and thus "would not want a fully online course" (Kern 2013: 105).

5.5 Self-study with language learning software

As Section 5.3 suggests, self-study poses even heavier demands on the learner in terms of independent study skills and self-motivation than blended environments. For most, the outside structure of regular face-to-face classes, the contact with peers and resulting sense of community, and the guidance and feedback of teachers are indispensable elements in language learning, outweighing the learning flexibility of the online format. Research in related fields such as distance learning and learner autonomy has contributed to our understanding of the kind of challenges faced by learners engaged in self-study, and has made it abundantly clear that "learners do not develop the ability to self-direct their learning simply by being placed in situations where they have no other option" (Benson 2007: 22). The common thread that has emerged in a number of studies is that various parameters located within the learner as an individual ("learner contributions"), the affordances of the online course/media, and the social/interpersonal environment supporting the learner need to apply if learners are to persevere and succeed in self-study contexts (Bown 2006; Littlemore 2001; Hampel and Stickler 2005; Liu et al. 2007).

Still, there is a growing market for self-study packages, which has received fresh impetus from both the internationalisation of business and recent technological advances (see Section 3). Some learners find it impossible to fit class meetings around work and family commitments. Others simply value absolute independence from set schedules, yet still believe that "expert-designed" instructional materials guarantee a faster road to success. For both groups, "all-in-one" virtual courses such as *TELL ME MORE* or *Rosetta Stone* appear to be the answer. These packages are (relatively expensive) for-pay options delivered on software (and recently on dedicated websites or clouds), and are particularly appealing for beginners. The latest versions of these language courses usually offer live online tutoring to be booked as extras. Focussing on the profitable corporate market, we find online packages such as *One* by renowned textbook publisher *Pearson*. This business English course provides tailor-made components ("business-specific content customized to each learner's role and ability level"); with the *One Community*, it furthermore boasts the opportunity to communicate and collaborate "with industry peers and other like-minded business people" (globalenglish.com).

Evidently, what many commercial providers are starting to realise is that it is not enough anymore to sell “one-size-fits-all” static language solutions on DVD or CD-ROM. The emphasis in marketing is on individualisation, and on providing interpersonal support and guidance, either by teachers or through access to a community of peers. This led the US behemoth *Rosetta Stone*, for instance, which for a remarkably long time continued to offer its courses only as disc sets, to acquire the online language learning community *Livemocha* in 2013. It now benefits not only from the latter’s cloud-based technology, but also from its lively online community of 16 million members in 195 countries (economist.com/blogs/johnson/2013/06). *Lingoda*, another well-known commercial language-service provider, has put its emphasis on the “human” side of the online resources spectrum right from the beginning: it offers group classes in virtual classrooms, starting every hour on the hour, via video conferencing technology. The company further markets private online tuition by native speakers, also via video chat, and personal advisors “to build and optimize the lesson plan” and to familiarise users with the online resources (lingoda.com).

In view of these recent trends, a standardised approach with static digital materials – particularly without sufficient interpersonal support – is nowadays unlikely to be considered an effective or even viable self-study solution. There are, however, organisations which wish sizable numbers of employees to get to grips with the basics of a foreign language, even if in-company or off-site personal instruction is impracticable. A case in point is presented by Nielson’s (2011) survey on “Self-study with language software in the workplace”, in which US government employees attempted to learn Arabic, Mandarin or Spanish with the help of *Rosetta Stone*. The study was conducted before *Rosetta Stone*’s take-over of *Livemocha* and its learning community, and impressively illustrates the shortcomings of stand-alone digital learning resources without teacher/peer support.

Nielson’s investigation confirms unequivocally that simply handing out learning software to employees is rarely an appropriate solution. Despite the fact that participants were highly motivated and had volunteered to take part in the project, most of them dropped out very early on, and even those who continued ended up using the software much less frequently than previously agreed. Reasons for the high attrition rate and general dissatisfaction with the product ranged from severe technical problems (system crashes, software did not work on work computers / with wireless connections, necessary plugins could not be downloaded . . .) to frustration concerning content and structure of materials (lack of explicit instruction, lack of guidance, lack of job-specific or conversational vocabulary and so on). Nielson concludes that even the most sophisticated piece of learning software cannot replace human interaction and support, and advises that “managers and learners alike should consider [language learning packages] as supplements to instructor-mediated training rather than stand-alone solutions” (2011: 126). It would be interesting to see if outcomes are more positive with packages that are more job-specific and thus relevant to users’ needs (e.g., *One by Pearson*) and with solutions that provide

access to communities of peers (see Section 5.6). However, at the time of writing no empirical research studies could be found that dealt with these specific issues.

5.6 Structured language-learning communities

Web 2.0 language learning communities are placed at the intersection of the Internet as a source of language input (authentic as well as targeted at the language learner) and the Internet as a tool for communication (e-mail, chat, social media). Zourou (2012) defines them as a subgroup of social network sites and characterised by having been designed especially for language learning. The author distinguishes between three types of such communities:

- Structured language learning communities: learning materials accompanied by structured learning pathways and the opportunity to interact with other learners and native speakers (e.g., *Busuu*, *Babbel*, *Duolingo*);
- Marketplaces: meeting places for online language learners and their tutors where services are offered in exchange for a fee (e.g., *Palabea* – based on video chat);
- Language exchange sites: free tandem-learning websites connecting learners interested in acquiring each other's language, such as *Scrabbing* (e-mail, voice chat), or the Skype-based *Mixer* (Zourou 2012).

Structured learning communities appear to provide an attractive form of learning for professionals: independent of class time tables, accessible from everywhere, yet still promising the convenience and dependability of didactically prepared materials with an innate element of guidance. For some, they may indeed represent the best of both worlds. Self-paced lessons incorporating Web 1.0 learning materials (input in the form of written text, audio/video and flashcards, vocabulary training, “expert-designed” interactive exercises and quizzes, translations, reviews, on-demand grammar explanations) in a single place are enriched by the motivation of a Web 2.0 social learning environment (access via chat to other learners or native speakers and the opportunity to practise with real people, albeit in a virtual environment).

But for others the negatives, encompassing pedagogical as well as technical usability issues, abound. Insufficiently structured pathways; apparent randomness in organisation of lesson content; “cartoony” user interface; confusing layout and navigation; inadequate voice recognition; outdated (or no) teaching methodology; lack of authentic materials, lack of context; isolated examples of language use (flashcard-based); over-reliance on translation; lesson reviews testing memory rather than comprehension; same input/content for all languages offered: these were only some of the concerns mentioned by product reviewers (e.g., economist.com/blogs/Johnson, langology.org, streetSMARTlanguagelearning.com). It is striking that these problems are so very reminiscent of those that haunted the early stand-alone CD-ROMS and multimedia packages (see Trinder 2000; Trinder 2002).

Plus ça change...? Perhaps not quite. The strengths and weaknesses of such language-learning websites vary, as does their cost, since some are free, many have certain features or trial lessons for free, and others are based entirely on subscription fees. Yet of course, it is evident that interface design and technical features have overcome many of the early glitches. Moreover, users have a variety of different learning preferences and goals. Whilst for some a logical structure, tutorial-like explanations and opportunities for language analysis are essential, others do not mind a bit of randomness. And if the content lacks sophistication, it might still be a convenient resource for someone interested in quickly picking up some basic vocabulary of one of the lesser taught languages.

In the eyes of many reviewers and researchers, structured learning communities are elevated above the older generation of CD-Rom or web-based courses by their social network features facilitating contact to other learners via video, audio or text-based chat. These communities are active and very large: *Busuu*, the largest one, boasted 35 million users in 2013, thus offering intriguing possibilities for language learning. For one, such sites encompass opportunities to work on productive skills and accuracy. Many of the communities, for instance, offer awards (taking learners up to a higher level or allowing free access to premium features) for giving feedback on other learners' work. Even if there may again be some issues concerning quality, reliability and immediacy of feedback and corrections, this approach offers users speaking and writing practice, something many learners feel in need of and the new technologies are not usually good at. What is more, the "online exchange environments" facilitating conversation practice with native speakers (oral or in writing) add a social and collaborative dimension to what is in effect a form of distance learning, helping users to remain motivated and feel less isolated in their efforts.

In view of all this, some of the results Stevenson and Liu (2010) present in an empirical study of user perceptions and use of the popular sites *LiveMocha*, *Palabea* and *Babbel* certainly present food for thought. Based on a survey of 164 users as well as a usability test, they conclude that, despite some misgivings concerning the quality and organisation of contents, the majority found the "traditional" Web 1.0 learning materials more appropriate for reaching their learning goals than the communication/chat sites. It is worth noting that adult learners, particularly those who have not grown up with social media, may look askance at the respectability and quality of a website that reminds them of *Facebook* & Co. Some respondents actually expressed concern about the "social" aspect of the site, which for them was too indirectly linked to language learning. Sample comments pointing in that direction included reactions like: "Some people seem to think this is more of a dating website"; "I am disappointed because this area [chat] is mostly used by people who want to meet other people" (Stevenson and Liu 2010: 241).

The authors further report that, even though overall there was some interest in the social/collaborative aspect of these sites, the large majority of survey respondents

rated the traditional “vocab training” section of *Babbel* as the most useful for reaching their aims, and the “discussion board” and “people chat page” as the least helpful. The authors conclude that “there is a need within these sites to ease adult learners’ concerns over whether they are engaged in high-quality learning in a website or not” (Stevenson and Liu 2010: 251). The study suggests that the desire to engage with strangers over the Internet, even if they can be considered a learning resource, should not be considered a universal given. As already inferred, there seem to be personality issues and proficiency-based constraints and reservations: some feel too shy, some not proficient enough to exchange small talk; others appear to doubt the quality and relevance of user-created content and feedback. Despite the new fascination with social computing on the part of both students and instructors, many (adults) want a clearer line drawn between the “goal-oriented business of language learning” and the more social aspects of Web 2.0. In other words, the very features that for some researchers/reviewers are the redeeming elements of such sites in view of the often frankly mediocre (static) language learning content might in fact alienate a sizable group of users.

6 Focus on learner differences

Throughout this chapter it has been emphasised that, whilst technology offerings in a variety of contexts might be appropriate for some types of learners, they will be experienced as less effective by others. In this final section, the focus is explicitly on the question “beneficial for what kind of learner?”, in particular in relation to the development of communicative skills.

Thanks to the interactive capabilities of email, online forums, blogs, chats and videoconferencing tools, computer-mediated communication (CMC) nowadays facilitates “new kinds of social encounters, new kinds of communities, and new prospects for learning” (Kern 2014: 340). The different characteristics of different media, particularly in terms of synchronicity (e.g., chat) vs. asynchronicity (e.g., email), make them more suitable for certain pedagogical purposes and certain learners than for others. Wertsch (2002) points out that, in contrast to real time encounters, asynchronous forms of written discourse such as email and online forums allow uninterrupted, explicit, and extended commentary. In other words, there is less (time) pressure for weaker or shyer students to formulate their thoughts. In fact, interaction via asynchronous forms of computer-mediated communication “has long been viewed as an equalizing tool that encourages universal participation as opposed to the more complex dynamics found in face-to-face dialogues, where certain individuals can often dominate the flow of discourse” (Blake 2009: 825).

Individual learner differences encompassing a wide array of characteristics, ranging from personality (e.g., extroversion vs. introversion) to affective factors such as motivation and anxiety, contribute to the fact that students display diverse

likes and dislikes in the classroom, as well as regarding use of technologies. Thus, learning-style conflicts can occur when a learning activity, resource or approach runs counter to students' inclinations; for example, when a visual learner receives mainly auditory input, or when an analytic learner is required to learn mainly through communication (Ehrman 1996). Consequently, to judge the effectiveness of a technology-mediated activity, we must take account of learner-inherent variables, that is, aptitudes and attitudes arising from individual differences. This latter aspect has received only intermittent attention in research. Yet, as indicated above, chat tools and other forms of computer-mediated communication can offer safe practice spaces for students who display communication reticence in face-to-face learning contexts (so-called "communication anxiety" or "foreign-language class-room anxiety"; e.g., Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986; Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham 2008).

This claim is supported by Sun (2009), who reports on Chinese students' assessment of voice blogging, an activity that involves recording a speech in private and subsequently publishing it on an intranet site. The interactive element is provided by the chance for other users to comment. This form of computer-mediated communication allows planning, practising and monitoring, and may consequently be experienced as a safer, less face-threatening environment by less confident learners. Asian students, as confirmed by a number of studies on cultural-based learner differences (e.g., Liu 2006; Liu and Jackson 2008), are notoriously reluctant to speak in foreign language classes. And indeed, when interviewed about their perceptions of voice blogs as a learning tool, participants in Sun's study singled out anxiety-reduction as a reason for their positive perceptions of the technology:

- "Voice blogs are helpful because they promote speaking among people like me who don't speak English on a regular basis. Unlike the classroom environment, blogs make me feel relaxed and thus help me speak more fluently";
- "Speaking on a voice blog increases the opportunities for me to speak English and to provide oral feedback to peers. It really helps me reduce speaking anxiety" (Participants' comments, cited in Sun 2009: 97).

In this case, the integration of a technology tool proved successful because it managed to meet the specific individual needs and goals of a group of learners. Its implementation demonstrated awareness of the characteristics of the technology as well as of those of the learners. The asynchronous nature of the application provided freedom from the time constraints operative in face-to-face interaction, facilitating attention to form and promoting accuracy and complexity of language. What is more, the sheltered practice environment offered scaffolding for those who feel shy and anxious when having to communicate spontaneously.

Thus some types of computer-mediated communication succeed in offering the nurturing qualities necessary for anxious, introvert or low proficiency learners, "allowing them to hold the floor as long as they wish" (Kern 2014: 342). But what can they contribute at the other end of the learner-type spectrum, that is, for

advanced learners who relish challenge, and whose learner beliefs and extrovert orientations predispose them to direct human contact? Does the immediacy of synchronous video chat, for instance, replicate face-to-face interaction to such an extent as to be considered a viable and equally effective alternative?

Kern's (2014) and Trinder's (2016) empirical studies suggest that there seem to be issues related, not to technology itself but to its mediation that have an impact on how the environment is perceived by learners. In a study involving intermediate students of French, Kern focused on the role of the medium in communication via Skype and observed several technology-induced problems that inhibited the natural flow of conversation. For example, the video camera exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, the position of the camera on top of the screen prohibited eye-contact, the added time-delay of transmission was experienced as awkward, speech was garbled at times without the speaker noticing and, last but not least, watching themselves on the computer interface increased self-consciousness amongst participants (Kern 2014). These are of course minor problems in view of the learning benefits the technology offers, and Kern's respondents were by and large very positive as to its impact on their communicative skills. Yet the study also clearly shows that technology not only enables, but at the same time slightly distorts and disturbs remote communication.

The subjects in Trinder's (2016) study were advanced students of business English who strongly preferred face-to-face interaction to the technology-mediated variety. Reasons given included both technical issues (sound quality, delays in transmission) that hindered comprehension and motivational ones arising from perceived lack of authenticity and real-life conditions (conversations divorced from shared physical surroundings were experienced as artificial and impoverished). Respondents further found that communication contexts that allowed them to consult tools they would not have in face-to-face encounters (e.g., electronic dictionaries) did not adequately reflect the challenges of communicating in real life, and that other applications (e.g., messages coming in) presented a distraction. In general, and arguably due to their advanced proficiency as well as mostly extrovert personalities, students assessed direct personal encounters, which put their language skills to a realistic test, as far more beneficial.

7 Conclusion

This contribution has attempted to illustrate that successful pedagogical exploitation of technologies depends on a number of parameters located within the learning context, the technology and the individual learner. It is indeed a set of "interrelated and complex research variables" (to re-quote Garrett 2009) that we need to look at if we are to assess the viability of using technology for part or all of the complex business of learning languages for business purposes.

The ways in which various media are integrated into different learning contexts are varied and numerous. We have seen that the array of blended learning scenarios encompasses everything from technological “add-on” in face-to-face courses to the primary input-delivery function in distance learning formats. Despite these differences, any form of technology use tends to entail greater learner control in terms of access and self-pacing. The lack of temporal and geographical constraints represents another major benefit greatly appreciated by professionals.

Yet, as stressed throughout this chapter, pedagogical exploitation of the new media involves more than simply expecting learners “to get on with it” in their own time. Familiarity with and proficient use of certain technologies for private and business purposes does not guarantee that they are considered effective tools for language learning; as Levy (2009: 779) asserts, “the default position of users is different from that of learners”. Use and usefulness of a given resource’s affordances may need to be demonstrated by a teacher; tasks and projects must be devised carefully in order to enhance language learning. This poses new challenges for teachers, who need to adapt to new demands and acquire different sets of skills in the quickly changing world of technology. In fact, “sustainability” and the need to provide training for teachers as well as learners have become central issues in the field.

What is more, learner differences encompassing such diverse factors as proficiency level, autonomous learning skills and personality aspects are further important variables when assessing opportunities and pitfalls of technology-mediated language learning. Research has confirmed the paradox frequently intuited by teachers that, in self-study and blended learning contexts, it is often the most motivated, self-directed and experienced students who make best use of internet and CALL resources. By contrast, weaker learners, who could do with extra practice, may be overwhelmed by the virtual world’s abundance of materials and lack of structure. A certain level of autonomy is necessary if learners are to be able to identify their weak points as well as the appropriate “digital remedy”. At the same time, differences in proficiency and confidence also mean that lower-level or shy learners may feel more comfortable in having a technology-mediated conversation, whereas extrovert, proficient students feel insufficiently challenged. For the former group, computer-mediated communication represents a helpful stepping stone towards managing real-life encounters. For the latter, on the other hand, the technology intervention constitutes an unwelcome distraction, and the computer environment is deemed a poor substitute for direct contact.

To conclude, in assessing the efficacy of technology-mediated learning, it is crucial to remember that perceived and actual effectiveness of any resource, whether real-life or virtual, human or material, must be seen in relation to its ability to meet specific learning aims and learner preferences. Researchers have long agreed that, rather than comparing technology with face-to-face environments, more specific questions have to be asked about what type of technology should be employed in realizing different types of outcomes in diverse learning contexts (Lafford 2009). In

short, technology can be used in the services of language learning for a great variety of reasons and with widely differening aims, but it should never be considered a panacea.

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IV Lexical phenomena

Michael Betsch, Franz Rainer and Joanna Wolborska-Lauter

17 The structure of economic and business terms

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2. The terminological profile of the language of economics and business in English
3. English in comparison with German, Polish and Spanish
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1 Introduction

All languages for specific purposes have developed their own terminology, and, although that is by no means the only linguistic feature that sets them apart from general language, and from other languages for specific purposes, it is undoubtedly the most salient one. In the light of this fact, it may come as a surprise to learn that research on the “terminological profile” of individual languages for specific purposes is still in its infancy, despite promising beginnings as early as the 1970s (cf. Ihle-Schmidt 1983 for French, a Ph.D. dissertation finished in 1978). By *terminological profile* we refer to the characteristic selection and frequency of devices for the coining of new terms that a language for specific purposes has drawn upon, viewed against the background of the distribution of these same devices in general language and in other languages for specific purposes.

The devices alluded to here comprise the classical triad of word formation, semantic extension and borrowing. As far as the English terminology of economics and business is concerned, we know only of a short discussion by Resche (2013: 86–92) of how economic neologisms – “neonyms”, as she calls them – are created (for German, see Hundt 2002; for a German-Italian comparison, Crestani 2010). She follows Algeo (1991) in distinguishing the six basic processes illustrated in Table 17.1, which can be found in a similar fashion, though often with somewhat different names, in most works on lexicology (cf. Sablayrolles 2000, who has assembled 100 different classification schemes from the French literature alone).

The purpose of the present chapter is to provide a first sketch of the terminological profile of the language of economics and business. While terminology has regularly been discussed in disciplines with elaborate nomenclatures such as medicine or chemistry, it seems to have been much less of an issue in the area of economics and business. To the extent that terminology has been addressed at all within these disciplines, discussion has predominantly revolved around semantics and epistemology. This is true of a certain tradition of linguistic criticism in business studies (cf. Kroeber-Riel 1969 for a seminal work), as well as of discussions about the use

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-017

Table 17.1: Resche's six basic processes for the formation of economic neologisms (The examples between square brackets are ours.)

Process	Subpattern	Example
Creating (<i>ex nihilo</i>)		[<i>Kodak</i> (brand name)]
Borrowing	Simple loanword	<i>laissez faire</i>
	Adapted loanword	[<i>economy</i> (from Fr. <i>économie</i> , Gr. <i>oikonomía</i>)]
	Calque	<i>Let the buyer beware</i> (< Lat. <i>caveat emptor</i>)
Combining	Compound	<i>flat hierarchy</i>
	Derivative	<i>ecomangement</i>
Shortening	Clipping	<i>cocos</i> (shorthand for “contingent convertibles”)
	Abbreviation	<i>the three Cs</i> (i.e. credit, collateral, character)
	Acronym	<i>TARP</i> (< Troubled Asset Relief Program)
Blending		<i>stagflation</i> (a blend of stagnation + inflation)
Shifting	Semantic change	[<i>capital</i> (originally meaning ‘cattle’)]
	Conversion	<i>subprime</i> (adjective > verb)

of tropes in economics and management, which has been a fashionable topic since the 1980s (cf. Section 2.2 of Chapter 18 on metaphor, metonymy, and euphemism). As linguists, we have no intention to meddle with these epistemological questions, but will concentrate more humbly on the language resources to which economists and management scholars have had recourse in order to build their terminologies, with special attention devoted to the central technique of word formation.

There are many reasons why languages for specific purposes develop distinct terminological profiles. Most important is the history of the discipline. That medicine contains so many words of Ancient-Greek origin (or coined more recently following an Ancient-Greek model) of course reflects the fact that Galenic medicine dominated medical theory and practice well into modern times. The disciplines of economics and business, by contrast, established themselves relatively late: Though Aristotle – inevitably – was also the first to theorize on *oikonomía*, or household management, economics only established itself as an academic discipline in the second half of the 18th century. By then, Greek was of little avail in economists' endeavours to make themselves understood, and so reach those in power. The same was true for business studies, which became a respectable discipline even later (cf. Chapter 2 on the history of business language).

A second force that contributes to shaping the terminological profile of languages for specific purposes is the highly divergent conceptual necessities of different disciplines. Thus chemists had to find names for a myriad of new substances and compounds. Economists, in contrast, have mostly been concerned with phenomena

already named by the speech community, such as investing, producing, storing, transporting, pricing, buying, selling, paying, providing credit and issuing money. It is therefore no wonder that the two professions adopted different principles of term formation. A third major determinant of terminological profiles, of course, is the structure of the language itself, especially its system of word formation. Last but not least, sociolinguistic attitudes also come into play, for example the attitude of a speech community, or of the leading practitioners of a discipline, towards foreign linguistic influences.

2 The terminological profile of the language of economics and business in English

In order to highlight the characteristic traits of the terminology of economics and business language, two types of comparison suggest themselves: with general language on the one hand, and with other languages for specific purposes on the other. The first perspective will give an idea of how the terminologies of economics and business deviate from general language, while a comparison with other languages for specific purposes will sharpen the profile, sorting out what pertains to languages for specific purposes in general from what is characteristic of only such particular language or of a small cluster of them. Both these comparisons are riddled with methodological problems that cannot be addressed in depth in the present context, but which ought to be discussed briefly all the same.

2.1 Methodological preliminaries

First of all, we are fully aware of the fact that neither the “general language” nor any language for specific purposes is a homogeneous entity in itself. It is true that standard descriptions of English word formation, such as Marchand (1969) or Bauer, Lieber, and Plag (2013), provide many observations about how the use of specific word-formation patterns varies according to geography, register, genre or speech situation. Yet we still lack large-scale descriptions of the relative frequency of patterns of word formation based on quantitative data, especially for compounding (on derivation, cf. Plag, Dalton-Puffer, and Baayen 1999). Moreover, it would have been beyond our means to compile and statistically analyse a corpus of complex words representative of general English that might have served as an explicit reference corpus. Our observations concerning deviations from general language must therefore remain preliminary.

The situation with regard to comparison of the terminologies of economics and business with those of other languages for specific purposes is a different one. In

this case we can provide more explicit data, although even here we had to resort to a certain degree of idealization in order to keep the analysis manageable. As the basis of comparison we have chosen all discipline-specific terms (i.e., discarding general academic vocabulary) drawn from the natural sciences (physics and chemistry; Alonso & Finn 1992; Housecroft & Constable 2006), the life sciences (medicine; McPhee 2006) and the humanities (linguistics; Becker & Bieswanger 2006) extracted from 50 evenly distributed pages – 12 only for medicine, due to the extraordinary amount of terminology – of introductory textbooks written in English. The reason for choosing introductory textbooks was that they contain the essential terminology of a discipline and cover a broad range of topics.

For each discipline this extraction process yielded lists of different length, ranging from 476 terms in linguistics to 1,084 in medicine. These lists form the basis of the tables presented in this chapter. Since we will base our comparisons on the relative weight of certain patterns of term formation within the six samples, the differing lengths of the lists should not in principle present a major problem. The relative weights will be indicated as a percentage of the total of terms in each sample. In the following subsections, the six lists will be compared along five dimensions which have been found to be the most pertinent for a characterization of the languages for specific purposes under scrutiny.

2.2 Parts of speech

The vocabulary of a language is divided by grammarians into a number of word classes, or parts of speech, according to their syntactic, semantic and morphological behaviour. All languages seem to have verb and noun categories, while differing widely with respect to adjectives and other parts of speech. This cross-linguistic variety is well-known, but it may be more unexpected to learn that languages for specific purposes differ considerably in the extent to which they make use of different parts of speech. All languages for specific purposes are heavily biased towards nouns, but the proportion of technical terms that are verbs varies widely. As can be seen in Table 17.2, this figure ranges from an insignificant 0.2% in chemistry to 7.1% in economics and 8.8% in business.

The reason for this startling difference has to be sought in the subject matter of the disciplines. Economists try to explain human behaviour in the economic sphere. Such behaviour manifests itself in a great variety of actions which, in the most straightforward form, are expressed as verbs in English (and other languages). The following sample culled from the business list may serve as an illustration: acquire, advertise, bid, borrow, buy, compete, deregulate, devalue, diversify, do business, earn, empower, expatriate, go out of business, hedge, innovate, invest, lay off, lease back, lend, license, loan, make money, manage, manufacture, market. In complete contrast, chemistry has to name a myriad of substances and compounds, while the

actions, processes and relations that lend themselves to expression as verbs seem to be few in number (e.g., bind, burn, evaporate, form, liquefy, mix, react, sublime). In comparison with the bustling marketplace, life at the molecular level and in the laboratory seems to be rather monotonous. The number of verbs is also relatively low in linguistics and medicine, with physics being located somewhere in the middle.

Table 17.2: Parts of speech in chosen disciplines (English)

	Economics	Business	Medicine	Linguistics	Chemistry	Physics
Noun	85.6%	86.0%	90.8%	88.2%	95.9%	90.8%
Adjective	7.1%	4.8%	6.4%	10.5%	4.0%	3.7%
Verb	7.1%	8.8%	1.2%	0.4%	0.2%	5.0%
Adverb	0.2%	0.4%	0.6%	0.8%	0.0%	0.5%
Symbol	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

2.3 Simplexes

Another dimension along which languages for specific purposes may vary is the number of simplex terms they use. By *simplex*, we mean a term which, from a synchronic point of view, will not be linked formally and semantically to another term in the language by etymologically uninformed speakers. Of course, the demarcation of simplex and complex terms is notoriously fuzzy, relatedness being a matter of degree and subject to variation among speakers. Some speakers, for example, may spontaneously associate *dividend* with *divide*, but most unsophisticated speakers, we surmise, do not.

Table 17.3: Simplex and complex nominal terms in chosen disciplines (English)

	Economics	Business	Medicine	Linguistics	Chemistry	Physics
Simplex	11.7%	12.4%	6.7%	16.2%	11.9%	17.3%
Complex	87.6%	85.7%	90.6%	82.6%	87.9%	82.5%
Other	0.7%	1.8%	2.7%	1.2%	0.2%	0.2%

(The “Other” category comprises abbreviations, symbols and other oddities.)

As shown in Table 17.3, the percentage of simplex terms ranges from 6.7% in medicine to 16.2% in linguistics and 17.3% in physics, the values closest to the general language. Like that for the other natural science, chemistry, the percentages for economics and business lie roughly midway between these extremes. As remarked above, economists and management scholars deal mostly with phenomena conceptualized in the speech community before the advent of scientific analysis. Just think of nouns from the economics list such as *bank*, *benefit*, *business*, *cash*, *commodity*, *company*,

cost, costumer, factory, firm, interest, job, land, loan, market, merchant, money, mortgage, price, profit, property, revenue, risk, rival, sale, service, skill, tariff, tax, trade, value, wage or work. Many verbs are equally basic; witness *buy, compete, hire, lend, negotiate, rent, sell,* etc. All members of the speech community have an intuitive grasp of the concepts represented by these terms, and for many educated speakers this is even true of less familiar terms such as *asset, bond, brand, budget, capital, cartel, check, corporation, currency, default, dividend, economy, entrepreneur or finance.*

When the phenomena denoted by nouns such as those listed above became the object of explicit analysis, experts adopted the words that were already in use for designating them in everyday practice. To the extent that professional practice and theories became more elaborate, however, some of these terms inevitably underwent semantic elaborations or adjustments in technical usage. So, for example, *price* is closely tied to situations of buying and selling in everyday English, but economists use it to denote a more abstract concept which includes salaries (the price of labour) or interest (the price of borrowed money). When economists talk of *price* in an academic setting, in their mental imagery they usually see the point of intersection of a supply curve and a demand curve. In a similar manner, for ordinary people the term *money* essentially refers to coins and banknotes, maybe also to “plastic money”, while for central bankers and experts in monetary theory it also comprises cheques, deposits and certain funds, classified according to the ease with which they can be converted into cash.

The technical use of *price* or *money* thus constitutes an analogical extension of the everyday meaning. Given that the original meaning and its extension are so close, it would seem misguided to speak of metaphor here. A real metaphorical leap, however, is involved in other cases, as when Theodore Schultz in the 1950s extended the use of *capital* to refer to the knowledge and skills of people, speaking of *human capital* (cf. Klamer and Leonard 1994: 32). This process of recycling everyday words for scientific use through semantic shift is called *terminologization*, a special case of *resemanticization*. Occasionally, such a semantic shift can give rise to misunderstandings between lay persons and experts. For instance, economists consider mortgage loan repayments as saving because the amount of money paid is not spent on consumption, and according to their definition saving is income not spent. But mortgage-holders are very unlikely to think of their repayments in that way since the amount of their savings is not increased (cf. Gallais-Hamonno 1982: 45–46). More importantly, semantic shifts are inevitable in the process of theory building, one of whose goals consists precisely in the explication of basic terms. And, if such changes in meaning go unnoticed or are not taken into account, the result is often misunderstandings and sterile discussions among scholars (see Moore 1906 for an early, insightful treatment of this problem, exemplified with the term *competition*).

Despite such complications, it seems obvious that the simplexes of economics and business, taken as they are from everyday practice, are generally easier to understand for the ordinary speaker than those of many other disciplines. Medical terminology, for example, comprises a similar range of everyday words (*blister, blood, bone, brain, breast*, etc.), but most of the simplexes – simplexes, that is, for the non-etymology-savvy speaker! – are technical terms not accessible to everybody, e.g., *alveolus, cyst, diastole, enzyme, gene, hormone*. And, although many ring familiar, the layperson’s concept is often rather vague in comparison with that of a doctor, as with *acid, angina, aorta, bacterium, cancer, dementia*, etc. The situation is similar in linguistics, where, apart from a few everyday words like *language, dialect, speak, pronounce, stress* and *word*, most simplexes are not learned until secondary education and may not be grasped by students in their precise meaning (e.g., *adjective, adverb, clause, diphthong, tense, aspect*). These concepts are, of course, much more difficult to understand than the basic concepts of economics and business, since they do not refer to entities that we encounter in our daily lives but to abstract categories created by linguistic analysis.

2.4 The degree of complexity of multi-word units

In the present section we will compare “our” six languages for specific purposes with respect to how likely they are to use nominal terms of different degrees of complexity. The degree of complexity will be defined, in a rather coarse way, as the total number of a term’s component words, without regard to the part of speech of the modifier(s) or the term’s constituent structure. We must also leave aside the vexed question of which sequences of nouns constitute true compounds in English and which ones are best treated as phrases (cf. Bauer 1988; Pastor-Gómez 2011). As can be seen in Table 17.4, the languages of economics and business, like that of linguistics, have a larger proportion of two-component terms than those of physics, chemistry and, especially, medicine: conversely, the percentage of three-component terms is smaller. Beyond three constituents the number of items is too small to provide genuinely reliable results.

Table 17.4: Number of components in complex nominal terms in selected disciplines (English)

	Economics	Business	Medicine	Linguistics	Chemistry	Physics
Two	85.8%	88.5%	70.1%	89.3%	80.2%	82.2%
Three	11.9%	8.9%	25.6%	9.8%	18.3%	16.4%
Four	1.8%	2.4%	3.3%	0.9%	1.3%	1.4%
Five	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Six or more	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Although we do not yet have a solid statistical basis for such a claim, it seems that the nominals used in languages for specific purposes are on average more complex morphologically than those of general, and especially spoken English (cf. Pastor-Gómez 2011: 169). The languages of economics and business, as well as linguistics, thus appear, on this parameter, to be closer to general English than those of medicine, physics and chemistry. It remains to be seen whether this distinction is indicative of a general divide between the humanities and social sciences, on the one hand, and the life and “hard” sciences on the other.

Two-component terms constitute the core of the terminology of economics and business. They are overwhelmingly sequences of noun + noun (e.g., *admission fee*, *advertising message*, *banking system*, *brand name*) or sequences of adjective + noun (e.g., *absolute advantage*, *added value*, *agricultural output*, *automotive cluster*). Three-component terms, though not as frequent as in the sciences, are nevertheless quite common: *bottom-line result*, *brand-name protection*, *capital expenditure analysis*, *cost/quality difference*, *free-market economy*, *corporate social responsibility*, etc. While three-component terms are still relatively easy for non-natives to interpret, at least if they are fluent speakers, terms of four components and more may constitute a challenge: *auto industry steel market*, *foreign-exchange brokerage company*, *home office senior management staff*, etc. By way of comparison, here are some complex terms from the medicine list: *cancer stem cell*, *fibrin degradation product*, *leukocyte adhesion deficiency*, *ventilation/perfusion mismatch*, *B-cell lymphoproliferative disease*, *24-hour urine free cortisol*.

In both economics and business, as in medicine, the use of abbreviations within complex-terms is often the only way to keep them within prosodically manageable limits: *BOP account* (balance of payment account), *GDP deflator* (gross domestic product deflator), *DNA sequence alteration* (deoxyribonucleic acid sequence alteration), *ACTH-dependent disease* (adrenocorticotrophic hormone-dependent disease), etc. This same tendency can, of course, also be observed in other disciplines; witness *IPA vowel chart* (International Phonetic Association vowel chart), etc. In chemistry, the full name built according to the rules of the IUPAC nomenclature often becomes so unwieldy that a parallel short name is introduced, e.g., *monoglyme* instead of *1,2-dimethoxyethane* or *2,5-dioxahexane*, *diglyme* instead of *2,5,8-trioxanonane*, or *triglyme* instead of *2,5,8,11-tetraoxadodecane*. As can be seen, the systematic nomenclature of chemistry allows the mixing of words and numbers. The same mixture of words and symbols can also be found in medicine: *interleukin-1*, *CD4 T-lymphocyte function*, *K⁺ balance*, etc. By contrast, term formation in economics and business strictly obeys the word-formation rules of general English. This is true even of relatively complex terms such as *auto industry steel market*: even non specialists can correctly interpret this compound as ‘steel market related to the auto industry’ by applying the same general rule of compound interpretation that allows them to interpret *auto industry* as ‘industry producing autos’ and *steel market* as ‘market for

steel'. The differences relate only to the specific selection and frequency of the patterns of general English.

2.5 Adjective + noun vs. noun + noun vs. noun + preposition + noun

In the preceding section we analysed complexity without regard to the internal composition of the nominal terms. We would now like to ask whether our languages for specific purposes also differ with respect to the patterns of term formation which they privilege in two-component terms. As shown in Table 17.5, this seems indeed to be the case. The languages of economics and business stand out for their clear preference for noun-noun (NN) compounds, with a ratio approximately twice that of the other languages for specific purposes. Conversely, they have lower rates with respect to adjective-noun (AN) terms. This finding, we surmise, must again be interpreted as evidence for the closeness of economics and business language to general English, where NN compounds also occupy centre stage. AN terms, by contrast, are typical of more stylistically elaborated registers, since in most of them the A represents a relational adjective, that is, an adjective derived from a noun expressing the general meaning 'related to N' (e.g., *economic* 'related to the economy').

Such relational adjectives tend to be associated with academic English. As far as the language of economics and business is concerned, we observe that, although about 60% of AN terms contain a relational adjective, these are normally in current use in general English. Examples are *economic*, *financial*, *industrial* and *strategic* (by far the four most frequent in the business list), as well as *agricultural*, *automotive*, *competitive*, *confectionary*, *corporate*, *environmental* and *global*. By comparison, the relational adjectives among the medicine list are much harder to understand for the average speaker: *adrenal*, *alveolar*, *anatomic*, *aortic*, *apical*, *atrial*, *bacterial*, *basal*, *bronchial*, *capillary*, *cardiac*, *cellular*, *chromosomal*, etc.

Furthermore, many AN economics and business terms contain simple non-relational adjectives or participles used as such (e.g., *absolute advantage*, *added value*, *administered price*, *affiliated firm*, *bad debts*, *best practice*, *centralized planning*, *daily operations*, *developing country*, *direct selling*, *finished product*, *fixed expenses*, *foreign assignment*, *free trade*, *grey market*). Even though lay persons may not be familiar with the exact concepts designated by some of these terms, they can normally arrive at a reasonable understanding simply by applying the ordinary rules of phrasal interpretation prevalent in English. These rules allow them, for instance, to infer that a developing country is a country in the process of development, a concept sufficiently precise for understanding most texts in which the term occurs without looking up the exact technical definition given by the United Nations.

Table 17.5: Two-constituent nominal terms in chosen disciplines (English)

	Economics	Business	Medicine	Linguistics	Chemistry	Physics
AN	33.6%	26.5%	45.9%	61.7%	38.1%	49.7%
NN	45.1%	50.8%	19.6%	23.4%	31.2%	23.6%
NPrepN	5.3%	3.7%	2.1%	3.4%	0.5%	6.0%
Other	16.0%	19.0%	32.4%	11.5%	30.2%	20.7%

Another reason why the figures in Table 17.5 are interesting is the relative weight of the noun-preposition-noun (NPrepN) pattern across the six languages for specific purposes. Economics ranks high on this indicator, though not too much should be made of the figures given the small absolute numbers underlying the ratios. English is an exception among the Germanic languages in possessing – in addition to the characteristic right-headed NN pattern – a left-headed NPrepN pattern of Romance origin, of the type *bird of prey* (calqued on French *oiseau de proie*; cf. Wandruszka 1969: 140; Klinge 2006). A thorough analysis of the competition between these two patterns seems to be lacking, but our hunch is that the choice of NPrepN over NN is essentially due to analogy. Heads which occur in one term with the structure NPrepN seem to give rise to small series of similar formations. Here are the examples from the economics list which involve two or more formations with the same head noun: *barrier to entry/trade, cost of entry/labour/property/earnings/production/transportation, distribution of income/wealth, economies of scale/scope, law of diminishing returns/downward-sloping demand, level of consumption/prices/production/technology, price of coffee/entry, rate of inflation/return, return on equities/investments*. The availability of the NPrepN pattern can also be exploited in order to avoid cumbersome multi-component NN compounds and render the semantic relationships between nouns more explicit: *pretax rate of profit on capital* is certainly more elegant and more easily interpretable than *pretax capital profit rate*. The choice between NN and NPrepN, by the way, is not a question of either/or. In many cases, both options are available: *labour division* and *division of labour, production factor* and *factor of production, oil price* and *price of oil*, etc. The NN option seems to be favoured in more complex compounds, unless the modifying NPrepN is highly lexicalized: so one might say *division-of-labour concept*, but hardly **price-of-oil revolution*, while *oil-price revolution* is fine.

2.6 Neoclassical compounding

There is one more parameter which is apt to highlight the closeness of the language of economics and business to general English, viz. the ratio of neoclassical compounds. Neoclassical compounds such as *hydrology, hydroelectricity, or Kremlinology*, resemble ordinary compounds in that they are right-headed and their meaning is

computed very much like compounds of the Germanic type, but differ in that at least one of their constituents is a bound element (in our examples, *hydr(o)-* and *-(o)logy*). These bound elements, which are generally called *combining forms* in the English literature, resemble words semantically (e.g., *hydro-* ‘water’, *-ology* ‘science’), but are like affixes due to their being bound. Combining forms have entered the European languages with loanwords from Greek and Latin, but later on have become partially productive through reanalysis of such loanwords on the basis of the recipient language. Although some combining forms have entered the general vocabulary, most continue to be a characteristic feature of languages for specific purposes. However, not all languages for specific purposes resort to this type of word formation to the same extent. As Table 17.6 clearly shows, it barely figures in our economics and business lists, while accounting for 15.2% of the medical terms.

Table 17.6: Percentage of combining forms in selected disciplines (English)

	Economics	Business	Medicine	Linguistics	Chemistry	Physics
Neoclassical compound	0.4%	0.3%	15.2%	8.4%	7.7%	4.0%
Other compound	80.5%	76.8%	77.5%	67.7%	77.4%	77.7%
Derivative	19.1%	22.9%	7.3%	23.9%	14.9%	18.3%

Nevertheless, combining forms are not completely absent from the language of economics and business. Apart from *technology*, a word taken over from the general language, we find *monopoly* and *oligopoly* in the economics list and *Eurobond* in the business list as subject-specific terms. *Monopoly*, which is certainly a simplex for most speakers, goes back to Greek *monopōlion*, composed of *mono-* ‘single’ and *-pōlion* ‘sale’. The word found its way into Latin and from there was borrowed by many European languages. *Oligopoly* is also a Latin loanword: in fact, *oligopolium*, whose first constituent *oligo-* is Greek and means ‘a few’, appears in Thomas More’s *Utopia*, published in Latin in 1516. It refers to a market constellation in which each member of a small group of sellers influences the market but does not control it, as opposed to a monopoly, where the market is controlled by a single seller. At the beginning of the 20th century, a market dominated by two sellers was dubbed a *duopoly*, whose first element represents either Greek *dyo* or Latin *duo*, both meaning ‘two’. The 20th-century neologisms include the less well-known terms *monopsony* and *oligopsony* for markets dominated by one or a few buyers respectively. Their second constituent was taken directly from Greek *opsōnía* ‘purchase’, the antonym of *-pōlion* ‘sale’ in *monopōlion*. All these terms, as one can see, are at least partially based on knowledge of Latin and Greek.

Such stilted word manufacture is very common in the language of medicine. Fortunately, it has not become the accepted term-formation method in economics and business studies, be it out of a laudable desire not to hinder communication

with decision-makers and society at large, or simply because of economists' "small Latine and lesse Greeke", as Ben Johnson said of Shakespeare. In several respects the term structure of economics and business in fact closely resembles that of linguistics, the only representative of the humanities in our sample. However, with respect to combining forms linguists have been more Grecophile, decorating their scholarly publications with *phonemes* and *morphemes*, *allophones* and *allomorphs*, *synchrony* and *diachrony*, *homophones* and *homographs*, *synonyms* and *antonyms*, *homonymy* and *polysemy*, etc.

The case of *Eurobond*, the only example in our business list term of the use of a combining form, is somewhat different. Here, the combining form *euro-* is highly opaque from a synchronic perspective, since it refers to a bond issued not 'in Europe', 'for Europe' or 'by Europe', but in a foreign currency, outside the jurisdiction of the domestic central bank (a Eurobond can be issued, for example, by a South-African company in Tokyo and denominated in US dollars). This peculiar meaning arose in the 1950s, when dollar-denominated deposits outside the United States were held almost exclusively in Europe and therefore called *eurodollars*. (To this traditional meaning, which is the relevant one in our list of business terms, a second was added during the recent financial crisis, viz. that of 'bond issued by the European Community, or the members of the eurozone'.)

2.7 Interim summary

The discussions in the preceding sections – of parts of speech, the percentage of simplexes, the degree of complexity of complex terms, the distribution of NN vs. AN, and neoclassical compounding – have all pointed to the same conclusion: the language of economics and business is much closer to general English in its terminological profile than any of the other four languages for specific purposes examined. Of these, linguistics is the most similar to economics and business. But, in the use of simplexes, relational adjectives and combining forms, even linguistic terminology has a more learned and technical flavour than the language of economics and business.

It would certainly be possible to find other dimensions along which to discriminate between the terminologies of languages for specific purposes. For example, economists and management scholars have a reputation for being very fond of abbreviations, although to a certain extent this tendency seems to be common to most languages for specific purposes. Only detailed statistics based on a larger corpus could show whether this parameter is useful for the establishment of terminological profiles. Another dimension that holds some promise is the use of eponyms, that is, of terms derived from proper names. Disciplines have used these to different degrees, and in some of them practice in this regard has undergone considerable change over time. Whereas no eponym appears in our business list, economists have resorted more

often to this strategy, naming schools, laws, theorems or curves after the people who are credited with creating them: *Say's law*, *Pareto-optimal*, *Keynesian economics*, *Nash equilibrium*, *Phillips curve*, etc. We do not know whether this tradition of naming still persists in the third millennium in economics, but the number of such terms has been sufficiently large to warrant the publication of a specialized dictionary of economic eponyms (cf. Segura and Rodríguez Braun 2004).

Other disciplines also have a rich eponymic past, first and foremost medicine. As the reader can easily check on any library site, there are dozens of dictionaries of medical eponyms. In recent times, however, their use has been severely restricted: they are now absent, for example, from the official terminology of anatomy, the *Nomina anatomica*. Natural scientists also have a solid eponymic tradition (e.g., *Bohr's condition*, *Carnot's cycle*, *Newton's third law*) and have even converted their luminaries into names of chemical elements (e.g., *einsteinium*) or units of measurement (e.g., *ampere*). Linguists throughout the 19th century, too, could dream of achieving eternal fame through attachment of their name to that of some sound law they had discovered (e.g., *Verner's law*). This naming strategy, though, has been abandoned (though there is a rule called *Chomsky adjunction*, also available as a backformed verb, *Chomsky adjoin*). Eponyms thus clearly have a distinct history in each discipline, but their use does not lend itself to the kind of quantitative display that we have chosen for other parameters in the preceding sections.

3 English in comparison with German, Polish and Spanish

In the introduction to this chapter we mentioned the structure of a language as one key determinant of its terminological profile. The profile of economics and business terminology outlined in Section 2 thus describes the situation in English only and does not automatically apply to other languages. In the present section, we investigate the extent to which our findings for English also apply to other European languages. Specifically, we will compare English with a second Germanic language, German, and with Polish and Spanish as representatives of the Slavonic and Romance languages families, respectively. Although all four languages belong to the Indo-European language group, we will see that there are huge differences between them in the areas of economics and business language.

3.1 Methodological preliminaries

What, then, is to be the basis of our comparison? Clearly, there are various options. One would be to establish comparable lists on the basis of economics and business

textbooks written in English, German, Polish and Spanish, a second to look up the terminological equivalents of our English terms in translations of English textbooks. In our case, the latter alternative was ruled out by a purely practical problem, viz. the unavailability (to us) of German, Polish and Spanish translations of the textbooks by Samuelson and Nordhaus (2010) or Rugman and Hidgetts (2000) in the relevant editions. Admittedly, the first approach has the advantage that the terminology used in the other languages would probably be less influenced by English than in translations. However, it too has a drawback: the difficulty of knowing how far any inter-language differences identified merely reflect differences in the subjects treated in the respective textbooks. In view of these considerations, we finally settled on a third approach, viz. to produce our own German, Polish and Spanish equivalents for the terms on our lists of economics and business terminology, and to use these as the basis of comparison. Since specialized dictionaries in this domain are full of gaps and often contain unreliable translations, each proposed equivalent was checked with the aid of the infinite resources nowadays provided by the internet.

The terminology of business is in constant flux, and for many concepts there are two or more competing terms in current use. The reasons for this are manifold. First, for most areas of economic and business terminology there is no institution that has the authority to issue binding norms regarding language use (cf. Chapter 19 on language planning, standardization and linguistic purism). Accounting (cf. Chapter 21) is a partial exception in that respect, but even in accounting terminology polymorphism is the norm rather than the exception (see the example discussed below). Second, in the case of Polish, the still unstable state of business terminology is a direct consequence of the fact that not until some 25 years ago did the country become a market economy. A third factor is constituted by the “polycentric” nature of three of the four languages considered here: English, German and Spanish are each spoken in more than one country, so that usage and the official norm can vary accordingly. Polycentrism is particularly pronounced in the case of Spanish, a language spoken in some 20 countries and with no natural linguistic centre of gravity.

Here, it should suffice to give just one telling example of polymorphism from the terminology of accounting, viz. the German, Polish and Spanish equivalents of the English term *return on assets*. This term has two German equivalents, *Gesamtkapitalrendite* and *Gesamtkapitalrentabilität*, both of which translate literally as ‘total capital return’. The variation here derives from the fact that there are two options for expressing the concept of ‘return’, viz. *Rendite* and *Rentabilität*. In Polish, there are three, viz. *rentowność*, *dochodowość* and *zwrot*, as well as the additional possibility of adding *wskaźnik* or *stopa* ‘rate’ at the beginning. The result is a range of possible realizations for the underlying concept ‘(rate) return(-GENITIVE) assets-GENITIVE’, of which the following five have some currency: *wskaźnik rentowności aktywów*, *rentowność aktywów*, *wskaźnik dochodowości aktywów*, *dochodowość aktywów*, *stopa zwrotu z aktywów*. For Spanish, Rainer and Schnitzer (2010: 661)

identified no less than 18 different formal realizations: *return* may be rendered as *retorno*, *rentabilidad* or *rendimiento*, *assets* by the singular form *activo* or the plural *activos*, the preposition *on* as either *de* or *sobre*, while speakers are free to insert or omit a definite article between the preposition and its complement. Apart from these native terms, in all three languages the English term is occasionally also used without adaptation. Dictionaries, both mono- and bilingual, generally only provide little idea of the number of polymorphisms to be found in practice and therefore constitute very unreliable sources for the study of the language of economics and business. When we encountered cases of polymorphism in the process of translating our list of business terms, we decided to choose the variant which the Google search engine found to be most frequent.

The comparison will proceed following the parameters identified in Section 2 as most relevant for English. Of course, not all parameters are equally pertinent from a contrastive perspective. The part-of-speech parameter, for example, can be glossed over, since the languages under consideration have almost identical word-class systems. Another parameter that we will not discuss in detail is the percentage of simplexes, which is approximately the same in all four languages, although not always does a simplex in one language correspond to a simplex in another. The German equivalent of the English simplex *asset*, for example, can be either a simplex (*Aktivum*) or a compound (*Aktivposten*, literally ‘active item, entry’), while the equivalent of *bill* is a derivative (*Rechnung*, literally ‘calculation’). A third parameter that need not be taken up here is neoclassical compounding since combining forms are scarce in the English terminology of business, as we have seen in Section 2.6, and the same is true for the other languages. The combining form *euro-* present in our only example from the business list (*Eurobond*) has been adopted unchanged by German (*Eurobond*, *Euromarkt-Anleihe*), Polish (*euroobligacja*) and Spanish (*eurobono*). The parameters relevant from a contrastive perspective are therefore the degree of complexity of complex terms and the relative weight of different patterns of word formation. To consideration of these two factors, we will add some observations on the role of non-assimilated English loan words in German, Polish and Spanish business terminology.

3.2 The internal structure of complex nominals

As members of the Western branch of Indo-European, Germanic, Romance and Slavonic languages share many common features. Yet they differ greatly with respect to the preferred patterns for the creation of complex nouns, as is shown in Table 17.7 (where N denotes noun, Prep preposition, Gen genitive and ARel relational adjective). This fact, which has already attracted much attention in translation studies (see, e.g., Frevel 2002 on Spanish), is the main reason why the terminological profile of the language of economics and business differs in significant ways between the three families.

Table 17.7: Structure of complex nominal business terms in selected languages

	English	German	Spanish	Polish
NN	54.7%	67.9%	1.3%	0.6%
NPrepN	3.9%	1.1%	47.5%	3.0%
N N(Gen)	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	28.9%
N ARel / ARel N	16.2%	6.5%	25.8%	43.4%
Other	25.1%	23.9%	25.4%	24.0%

The first stark contrast between Germanic languages, on the one hand, and both Spanish and Polish on the other concerns noun-noun compounding. While this is the central means of term formation in English and German, it is nearly absent from our Spanish and Polish term lists. For Spanish, our only examples are left-headed two-member compounds like *mercado país* ‘country market’, *tienda insignia* ‘flagship store’, *casa/compañía matriz* ‘parent company’, *país anfitrión* ‘host country’, or *grupo meta* ‘target group’, all of these cases where the modifier shows an appositional relationship to the head noun. For Polish, only two noun-noun compounds with the linking element *-o-* can be found among our equivalents of business terms from the English list, viz. *roboczegodzina* ‘working hour’ and *franczyzodawca* ‘franchisor’ (literally ‘franchise giver’), the latter possibly a loan translation of German *Franchisegeber*. As can be seen in Table 17.7, the term-formation patterns used by Spanish and Polish to compensate for the absence of noun-noun compounds (of the right-headed variety) display both similarities and differences.

We turn first to terms consisting of a noun and a relational adjective, corresponding to “N ARel / ARel N” in Table 17.7. All four languages use such combinations as a pattern for naming complex nominal concepts, but to varying degrees. The lowest percentage is found in German, a circumstance that can be regarded as the inverse of its preference for noun-noun compounds. In many cases we observe that German has a nominal modifier where English prefers the relational adjective:

<i>Wettbewerbsvorteil</i>	vs.	<i>competitive advantage</i>
<i>Unternehmensstrategie</i>		<i>corporate strategy</i>
<i>Tagesgeschäft</i>		<i>daily operations</i>
<i>Inlandsabsatz</i>		<i>domestic sales</i>
<i>Wirtschaftswachstum</i>		<i>economic growth</i>
<i>Auslandsinvestition</i>		<i>foreign investment</i>
<i>Industrienation</i>		<i>industrial nation</i>
<i>Organisationsprozess</i>		<i>organizational process</i>

Nevertheless, German also makes use of combinations of relational adjective + noun. The realization of a specific conceptual combination in actual usage is hard to predict. While for the concept ‘economy’, for example, English consistently uses the relational adjective, *economic*, German shows a rather unsystematic distribution of

Wirtschaft- ‘economy’ (plus linking element -s) and *wirtschaftlich* ‘economic’. In many instances these show free variation, but in others there is a strong preference (e.g., for *Wirtschaftswachstum* over *wirtschaftliches Wachstum*) or even a near-to absolute preference (e.g., *Wirtschaftspolitik* vs. **wirtschaftliche Politik*) for one of the two theoretical options. Predictability, unfortunately, is no higher in English, at least in many cases. For the concept ‘industry’, the relational adjective is sometimes preferred to the point of exclusivity (e.g., *industrial nation* vs. **industry nation*), while elsewhere the realization as a noun is also tolerated (e.g., *industry analyst* as well as *industrial analyst*). In still other cases the two options are exploited for semantic differentiation (e.g., *industrial relations* ‘relations between employers and employees’ vs. *industry relations* ‘relations with the industry’).

There can be no doubt that the greater use of relational adjectives in English (16.2%) compared to German (6.5%) is a manifestation of its hybrid Germanic-Romance nature. Most relational adjectives have come into English from Latin and French. It therefore comes as no surprise that the proportion of relational adjectives (25.8%) in Spanish, a Romance language, is even higher than in English. Nevertheless, in all the languages apart from Polish the use of such modifiers is severely limited by the fact that they are available only for a subset of nouns. In Spanish, for example, there is no relational adjective for such common economic concepts as *mercado* ‘market’, *precio* ‘price’, *producto* ‘product’, *riesgo* ‘risk’, *venta* ‘sale’, and many more. Polish, by contrast, allows the productive derivation of relational adjectives from almost all nouns. Even recent loanwords tolerate the adjunction of the relational suffix *-owy*, witness *fastfoodowy*, *outletowy*, *outsourcingowy* and similar examples. Indeed, relational adjectives are the most preferred naming strategy in our Polish term list, making up 43.4% of cases.

Let us now turn to the term-formation strategy consisting in adjoining a modifier in the genitive to a head noun (“N N(Gen)” in Table 17.7). This strategy, of course, is completely absent from Spanish, which lacks any kind of case inflection. English has genitival compounds of the type *women’s magazine*, but no example is attested in our business list, while this genitival strategy accounts for only 0.6% of our German cases. By contrast, it is highly important in Polish; indeed, it is the second most frequent (28.9%). Often, the genitive and the relational adjective are used side by side, e.g., *struktura kapitału/kapitałowa* ‘capital structure’, *katalog firmy/firmowy* ‘company catalogue’, *strategia eksportu/eksportowa* ‘export strategy’, *proces produkcji/produkcyjny* ‘production process’. Note, though, that what we have said here about Polish does not necessarily extend to other Slavonic languages, which differ markedly in their preferences between relational adjective and genitive (cf. Ohnheiser 2015).

The last strategy from Table 17.7 that we need to comment on is the combination of a head noun and a prepositional phrase (“NPrepN”). This is used in 47.5% of our complex nominal business terms in Spanish. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the preposition used is semantically void *de* ‘of’: *estructura de capital* ‘capital structure’, *mensaje de publicidad* ‘advertising message’, *precio de mercado* ‘market price’,

etc. Yet other, semantically more specific prepositions also occur: *crédito al consumidor* ‘consumer credit’ (literally ‘credit to_the consumer’), *país en desarrollo* ‘developing country’ (literally ‘country in development’), *retorno sobre activos* ‘return on assets’, etc. Just like sequences of relational adjective + noun, or noun + genitive in Polish, such multi-word terms have sometimes been classified as phrases, i.e. syntactic entities. Yet it is clear that these patterns serve the same naming function as genuine noun-noun compounds. It therefore seems preferable to regard them as “phrasal names” in the sense of construction morphology (cf. Booij 2010, Ch. 7). In the three languages other than Spanish the NPrepN pattern is also used, but to a much lesser extent: occurring very rarely in the German list (e.g., *Gewinn vor Steuern* ‘profit before tax’), it is slightly more productive in English (e.g., *balance of trade*; cf. Section 2.5) and Polish (e.g., *dostęp do rynku* ‘market access’ [literally ‘access to_the market’], *pozycja na rynku* ‘market position’ [literally ‘position on_the market’]).

3.3 The degree of complexity of nominal compounds in English and German

In the preceding section we have seen that the two Germanic languages, English and German, contrast sharply with both Spanish and Polish in the centrality of noun-noun compounding for term formation. The relevant percentages, which are displayed again in the first line of Table 17.8., show that German is even more given to noun-noun compounding than English. Unlike Table 17.7, Table 17.8 not only provides the percentages of two-member noun-noun compounds, but also of three- and four-member compounds. Spanish has the only three-member terms in the two non-Germanic languages, both containing a coordinated modifier: *diferencia coste-calidad* ‘cost/quality difference’, *relación volumen-coste unitario* ‘volume-to-unit-cost relationship’. In three-member compounds, German is again ahead of English (by 6.7% to 3.9%), while for each of these languages there is only one four-member compound, respectively *Devisenkursrisikomanagement* ‘exchange rate risk management’ and *auto industry steel market*.

Table 17.8: Proportion of NN compounds among business terms in the languages investigated

	English	German	Spanish	Polish
NN	54.7%	67.9%	1.3%	0.6%
NNN	3.9%	6.7%	0.4%	0.0%
NNNN	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	41.2%	25.2%	98.3%	99.4%

At a certain level of abstraction, the rule of nominal compounding can be described in exactly the same way for English and German: Nouns can, in principle, be

adjoined indefinitely to the left, and the semantic impact can be reduced to the formula ‘N2 (the head) related somehow to N1 (the modifier)’. It is therefore not surprising that many one-to-one correspondences can be found between English and German:

<i>achievement motivation</i>	<i>Leistungsmotivation</i>
<i>admission fee</i>	<i>Zulassungsgebühr</i>
<i>amusement park</i>	<i>Vergnügungspark</i>
<i>bank share</i>	<i>Bankaktie</i>
<i>brand name</i>	<i>Markenname</i>
<i>business activity</i>	<i>Geschäftstätigkeit</i>
<i>capital market</i>	<i>Kapitalmarkt</i>

The same symmetry can also be found in three-member compounds:

<i>airline industry</i>	<i>Luftfahrtbranche</i>
<i>cleaning products company</i>	<i>Reinigungsmittelhersteller</i>
<i>consumer goods market</i>	<i>Konsumgütermarkt</i>
<i>loan repayment plan</i>	<i>Darlehenstilgungsplan</i>

If this were the whole story, however, we would not expect the conspicuous difference evidenced in Table 17.8. In order to account for it, one must delve deeper and look at lower-level patterns of nominal compounding.

The German lead over English with respect to two-member compounds is essentially due to three factors. Two have already been addressed in Section 3.2, viz. the higher proportion of relational adjectives in English with respect to German and the NPrepN pattern of the type *balance of trade* which English shares with Romance languages thanks to its Anglo-Norman past. The third factor is German’s use of a compound – here provided with a literal gloss – to express what English expresses with a simplex or a derivative:

<i>Wertsteigerung</i> ‘value increase’	vs. <i>appreciation</i>
<i>Kreditaufnahme</i> ‘credit out-taking’	vs. <i>borrowing</i>
<i>Vertriebsunternehmen</i> ‘distribution firm’	vs. <i>distributor</i>
<i>Führungskraft</i> ‘leadership force’	vs. <i>executive</i>
<i>Sachkenntnis</i> ‘matter knowledge’	vs. <i>expertise</i>
<i>Finanzwesen</i> ‘finance system’	vs. <i>finance</i>
<i>Lebensmittel</i> ‘life means’	vs. <i>food</i>
<i>Franchisegeber</i> ‘franchise giver’	vs. <i>franchisor, etc.</i>

German’s lead over English in three-member compounds is in part a straightforward consequence of the factors mentioned in the last paragraph:

<i>Lebensmittelhersteller</i> ‘life means producer’	vs.	<i>food company</i>
<i>Unternehmensstrategieexperte</i>	vs.	<i>corporate strategy expert</i>
‘company strategy expert’		
<i>Handelsbilanzdefizit</i> ‘trade balance deficit’	vs.	<i>balance of trade deficit</i>

But a further factor, less easy to pin down, is that English speakers seem not to like unwieldy polysyllabic words. If there is a way to avoid a longer noun compound, for example by choosing a different noun as modifier, they will prefer the shorter outcome:

<i>employment security</i>	vs.	<i>Arbeitsplatzsicherheit</i> ‘work place security’
<i>employment subsidy</i>	vs.	<i>Lohnkostenzuschuss</i> ‘salary cost subsidy’
<i>exchange risk</i>	vs.	<i>Wechselkursrisiko</i> ‘exchange rate risk’
<i>inventory costs</i>	vs.	<i>Lagerhaltungskosten</i> ‘stock maintenance costs’
<i>labour policy</i>	vs.	<i>Arbeitsmarktpolitik</i> ‘labour market policy’
<i>retail banking</i>	vs.	<i>Massenkundengeschäft</i> ‘mass customer business’

No rule being without exception, however, we can also find isolated instances where German is more concise than English:

<i>Börse</i>	vs.	<i>stock exchange</i>
<i>Zoll</i>	vs.	<i>customs duty</i>
<i>Ausgleichsmaßnahme</i> ‘compensation measure’	vs.	<i>countervailing duty measure</i>
<i>Gesundheitswesen</i> ‘health system’	vs.	<i>health-care system</i>
<i>Investitionsrechnung</i> ‘investment calculation’	vs.	<i>capital expenditure analysis</i>

3.4 Adjective compounds

English and German are sharply distinguished from both Spanish and Polish not only by the centrality of noun-noun compounding, but also by the abundant use of adjectival compounds of the structure noun + adjective, which are almost unknown in Romance and Slavonic languages. Between English and German there is a high degree of parallelism in this area (some of the following pairs probably constitute loan translations):

<i>cost-efficient</i>	<i>kosteneffektiv</i>
<i>firm-specific</i>	<i>firmenspezifisch</i>
<i>interest-free</i>	<i>zinslos</i>
<i>market-driven</i>	<i>marktbestimmt</i>
<i>resource-based</i>	<i>ressourcenbasiert</i>

Only in some isolated cases does a direct translation seem impossible, for example in the case of *majority-owned* vs. *im Mehrheitsbesitz*, literally ‘in_the majority ownership’, or *state-owned* vs. *im Staatsbesitz*, literally ‘in_the state ownership’. In these compounds, the semantic relationship between the adjectival head and the dependent noun is almost as flexible as in noun-noun compounds. Spanish equivalents, being mostly syntactic paraphrases, thus have to make this relationship explicit: *eficiente en costes* ‘cost-efficient’ (literally ‘efficient in costs’), *específico de la empresa* ‘firm-specific’ (literally ‘specific of the firm’), etc. In order to avoid these somewhat roundabout paraphrases, Spanish occasionally also resorts to word-by-word translations contrary to the morphological spirit of the language: *capital-intensive*, for example, is also sometimes translated bluntly as *capital-intensivo*, instead of *intensivo en capital*. Polish, too, lacks a structurally equivalent noun-adjective pattern of compounding and must therefore resort to different naming strategies: *państwowy* ‘state-owned’ (literally ‘state [adj.]’), *oparty na zasobach* ‘resource-based’ (literally ‘based on resources’), etc. Note, though, that Polish has possessive compounds of the type *wysoko-jakościowy* ‘high-quality’ (literally ‘high-o-quality-owy’), where the adjective precedes the noun and the compound is followed by the suffix *-owy*. German has an equivalent type of adjective compounds: *kurzfristig* ‘short-term’ (literally ‘short term + suffix -ig’), *hochpreisig* ‘high-priced’, etc.

3.5 Anglicisms

The terminology of economics and business has always been particularly open to foreign influence (cf. Chapter 2 on the history of business language). After World War II the influence of English became overwhelming, to the point that most economic and business terms in other languages are now imitations of English models. The overwhelming majority of these are loan translations, but a sizeable number of English terms have also been adopted without adaptation into other languages (for a general panorama of Anglicisms in European languages, cf. Görlach 2002, 2005).

German has a reputation for being particularly receptive to English influence, and the language of economics and business is among the favourite targets of purists (cf. Fink 1995). They, and also linguists (cf. Langer 1996; Kupper 2003, 2007; Meder 2006; Grabow 2008; Rathmann 2012), have been especially exercised by the (ab)use of Anglicisms in the business press and in advertising. At first sight our data provide little justification for this stance. Of the terms on our German business list, only 3% (30 out of circa 950) are non-assimilated – or only partially adapted – Anglicisms. They are *Best Practice*, *Cashflow*, *Cluster*, *Design*, *Dumping*, *EFTA*, *Eurobond*, *Fast Food*, *Flagship Store*, *Franchise*, *GATT*, *High-Tech*, *Joint Venture*, *just-in-time*, *Logo*, *made in*, *Management*, *Marketing*, *Investment*, *NAFTA*, *Netting*, *Outsourcing*, *Panel*, *Profit Center*, *Recruiting*, *Slogan*, *Sponsor*, *Trainee* and *WTO*; to these we should add *Controlling*, which corresponds to *management accounting* and was created in

German as an English word. In all cases, either no genuine German equivalent exists or the equivalent is less common than the Anglicism. Some of these words have definitively become part of German (e.g., *Cluster*, *Design*, *Dumping*), but others have competitors built from German material by puristically-minded speakers, which may one day oust the Anglicisms (e.g., *Erfolgsmethode* ‘success method’ instead of *Best practice*, *Hauptgeschäft* ‘main store’ instead of *Flagship Store*, *Gemeinschaftsunternehmen* ‘common enterprise’ instead of *Joint Venture*).

However, if we consider the evidence provided by a comparison with our Spanish and Polish lists, German’s reputation seems more deserved. In Spanish, the proportion of non-assimilated Anglicisms is only a third of that for German, being 1% of the total number of terms. In many instances, Spanish has recourse to loan translation or at least formal adaptation in cases where German tolerates the crude Anglicism:

<i>Cashflow</i>	vs.	<i>flujo de caja</i>
<i>Franchise</i>	vs.	<i>franquicia</i>
<i>made in</i>	vs.	<i>hecho en</i>
<i>NAFTA</i>	vs.	<i>TLCAN</i>
<i>Management</i>	vs.	<i>gestión/gerencia/administración de empresas</i>
<i>Netting</i>	vs.	<i>neteo</i>
<i>Slogan</i>	vs.	<i>eslogan</i>
<i>Sponsor</i>	vs.	<i>patrocinador</i>
<i>WTO</i>	vs.	<i>OMC</i>

This difference also shows up in the pronunciation of orthographically English words. For example, even though some dictionaries recommend the pronunciation /dampin/ for *dumping*, most Spaniards in reality stick to the spelling pronunciation /dumpin/. Of course, we also find the same competition as in German between foreign and native terms in Spanish, but overall there can be no doubt that Spanish “digests” Anglicisms better than German. On the basis of a broader corpus-based study, Alejo González (2005: 173) also reaches the conclusion that Spanish has “a certain preference for adapting over adopting mechanisms”. He shows, furthermore, that the tendency to adopt or adapt varies within the field of economics and business: the number of “integral borrowings”, for example, is higher in commercial and financial vocabulary than in the terminology of economics.

Adaptive tendencies are also stronger in the Polish list of business terms than in the German one. This is evident from the widespread habit of adapting Anglicisms to the orthographical conventions of Polish: *biznes* (business), *franczyza* (franchise), *klaster* (cluster), *menedżer* or *menadżer* (manager), etc. Both orthographically adapted and non-assimilated Anglicisms are easily integrated into the morphological system of Polish and can give rise to further derivations or compounds (e.g., *franczyzodawca* ‘franchisor’ [literally ‘franchise-giver’], or relational adjectives such as *fastfoodowy*, *outletowy*, *outsourcingowy*).

It is important to note that the results obtained for Spanish and Polish must not be generalized to the respective language families, Romance and Slavonic. In fact, it is well-known that some speech communities are more receptive to Anglicisms than others. In the Romance domain, for example, Italian (cf. Rando 1990; Rosati 2004) is notoriously more liberal than both Spanish and French. In France, the obsession with Anglicisms since the 1970s has led to the creation of state-funded terminological commissions. These elaborate lists of French terms that civil servants are obliged, and citizens (as well as privately-owned companies) invited to use instead of the corresponding English terms (cf. Mamavi and Depecker 1992). As laid out in more detail in Section 4 of Chapter 19 on language planning and purism, and in Section 3.1 of Chapter 20 on the language of marketing, French authorities have tried, for example, to convince marketing experts and ordinary citizens to abandon the Anglicism *marketing* in favour of *mercatique* – without resounding success.

Within the Slavonic family, there are also important differences in receptivity to Anglicisms. In a recent contribution, Rajh (2012) has analysed the difficulties that Croatian and Slovene translators had to overcome when translating Philip Kotler's best-selling *Marketing Management*. Along the way, they had to create new Croatian and Slovene marketing terminologies, for two reasons. First, these countries had only recently adopted market economies, and, second, those native marketing experts familiar with western marketing concepts tended to use the corresponding English words. The adaptive strategies applied by the two teams of translators were quite different, but it remains unclear to what extent these differences reflected personal choices or were representative of more general tendencies in the respective language communities.

3.6 Interim summary

Section 3 has shown that some of the factors identified in Section 2 as determining a terminological profile are subject to considerable cross-linguistic variability. That is the case, first and foremost, with respect to the preference for certain patterns of term formation in the nominal and adjectival domain. However, the complexity of noun-noun compounding and the openness towards non-assimilated Anglicisms have also been seen to vary significantly. These results, it must be noted, are specific to the language of economics and business and cannot be generalized across languages for specific purposes.

4 Conclusion

Although the study of terminological profiles remains a relatively under-researched area, it is highly relevant in both theoretical and practical terms. From a general perspective, it can contribute to filling a gap in studies of word formation, which

have always been heavily biased towards non-technical, everyday language (cf. Marchand 1969 and Bauer, Lieber, and Plag 2013 for English, Fleischer and Barz 2012 for German, Szymanek 2010 for Polish and Rainer 1993 for Spanish). Furthermore, thorough terminological profiles would obviously also be of interest to applied linguistics, especially in the areas of translation studies (cf. now ten Hacken 2013, 2014) and the teaching of languages for specific purposes. Even today, neither translators nor language teachers or learners can rely on systematic descriptions of term structure. In particular, the contrastive observations in Section 3, even if preliminary due to the smallness of the corpus, are useful in highlighting the main areas of variation between the four languages concerned, areas that should be given privileged attention in language teaching.

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Fiorenza Fischer, Regina Göke and Franz Rainer

18 Metaphor, metonymy, and euphemism in the language of economics and business

1. Introduction
2. Metaphor
3. Metonymy
4. Euphemism
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Tropes are a general feature of human communication and, as such, they are by definition present in all languages and all types of communication. Nevertheless, languages and genres vary substantially in their preferences for some tropes over others, the lexicalization of single instances and the conventionalization of specific sub-patterns. The purpose of the present chapter is to analyse these aspects with respect to the language of economics and business. In this area metaphor, metonymy and euphemism are particularly relevant, which is the principal reason why we concentrate on these three types of tropes among the many others distinguished by scholars of rhetoric. Section 2 on metaphor is by Franz Rainer, Section 3 on metonymy by Regina Göke, and Section 4 on euphemism by Fiorenza Fischer.

2 Metaphor

2.1 Terminological preliminaries

What is a metaphor? This apparently simple question has occupied a host of philosophers, literary critics, linguists and cognitive psychologists for decades, if not centuries, with no far-reaching consensus in sight. The reason for this must surely lie in the fact that metaphor is a multifaceted phenomenon and that its analysis is intimately tied to highly controversial issues such as the nature of meaning. For the purposes of this section, it will suffice to provide a brief outline of some of the contentious issues, in order to fix the terminology and allow the reader better to appreciate the following sections on metaphor in economics and business.

In common understanding, a metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them”, to use Merriam-Webster’s definition.

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-018

Calling Mao Zedong the *Great Helmsman* is a case in point: here a word (*helmsman*) that in its literal use denotes a mariner who is at the helm of a ship is applied to a political leader. The analogy that this metaphorical transfer seeks to establish is quite straightforward: Mao's role with respect to the state is to be perceived as resembling that of a helmsman steering a ship. The adjective *great* and the general context make it clear that we should not imagine Mao as a political manifestation of Francesco Schettino causing the *Costa Concordia* to run aground, but as a powerful man guiding the Chinese ship of state through dangerous waters/times with a firm hand.

This example can be used to illustrate a frequent and somewhat awkward ambiguity in the use of the term *metaphor*. Taking the Merriam-Webster definition literally, the metaphor above is created by the application of the English word *helmsman* to the historical figure of Mao Zedong. The German equivalent *Großer Steuermann* or the original Chinese expression, for that matter, would then count as different, though functionally equivalent metaphors. However, in another terminological tradition particularly popular among contemporary cognitive linguists, a metaphor is defined as a relationship between two concepts. In our example, the metaphor would be considered to consist of a "mapping" of the concept 'helmsman' onto the concept associated with Mao. Thus the English word *helmsman* as used above would not constitute a metaphor, but a "metaphorical expression". In order to avoid the confusion arising from this double terminological tradition, concept-to-concept mappings are also often called "conceptual metaphors".

The *helmsman* example also makes it clear that metaphors do not necessarily constitute isolated processes or entities. The 'helmsman' metaphor, for example, clearly establishes an instantiation of the more general 'ship of state' metaphor, following from a relatively straightforward structural analogy between 'ship', 'helmsman' and 'steer' on the one hand, and 'state', 'leader' and 'govern' on the other. This structural analogy, by the way, still has generative potential, as was shown by Jonathan Fenby in saying that the former French president Jacques Chirac "chose Alain Juppé as the mast for his ship of state" (*France on the Brink*. 2nd edn. New York: Arcade 2014, p. 333).

Nothing said up to this point seems to have been controversial in the literature on metaphor. There is much disagreement, however, over the exact relationship between metaphorical expressions and conceptual metaphors, for example over how abstract conceptual metaphors should be, how systematic they are, and whether they are universal or language-specific. With respect to this third aspect, scholars who believe that most metaphors draw upon knowledge concerning our body and bodily experiences claim that conceptual metaphors should be widely shared across languages, since the human body is roughly the same for all human beings. But further investigation has revealed that culture plays a decisive role in shaping conceptual metaphors. (The 'helmsman' metaphor, for example, trivially presupposes the existence of ships with helms.) Another moot point is the place of conceptual

metaphors in human cognition: while nobody denies the importance of metaphors for conceiving novel ideas via analogy or inducing others to do so, some scholars argue for the metaphorical nature of our whole cognitive system. Nonetheless, this latter hypothesis, which reaches back at least to Friedrich Nietzsche and still holds some sway in extreme versions of modern constructivism, is not articulated with great precision and is thus difficult to assess empirically.

Metaphors are relatively heterogeneous if viewed from the point of view of their function in human cognition or communication. As mentioned above, it is still controversial whether metaphor, or analogy, really constitutes the core of human cognition. But other, more modest claims seem to be shared by most scholars in the field. In science – even the “hard” sciences like physics – metaphor is readily granted an important heuristic role in establishing hypotheses and theories, and initially formulating these. Analogical transfer is indeed one of the most common heuristic strategies in scholarly research, as we will see in the following sections dedicated to economics and business. In this context, metaphors provide not only new ideas – new ways of looking at things – but also a vocabulary to communicate these. In fact, many scientific terms are of metaphorical origin, though this may no longer be perceived. Moreover, metaphors can also be used to explain abstract or otherwise complicated matters to others. This pedagogical function of metaphor is often difficult to distinguish from the heuristic function, since the same metaphor can be used for both purposes.

The functions mentioned so far are mainly relevant in academic and educational contexts. By contrast, the two functions which have been at the centre of discussions about metaphors since Aristotle, those of persuasion and embellishment, although not absent from scientific discourse, feature much more prominently in politics, the courtroom, journalism, literature, and in everyday language. Correlations of this kind between function and genre are treated in more detail in Skorczynska and Deignan (2006), who conclude that “the social context and purpose of a text is an important factor in metaphor choice, and possibly at least as significant as subject matter” (p. 102).

A further dimension which contributes to the heterogeneity of metaphors is the degree to which they are still perceived to be metaphoric. All natural languages are replete with words that were once metaphors but are now completely opaque for the average speaker without an etymological dictionary at hand (the English word *chef*, for example, goes back to Latin *caput* ‘head’ via French *chef* (*de cuisine*)). But between these fully opaque, or “dead” metaphors and “live”, i.e. completely novel, metaphors, there is a large grey area populated by metaphors with different degrees of conventionalization and figurativeness. The relevance of this grey area for the theory of metaphor continues to be highly controversial. Traditionally, metaphor theorists have focused on “fresh”, surprising metaphors, whose creation was termed by Aristotle the “mark of genius”, while conventional metaphors, even if still transparent, used to be frowned upon with contempt as “clichés”. Cognitive linguists

(cf. Gibbs 2015), by contrast, have made this grey area one of the main foci of their research, starting from the hypothesis that conventional metaphors form clusters of conceptual metaphors that can be used as “windows” providing access to our conceptual system which, as the reader will recall, is regarded as essentially metaphorical in nature by such scholars. Opponents of this kind of cognitive-linguistic metaphor research (cf. Murphy 1996, 1997) have criticized it for being circular, since language (metaphorical idioms) is perceived to directly reflect cognition. They maintain that a sound approach would have to provide independent evidence of the cognitive impact of this kind of idiomatic language.

The last dimension along which metaphors may differ concerns the nature of the correspondence between the source domain (the “vehicle”, in another terminological tradition) and the target domain (the “tenor”). As seen in the Merriam-Webster definition referred to earlier, we are dealing with “a likeness or analogy”. And indeed, a metaphor can establish a relationship of resemblance with respect to some “superficial” feature, such as colour or shape. However, it can also establish a “deeper” structural analogy, as in the ‘helmsman’ example used above, or in academic “root metaphors” like ‘the economy as a machine’, which can be seen as invitations to explore the target domain in the light of the source domain. This exploration may be carried out by explicit and protracted reasoning, as in theory construction, or in a flash of intuition, as in many literary contexts, which makes the notion of metaphor even more heterogeneous.

As the reader can infer from the discussion above, the term *metaphor* has been used to refer to a set of phenomena that do not form a homogeneous category, though they are certainly tied together by multiple family resemblances. It is important to bear this in mind in order to avoid fruitless discussions. With that, we will turn from these inevitably cursory remarks on metaphor and metaphor studies to a closer examination of the literature on metaphor use in economics and business. Section 2.2 will focus on work produced by economists and management scholars themselves, while Section 2.3 will be dedicated to the linguistic literature.

2.2 Economists and management scholars on metaphor

2.2.1 Metaphor in economics

Isolated reflections by individual economists on the use of metaphor can be found much earlier, but it was not until the 1980s that the more systematic debate about metaphor in the philosophy of science reached the field of economics. The initial impetus was provided by two seminal articles, Henderson (1982) and McCloskey (1983). Henderson pointed out that many economic terms (e.g., *market forces*, *healthy economy*, *human capital*) were based on metaphor, and that “[e]ven predictive models have underlying metaphorical foundations” (p. 147). McCloskey’s article

had the far more ambitious goal of challenging the “modernist” philosophy of science underlying mainstream economic research. In that context, the author’s contention that “economics is heavily metaphoric” (p. 502) and that “models are metaphors” (p. 502) is only one among several lines of attack. While no one will deny that many central terms of economics are metaphorical in origin (e.g., *game theory*, *depression*, *elasticity*, *equilibrium*, *competition*), McCloskey went further by contending that much of the mathematical/geometrical machinery used in economics was equally metaphoric: “[t]o say that markets can be represented by supply and demand ‘curves’ is no less a metaphor than to say that the west wind is ‘the breath of autumn’s being’” (p. 502). Like Henderson, McCloskey also stressed the heuristic fruitfulness of metaphors such as *human capital* or Gary Becker’s (in-)famous likening of children to durable goods. Finally, McCloskey invited economists to be “self-conscious about metaphor” (p. 507) and to be wary of the ideological implications conveyed by economic metaphors such as Adam Smith’s *invisible hand*.

Henderson and McCloskey’s views did not go unchallenged. Jeffreys (1982), for example, tried to detract from the relevance of Henderson’s observations by pointing out that Pareto had believed that “any metaphorical usages could be analysed out in the process of formalisation” (p. 157). Though he would probably object to the word *any* in the preceding citation, Henderson conceded in his (1998) publication that economic metaphors tend to be tamed by definitions in the course of theory construction; in that respect their fate is quite different from that of literary metaphors.

McCloskey, who expanded on his views in several subsequent publications (cf. 1985, 1994, 1995), has also come under attack both from mainstream economists and from post-modernists. A representative of the first group is Sims (1996), who feared that “McCloskey’s enthusiasm for identifying rhetorical devices in economic argument and encouraging rhetorical skill among economists risks making us soft on quackery” (p. 110). Sims is of the opinion “that whatever the value of viewing economics as rhetoric, that view of economics should remain secondary, with the view of economics as science, in the sense that it is an enterprise that holds theory accountable to data, remaining primary” (p. 112). It is safe to say that the majority of economists still subscribe to this assessment. Nevertheless, McCloskey has been criticized from deconstructionist quarters too, for not going far enough (cf. Browne and Quinn 1999; Balak 2006). This is not the place for a detailed rehearsal of this debate, which goes far beyond the issue of metaphor, revolving around no less than the methodological and epistemological foundations of economics. In (1992), Nelson could still write that “the discussion of language and metaphor is possible (though still not entirely respectable) among economists” (p. 104), but in the meantime the debate launched by McCloskey has found its place in textbooks on economic methodology, to which the interested reader is referred (cf. Chapter 6 on “Rhetoric, Postmodernism, and Pluralism” in Boumans and Davis 2010: 145–167).

In theoretical discussions of metaphor in economics it is the mechanistic and the organic varieties which have attracted most attention: two root metaphors

whose influence, incidentally, extends well beyond economics. The organistic is the older: the ancient Greeks described the state of the economy in medical terms; in the 14th century, Oresme likened the movement of money in the economy to the flow of humors in the body; and since Mercantilist times money has been called the blood of the “body politic”. However, with the advent of the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century, and especially after Newton’s grand synthesis and the advances of hydromechanics, physics became the envy of all other scientific disciplines. And since they could not emulate it in substance, they tried at least to borrow its vocabulary. Mirowski (1989) argued that “the core of the neoclassical research program is a mathematical metaphor appropriated from physics in the 1870s which equates potential energy to ‘utility’, forces to ‘prices’, commodities to spatial coordinates, and kinetic energy to the budget constraint” (p. 176). He reproaches 20th-century mainstream economists for still sticking to this outdated model of physics. Another frequent complaint is that economics took over from physics the notion of *law*, which some consider to be fundamentally inappropriate for a social science such as economics (cf. Horvath and von Weizsäcker 2014). Given these criticisms of the mechanistic root metaphor, the debate about the relative merits for economics of it and its organic counterpart, which has attracted renewed interest since the 19th century Darwinian revolution, is an ongoing one (cf. Lowe 1951 for a pro-mechanistic, Thoben 1982, Hodgson 1993a, b for a pro-organistic stance).

2.2.2 Metaphor in organization studies

Metaphor became fashionable in organization studies more or less at the same time as in economics. Another parallel lies in the fact that, in the former field too, interest in metaphor was inspired by its treatment in the philosophy of science during the 1960s and 1970s. The discussion started with a rather unfriendly exchange of notes between Gareth Morgan, on the one hand, and Warren Bourgeois and Craig Pinder on the other. Morgan (1980) claimed that the discipline of organization theory had been “imprisoned by its metaphors” (p. 605), especially the mechanistic and organistic, and made a case for opening up new theoretical perspectives by multiplying metaphors, which he considered to be the seed of new theories (these ideas were later extended to book-length in Morgan 1986). The article provoked a sharp rebuttal from Pinder and Bourgeois (1982), who called for a “moratorium” (p. 650) on the use of metaphor in administrative science. In their opinion, “administrative scientists seem to have made much more deliberate and flagrant use of metaphors and other tropes than do people in general or scientists in other disciplines” (p. 642). They did not deny that metaphors may play a useful heuristic role at an early stage of scientific inquiry, but demanded that “[m]etaphors must be eliminable, and inferences made in metaphorical terms should still hold when one speaks literally, if they are to be of use in science” (p. 643).

In the second round, Morgan (1983) argued that his critics did not understand the nature of metaphor, which can never be literally true. This time Bourgeois and Pinder (1983) replied that they did not object to the use of metaphor in principle, but that hypotheses should be formulated in literal language in order to be unambiguous. According to them, even a theory of metaphor must be formulated in literal language to be meaningful: “With no contrast of trope from literal language, Morgan can say nothing important about tropes.” (p. 612). They surmised that the dispute ultimately stemmed from the fact that they and Morgan subscribed to different philosophies of science, viz. extreme constructivism in Morgan’s case and Kantian “constructive empiricism” in their own. At that point, the parties abandoned the debate, be it from exhaustion or because they saw no hope of converting the other side to their own position. (In the German literature, this stage of the debate is best reflected in Gloor 1987.)

The debate about metaphor in organization studies, however, continued to thrive. A decade later, Tsoukas (1991) presented his “transformational view of metaphors”, in which he tried to reconcile Morgan’s enthusiasm for metaphor with Pinder and Bourgeois’ insistence on literalness and falsifiability. As he put it, “the transformational view of metaphors [...] is a process in which the initial metaphorical insight is progressively disposed of its literary variety through a set of homomorphic transformations, until, it is hoped, an invariance is revealed in the form of a scientific model” (p. 577). In his 1993 study, Tsoukas identified three main strands of research on metaphor in organization studies at that time:

- Morgan-style studies, which regard metaphors as ways of thinking, but, according to Tsoukas, “have been reticent in spelling out the epistemological criteria for the justification of organizational theories” (p. 328);
- A strand represented by scholars like Pinder and Bourgeois, who admit metaphors as heuristic devices and at the level of everyday language but want to keep them away from technical language;
- Critical-discourse approaches, which concentrate on the hidden ideological implications that are often conveyed by metaphors.

A decade later, Oswick, Keenoy, and Grant (2002) and Keenoy, Oswick, and Grant (2003) invited organization scholars to consider tropes other than metaphor. They argued that dissimilarity-based tropes like anomaly, paradox or irony had a higher potential for generating new insight than metaphor, which, in their view, lays too much emphasis on similarity. Morgan (1996), however, articulating a traditional insight, had already correctly pointed out that “all metaphor creates a kind of ‘constructive falsehood’” (p. 223). If an organization theorist calls an organization a machine, he does not, of course, intend to say that the two concepts are identical; rather, the metaphor is an invitation to explore possible structural similarities amidst the large number of dissimilarities that obviously also exist. Another important observation in Morgan’s essay addresses the metaphorical nature of the concept of

metaphor as used in organization studies: while for two millennia the term *metaphor* has been used to refer to a figure of *speech*, i.e. to a certain kind of linguistic expression, “it is now being ‘carried over’ to a new domain, the study of ‘organization’, and is being used in a relatively new way” (p. 233). As a consequence, the discussion rarely reaches the level of linguistic expressions, but more often remains confined to the purely conceptual. This is not in itself problematic as long as scholars are aware of what they are doing.

The most recent important step forward in the study of metaphor in organization theory was taken by Joep Cornelissen. According to this author (2004), the most effective metaphors are those where a precise correspondence in the internal structures of the source and target domains is combined with a significant between-domain distance. The ‘management as theatre’ metaphor, therefore, is considered as relatively sterile from the point of view of knowledge generation, since the domains of theatre and organization are too closely related. Cornelissen’s (2005) “domains-interaction model” built on Max Black’s interaction theory and modern blending theory to describe a metaphorical mapping as consisting of three steps. In the first, the source and target domains are analysed in order to abstract a generic structure (image schema) containing their essential nodes and relations. Next, that is used to develop a structural analogy between the two that forges as many connections as possible between nodes and relations. Finally, in the third step, the heuristic value of new meaning that has emerged from the process is assessed. A good summary of the debate on metaphor in organization studies can be found in Cornelissen, Kafouros, and Lock (2005), which also provides an interesting catalogue of criteria that scholars use in assessing the quality of metaphors.

As demonstrated above, much of the research on metaphor in organization studies has a decidedly theoretical orientation, being essentially concerned with the role of metaphor in theory construction. However, there is another group of publications which discusses the use of metaphors in management practice, consulting or coaching (cf. Alvesson and Spicer 2011). Reflecting the theory-practice divide in the field, these publications often take little notice of the theoretical debate (cf. Marshak 2003). Conversely, articles published in higher-ranked management journals hardly ever include discussion of how their findings might actually be implemented by practitioners. One aspect which has attracted considerable attention from the practical perspective is the use of military metaphors in management. Mutch (2006) points out that most uses of this type rely on a simplistic, outdated understanding of the source domain, and that much could be gained by taking into account modern military strategy in all its sophistication. As Stahl and Rissbacher (2007) indicate, the military metaphors used in management can serve to rally the employees behind the leader in difficult situations. Yet they can also induce the employees to accept decisions of their superiors uncritically. In this publication, it is metaphors in the traditional sense of the word, i.e. linguistic expressions, which are at stake, more particularly in their persuasive function, and not metaphors as heuristic devices in the process of theory construction.

2.2.3 Metaphor in marketing

Generally speaking, one may say that the debate on metaphor has been more intense in the field of organization studies than in marketing. The section “Metaphors in marketing” of Arndt (1985: 16–19) provides a brief enumeration of the most important metaphors that researchers have employed throughout the history of marketing. The discussion, however, remains confined to the conceptual level, with no attention paid to language as such in the form of systematic text analysis. Other studies have an even more limited scope. Scully (1996), for example, examines the role of engineering metaphors in the early years of marketing (1900–1920), while Hunt and Menon (1995) concentrate on competitive strategy, where they identify four main source domains, viz. ‘war’, ‘game’, ‘organism’, and ‘marriage’. These authors make a distinction between “literary” and theoretically fruitful metaphors. ‘Strategic alliances as marriages’ exemplifies the latter type, ‘marketing myopia’ the literary variety, since it “most emphatically does not suggest that understanding the physiology of the human eye or borrowing theories from ophthalmology are (or should be) central to marketing management” (p. 82). Another case of “shallow” metaphor is the ‘product life cycle’: “Although the *terminology* of the PLC comes from biology, little of the rich theory in that area has been transferred to the PLC.” (p. 86). Fillis and Rentschler (2008) also insist on the heuristic function of metaphor, i.e. its function of stimulating creative thinking, very much in the vein of Gareth Morgan. They point out that metaphor is abundantly used in marketing practice, especially in advertising. As for the art of advertising, Boozer, Wyld, and Grant (1990) claim that a good metaphor has to be new, concise, coherent, and use attractive words familiar to the target audience. Since marketers are practically-minded people, their article furthermore contains a “ten-step process to develop metaphor skills” (p. 65).

2.2.4 Metaphor in accounting

Even the sober accountants have not been spared by the metaphor wave that has sloshed through management studies since 1980. In an early article, Davis, Menon, and Morgan (1982) identified four “images that have shaped accounting theory” (title):

- Accounting as a historical record of economic transactions;
- Accounting as depicting the current economic reality;
- Accounting as an information system;
- Accounting seen as an economic commodity.

Each of these four images, according to the above scholars, offers only limited insight as “no one image can capture fully the essence of accounting” (p. 315). The

accountants' habit of representing reality through numbers, far from providing an objective picture of the organization, only yields "an outline devoid, for example, of the human and political dramas that also constitute the reality of organizational life" (p. 308). Morgan (1988) had already rehearsed this view of accounting as an activity of reality construction rather than an objective mirror of reality. Essentially the same point was made by Amernic and Craig (2009), who highlighted how the conceptual metaphor 'accounting as an instrument' or its instantiations 'financial statements as a lens/a snapshot' insidiously suggest that accounting is based on representational faithfulness. Robson (1992) went a step further by asking why accounting developed numerical metaphors and suggested "that use of numerical metaphor in accounting practice is related to the problem of achieving long-distance control" (p. 686). While these scholars are mostly interested in metaphors whose target domain is the activity of accounting, another strand of research investigates the persuasive use of metaphor in accounting documents directed at shareholders and stakeholders (e.g., Amernic, Craig, and Tourish 2007; Bujaki and McConomy 2012).

2.3 Linguistic approaches

2.3.1 Why do linguists study metaphor in economics and business?

As discussed in Section 2.2, economists and management scholars have mainly been interested in the role played by metaphor in theory construction, echoing the earlier interest in the same topic in the philosophy of science. The use of metaphor in economic life and management practice has also come under examination, but on a much more limited scale. It is in this latter area that the interests of economists, management scholars and linguists should converge, since the object of study is constituted by metaphors as linguistic expressions and their functions in communication. In reality, however, there has to date been little exchange between the different fields mentioned.

Linguists' interests in metaphor in economics and business have been manifold, which is why the existing literature presents such a heterogeneous picture. For the purpose of the present overview, five principal topics will be distinguished: the classification of conceptual metaphors; the identification of cross-linguistic commonalities and differences; the critical analysis of metaphors' ideological use; the study of the origin and history of individual metaphors; and, last but not least, the pedagogical implications for education and foreign-language teaching. These five topics will now be reviewed in turn.

2.3.2 Classifications of conceptual metaphors

As already commented in Section 2.1, metaphors frequently form clusters related by mutual inference, which are called "metaphoric fields" (in German, *Metaphernfelder*)

or, more commonly nowadays, “conceptual metaphors”. A priori, a classification could be based on one of three different questions:

- What source domains (*bildspendende Bereiche*, in German) do the metaphors come from?
- What are the target domains that most often trigger metaphorical naming strategies?
- What couplings of source and target domain are found in the language/discourse of economics and business?

Many of the earliest publications (e.g., Ghiczy 1988: 211 on German; Stegu 1986: 69–71 and Schmitt 1988: 118 on French; Hennet and Gil 1992 on Spanish) tried to answer the first of these questions, yielding catalogues of source domains of metaphors generally gleaned from the business section of newspapers. Stegu, for example, identified the following “semantic fields”: spatial representations (e.g., ‘spiral’), liquids (e.g., ‘liquidity’), technology (e.g., ‘engine’), military (e.g., ‘campaign’), sports (e.g., ‘champion’), weather (e.g., ‘brightening’), organic life/medicine (e.g., ‘recovery’). Classifications were on the whole quite similar, variations being due mostly to the choices of corpus to serve as the research basis and the criteria that were used for the inclusion of metaphors into a particular metaphoric field. Brandstetter’s (2015) analysis of metaphors used in corporate communication still fits into this strand of research.

In more recent times, single source domains have received closer attention. Boers (1997a, b), for example, concentrated on ‘health’, used as a source domain for describing the state of the economy since Aristotle’s time. According to the author, ‘health’ metaphors are most frequent in newspapers with a free-market ideology and are also more frequent in winter than in summer. As far as the latter correlation is concerned, he surmises that “the observed seasonal fluctuation may be taken as indirect evidence of the connection between bodily experience and abstract thought” (Boers 1997b: 55). It could also be, however, that the observed frequency difference is simply due to the higher frequency of health-related words in winter: you need not have a cold yourself in order to use a ‘health’ metaphor. Other more detailed studies have concerned the source domain comprising natural phenomena (e.g., White 2004 on ‘turbulence’; Eubanks 2012 on the ‘perfect storm’, with interesting remarks on metaphor theory).

The second question, concerning the target domains that most frequently trigger metaphorical naming strategies, has yet to be answered in a large-scale study, but many have concentrated on smaller metaphor-prone target concepts or conceptual domains. In an early example, Dominique (1971) assembled French and English metaphors used to express up-and-down movements on the stock exchange (cf. also, on Spanish and English, Gómez Parra, Márquez Linares, and Pérez Hernández 1999; on Spanish and German, Eitze 2012). Other popular target domains are money movements (e.g., Vercruyse 1995; O’Connor 1998), growth (e.g., White 2003), crises

(e.g., Foley 2012 on the US housing bubble; on the present crisis: Koller and Farrelly 2010; Rojo López and Orts Llopis 2010; Silaški and Đurović 2010, among many others), and mergers and acquisitions (e.g., Herrera and White 2000; Koller 2004). The most extensive treatment of any single target domain is the book by Eubanks (2000) on how international trade is talked about (metaphorically), a study also highly recommendable for its profound treatment of metaphor-theoretical questions. The listed could be extended to include Champlin and Olson (1994) and Dunford and Palmer (1996) on restructurings or Vaara, Tienari, and Sääntti (2003) on mergers and acquisitions; although written by non-linguists, all three display close attention to linguistic expression. Other metaphor-prone targets, for example inflation, have never – to my knowledge – been the object of monographic treatments, even though many scattered observations can be found in literature.

The most pertinent of the three questions posed above, however, is the third. After all, a metaphor of necessity links a specific source domain to a specific target domain. The identification of metaphorical expressions must always constitute the first stage in any analysis. It is by no means a trivial task, and the outcome will depend very much on where one is willing to place the cut-off point on the dead-live continuum of metaphors. Should *organization*, for example, be considered as a literal expression from a synchronic perspective or as a metaphor motivated by the concept ‘organizing’? Once such questions have been answered and the set of metaphors (in the sense of ‘metaphorical expressions’) has been assembled, the next challenge consists in dividing this set into homogeneous clusters according to the type of relationship involved: synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy or others of a semantic nature.

Depending on the criteria adopted, which are generally left implicit, the outcome of this clustering exercise can vary considerably. And, although this second stage allows for considerable leeway, some decisions found in the literature are frankly surprising and surely unacceptable for the majority of linguists. In a couple of recent articles, for example, the following pairings between metaphor and conceptual metaphor have been proposed: *milagre económico* ‘economic miracle’ as evidence for ‘economy as religion’, *an economy with little growth* for ‘economy as person’, *inflation is as old as the market economy* for ‘inflation as organism’, *galloping inflation* for ‘inflation as horse’, *the roots of the crisis* for ‘crisis as plant’, German *Kerngeschäft* ‘core [lit. stone (of a fruit)] business’ and *Managementfelder* ‘fields of management’ for ‘management as agriculture’, etc. Such blunders testify that Semino (2002) was right when she diagnosed a “need for more explicit and better informed criteria for the extrapolation of conceptual metaphors from linguistic evidence” (p. 136).

2.3.3 Cross-linguistic commonalities and differences

We have already seen in Section 2.1 that the linguistic literature on metaphor includes some debate about the universality of conceptual metaphors. In the domain of

economics and business, this debate is reflected by a series of articles which have sought to find out the extent to which economic and business metaphors are shared cross-linguistically.

Reviewing the early literature, which was essentially based on the business sections of the press, Jäkel (1993: 19) arrived at the conclusion that “[i]n general [...], it can be established that, with only minor exceptions, in English, French, German, and Spanish, the same metaphorical source domains are employed in the description of economic processes”. This conclusion, which was corroborated by later studies carried out on other European and even some non-European languages, called for an explanation. In the event, two were offered, neither of which ruled out the other (cf. Semino 2002: 136): on the one hand, borrowing, especially the influence of English in the domain of economics and business (e.g., Charteris-Black and Ennis 2001: 251; Silaški and Đurović 2010: 136); on the other, the supposed universality of conceptual metaphors, at least body-related ones (e.g., Urbonaitė and Šeškauskienė 2007: 72). With respect to this latter hypothesis, however, Mouton (2012) has correctly pointed out that even body-related metaphors, such as the ‘health’ metaphor so popular in economics, are highly culture-bound. Many European ‘health’ metaphors, for example, still derive from Galenic medicine, and they are continually updated, as when the French president Jacques Chirac called speculation *le sida de l'économie* ‘the AIDS of the economy’ in 1995.

Cross-linguistic comparisons also unearthed some differences, even among closely related Indo-European languages. First, some languages use metaphors less in economics and business than others. Urbonaitė and Šeškauskienė (2007: 70), for example, found that “Lithuanian seems to be much less inclined to metaphorical reasoning in political and economic discourse” than English. It could well be, however, that this is a difference between journalistic writing traditions – a relic of Soviet times? – more than between the languages themselves. Espunya and Zabalbeascoa (2003: 172) have similarly found that, contrary to their English colleagues, “Spanish writers do not ask their readers to unravel the metaphorical relationship for rhetorical purposes”. Second, differences may arise if an English metaphor has yet to be translated into a particular language, for example the ‘white knight’ metaphor in the case of Slovene in 2004 (Bratož 2004: 191). And third, languages may have the same conceptual metaphor but use a slightly different metaphorical expression, for reasons that have to be established in each individual case. Bratož (2004: 185), for example, reports that the ‘bubble’ metaphor has been adapted to Slovene by using the word for ‘balloon’ (*balon*). Sometimes, the non-transferability has to do with the absence of an adequate word in the receiving language. The “nuclear” metaphors *meltdown* and *fallout*, for example, which are highly popular in the Anglo-Saxon economic press, have no equivalent in Spanish (Charteris-Black and Ennis 2001: 263) and Italian (Luporini 2013: 175). “This discrepancy”, Luporini surmises, “may be explained in terms of the absence of nuclear power stations from Italy.” However, a much more straightforward explanation is available: the Italian equivalent of

meltdown and *fallout*, i.e. *fusione del nocciolo* and *pioggia/ricaduta radioattiva*, are simply too unwieldy from the formal point of view to yield a good material basis for a metaphor. The same applies to Spanish.

Nevertheless, some differences are indeed amenable to cultural explanations. Kermas (2006), for example, argued that the differences in metaphor use that she found between American and British newspapers could be attributed to Americans being more optimistic and energetic than Brits. And Wang, Runtsova, and Chen (2013: 273) found that the global downturn after 2007 was often conceptualized in Russian newspapers with metaphors recalling major events during World War II, such as ‘June 1941’ or the ‘battle of Moscow’, which are still very present in Russian discourse today.

2.3.4 Critical discourse analysis

The critical-discourse approach was present even in the oldest article that I know of on metaphors in the economic press. Hebel (1969), in fact, wrote to make students aware of the fact “daß die entscheidenden Momente des Wirtschaftsprozesses durch sie verschleiert werden können, vor allem daß ihm aus ihnen Naturwüchsigkeit, Schicksalhaftigkeit und Undurchschaubarkeit fälschlich als Merkmale zugeordnet werden” (pp. 70–71) [that the decisive moments of the economic process can be obfuscated by [metaphors], especially if they wrongly attribute naturalness, fatefulness and inscrutability to it]. In the same vein, Svensson (1980: 116) took issue with personifications in economic texts: “Ein häufiger Gebrauch von Personifikationen eskamotiert die handelnden Personen aus der Wirtschaft und damit auch den antagonistischen Widerspruch zwischen Kapital und Arbeit.” [A frequent use of personifications spirits away the agents from the economy and, by the same token, the antagonistic contradiction between capital and labour.] These analyses were obviously influenced by the spirit of 1968, and perhaps more concretely by the Frankfurt school and its obsession with power and domination. In a reply to Schmitt (1988: 124), who reiterated Svensson’s view, Schiffko (1992: 564, fn. 26) judiciously observed that the manipulative aspect of economic journalism should not be overstated since most readers of the business sections are professionals who are not easily misled by metaphors.

Quite independently, as it seems, from this early German literature, the manipulative aspect of metaphors in economic and business discourse has again attracted great interest since the turn of the millennium. It is universally acknowledged that the basis of this manipulative potential lies in the age-old insight that metaphors necessarily highlight some aspects of the target while concealing others, a phenomenon nowadays often referred to as “framing”. Numerous publications stress the same aspects already pointed out by Hebel and Svensson: “concealment of human agency” (Charteris-Black 2000: 162), “a natural event for which no one in particular can be held responsible” (Cortés de los Ríos 2010: 85), etc.

Although many works conjure up the danger of manipulation, the effect of metaphors upon real-life audiences is hardly ever assessed empirically: most authors write about the *imagined* effects, not about cognitive or social realities. A notable exception is Boers (1997c), who confronted two groups of students with one and the same text about foreign trade in which only the conceptual metaphors had been manipulated: “The test results indicate that exposure to different metaphors to describe a general economic scenario can lead to different lines of reasoning.” (p. 238). It is therefore beyond doubt that metaphors can influence our thinking in important ways, yet we are not “trapped” in our metaphorical conceptualizations, neither as speakers/writers nor as hearers/readers (cf. Wolff 1976: 51; Wolf and Polzenhagen 2003: 269).

Another aspect worthy of consideration is the fact that metaphor is very often only one among many verbal and non-verbal means of persuasion used for a single purpose. Consequently, it is difficult to assess the exact influence of metaphor except in somewhat artificial experimental situations such as the one just mentioned. In her study of the role of metaphors in reframing the image of a bank during a banking crisis Holmgreen (2012), for example, observes that “[m]etaphors may not be the primary means through which frames are instantiated; instead metaphors seem to function as ways of adding evaluation to the frames introduced by other lexical items” (p. 261).

2.3.5 Word histories

We have already seen in Section 2.2 that many theories in economics and management were developed on the basis of metaphors. Such theory-constitutive metaphors often spin off an important vocabulary, which over time may lose its motivation if the metaphor itself becomes worn out or falls into oblivion. No ordinary speaker, for example, is led to think of Newtonian physics when uttering the term *market forces*, nor of the circulation of blood on hearing the term *monetary circulation*. The terminology of economics and management is littered with dead or dying metaphors of this kind. Their study, which has only begun (see Chapter 2 on the history of business language), is a rewarding pastime for historical linguists with a feeling for the history of science. The subject is, of course, less relevant from the standpoint of applied linguistics, though one pedagogical application will be mentioned in the next section.

2.3.6 Pedagogical implications

Metaphors have repeatedly been approached from the perspective of language teaching (cf. Cameron and Low 1999 for an overview based on English as a foreign

language). As we have already seen in Section 2.3.4, raising metaphor awareness among students in mother-tongue education was one of the earliest motivations for publishing on metaphor in economics and business (cf. Hebel 1969; Wolff 1976). As far as foreign-language teaching is concerned, and more specifically the teaching of business English, analyses of text books have shown that metaphors are still allotted a negligible role, and those metaphors that do appear are frequently not those most common in actual economic texts (cf. Juchem-Grundmann 2009: 49; Fodde and Wallis 2010: 89; Skorczynska 2010).

Metaphor researchers, by contrast, are convinced of the benefits that would derive from the more systematic integration of metaphors into textbooks and other materials used in the classroom. A first good reason is simply that students seem to like them (Resche 2001: 12; White 2003: 147–148). According to Juchem-Grundmann's (2009: 51) experimental study, another is that metaphors, when integrated into superordinate conceptual metaphors, increase learnability, memorization and retrieval. Finally, several authors make a case for taking into account even dead or dying metaphors and make them the object of explicit comment. Juchem-Grundmann (2009: 51) observes that reviving bleached metaphors has an exhilarating effect on students. Charteris-Black (2000: 150) stresses the function of metaphors as a link between vocabulary teaching and enhanced understanding of central concepts in economics and business. This aspect is treated most fully and convincingly by Resche (2013), a book-length study of economic metaphors embedded in the history of economic doctrines. Yet, although fruitful, this kind of approach cannot be recommended to all teachers of business English, who are themselves very often unfamiliar with the area and will be reluctant to skate on thin ice.

3 Metonymy

3.1 Terminological preliminaries

Like that of metaphor, the study of metonymy has a long tradition ranging from classical rhetoric to modern linguistics and, more recently, to organization studies as a sub-discipline of management studies. Accordingly, metonymy has been tackled from a considerable number of theoretical and empirical angles. In Merriam-Webster's dictionary, metonymy is defined as “a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated (as *crown* in “lands belonging to the crown”)”. In contrast to this definition, which focuses on metonymy as a naming strategy, modern scholarly approaches concentrate on the cognitive processes underlying the figure of speech. These processes highlight one conceptual entity (the “source domain”) instead of another (the “target domain”) that stands in what is called a contiguity relation

to the source domain (Koch 2012: 263). By this is meant, in broad terms, a non-taxonomic relation between conceptual entities associatively connected with each other in a given context of communication. Some examples of contiguities are the relationship between an institution and its members, a container and its content, a producer and the product, an owner and his or her property, or a cause and its effect. For the sake of clarity, the linguistic manifestations of these cognitive processes of metonymy, or “conceptual metonymies” are often referred to as “metonymic expressions” or “linguistic metonymies”.

It must be noted that, in the cognitive approach, the conception of metonymic expressions goes further than that of the notion of “figures of speech” because it not only covers the “names of things” but also spans from lexical to more complex linguistic structures such as whole sentences. For example, the word *company* in *The company decided to expand* is a lexical expression of a conceptual metonymy which activates a contiguity relation between ‘company’ (source domain) and ‘members of that company’ (target domain). The utterance *It’s cold here inside*, on the other hand, may be used in a given context as the linguistic expression of a conceptual metonymy relying on the relationship between a cause (‘I feel cold’) and its effect (‘I want you to close the window’).

The following sections concentrate on lexical expressions of metonymies because they traditionally represent the most prototypical and probably also the most prominent manifestations of metonymy. Like metaphors, lexical metonymies differ with respect to their status in the mental lexicon, i.e. their degree of conventionalization or lexicalization. In order to take these graduated differences into account, researchers usually differentiate between “ad hoc” or “creative”, “conventional” and “lexicalized” metonymies (Koch 2004: 27–29; Markert and Nissim 2006: 153).

In research on the language of economics and business, metonymies have so far played a rather minor role. Conventional metonymies have been explored in some linguistic studies of business-media discourse and, more recently, within the (non-linguistic) research field of organization studies. To my knowledge, no studies have been carried out on ad hoc metonymies, and very little has been said about metonymic term formation or semantic change. The following sections will provide an overview of the state of the art.

3.2 The linguistic analysis of metonymies in business-media discourse and terminology

3.2.1 Metonymies in business-media discourse

Corpus-based studies on metonymies in business media have demonstrated that metonymy is a productive and also very frequent phenomenon (Weidacher 1971:

84–91; Lecolle 2001: 153; Hänchen and Schnitzer 2003: 41; Markert and Nissim 2006: 153). Lexical metonymies in business media tend to be conventionalized (Koch 2004: 25). Although they occur quite often, the majority of these metonymies are not memorized in the mental lexicon as new lexical entries or new technical terms. They generally serve rhetorical purposes and may, depending on the context, create different semantic-pragmatic effects. Most can be observed in all the more common Western languages, but a minority seem to be more usual in some languages than in others (Hänchen and Schnitzer 2003: 41). Common source domains in all the observed languages are companies, markets, organizations, locations/places and goods. Frequent targets are economic agents, facilities, markets, prices/values, and goods. In the following, metonymic expressions are assigned to three different groups according to source domain. For each group, the most frequent target domains in business media are then described, together with the resultant semantic-pragmatic effects.

Probably the most thoroughly examined source domain of metonymic usage is that of institutions (i.e. companies, markets, and organizations). Depending on the specific target, these metonymies may be classified into at least five main types. Table 18.1 includes examples of each. Their targets are contiguous entities such as company shares (type 1.1), share or market values (types 1.2 and 1.3), members of the institution (type 1.4) and facilities of the institution such as factories, branches or offices (type 1.5) (Lecolle 2001: 165–166; Hänchen and Schnitzer 2003: 41; Markert and Nissim 2006: 162).

Table 18.1: Institutions as source domains

Examples	source	target
Type 1.1: ‘company for shares’ <i>General Motors is now oversold.</i>	‘company’	‘company shares’
Type 1.2: ‘market for market value’ <i>Asian markets have fallen following a heavy sell-off on Wall Street.</i>	‘market’	‘market value’
Type 1.3: ‘company for share value’ <i>Eurotunnel was the most active stock.</i> (Markert and Nissim 2006: 163)	‘company’	‘share value’
Type 1.4: ‘institution for members’ <i>The company says the layoffs are due to changes to a new continuous operations model, [. . .].</i> <i>The markets therefore lose their ability to price it so they ignore it.</i>	‘company’ ‘market’	‘company member(s)’ ‘market member(s)’
Type 1.5: ‘company for facility’ <i>The opening of a McDonald’s is a major event.</i> (Markert and Nissim 2006: 162)	‘company’	‘facility’

The second group of source domains consists of locations/places and may be divided into four regularly occurring types (see Table 18.2). The first refers to the stock market located at that place (type 2.1). It is inherently linked to the second, which relies on the relationships between a place, the stock market located there and an index of that market's performance (type 2.2). Type 2.3 can be seen as a combination of type 2.1 and the 'institution for members' type (1.4). Here, a location is linked to a stock market and, consequently, to the stock-market agents. The target concepts of type 2.4 are similar to those of the 'company for facility' type 1.5, in that they represent facilities of a company located at the place in question.

Table 18.2: Locations as source domains

Examples	source	target
Type 2.1: 'location for stock market' <i>Asian markets have fallen following a heavy sell-off on Wall Street.</i>	'location'	'stock market'
Type 2.2: 'location for stock exchange index' <i>Asian stocks end lower, Tokyo falls sharply.</i>	'location'	'stock-market value'
Type 2.3: 'location for share-market agents' <i>Wall Street is pumping more money into Republican campaigns this election cycle, [...].</i>	'location'	'stock-market agents'
Type 2.4: 'location for facility/factory' <i>The closure of Bochum is set to cost at least 550 million euros.</i>	'location'	'facility'

Finally, two types of metonymies have been identified whose source domains are economic goods such as products or money (see Table 18.3). The first activates the relationship between a good and the whole market sector (type 3.1). This type is quite frequent in Spanish and French, but rather rare in English and German, which is the reason why the examples in Table 18.3 are, exceptionally, drawn from the two Romance languages. The second type relies on a contiguity relation between a good and its price or value (type 3.2).

As pointed out at the beginning of this section, the main targets of metonymic expressions in business media are economic agents, markets, facilities and prices/values. Consequently, depending on the target, the resulting semantic effects may be described as personalization/personification, institutionalization, valuation/quantification or reification. Among these, personalization is the most frequently examined. It is exemplified by the two metonymic patterns 'institution for members' and 'location for stock-market agents' (types 1.4 and 2.3). Here, a market, a company or the location of either indirectly refers to members of the organizational structures concerned. These metonymies are characterized by very fuzzy references; that is, the precise identity of the agents remains unclear (Lecolle 2001: 165–166; Lejeune 2012:

Table 18.3: Goods as source domains

Examples	source	target
Type 3.1: 'good for market/sector' <i>Dans le téléphone fixe, la filiale [...] n'avait pas d'autres possibilités.</i> 'In the landline phone market (literally: landline phone), the subsidiary had no other options.' <i>La vivienda se enfrenta a otro año de fuerte demanda.</i> 'The housing market (literally: dwelling) is facing another year of high demand.'	'product'	'market/sector'
Type 3.2: 'good for price/value' <i>Gold almost touched its lifetime high of 30,000 [...].</i>	'good'	'price/value'

164–170). Operating in the name of, and as part of a social structure, organization or institution, their precise identities seem to be irrelevant, at least in the given context of business coverage. Svensson (1980: 115) suggested that, in this way, authors sometimes deliberately try to conceal the real actors. Second, the semantic effect of types 1.2, 1.3, 2.2 and 3.2 is valuation/quantification because these metonymic patterns refer to prices or values. Third, types 2.1 and 3.1 provide examples of institutionalization in which a location or good is meant to activate an association with some social entity or institution, such as a market or sector. Finally, types 1.1, 1.5 and 2.4 may be regarded as instances of reification, where a social entity (institution) is seen as a physical or material entity.

3.2.2 Metonymic term formation and semantic change in economics and business

In certain cases, metonymic processes result in the creation of new terms. They lead to the formation of new stable concepts and, thus, impact the mental lexicon. Unfortunately, these processes have been little studied in terminologically-oriented research on the language of economics and business. Consequently, it is still unknown whether there are typical metonymic patterns of term formation within this special language. In other words, we do not know whether certain constellations of source and target domains regularly lead to the creation of new terms. Given this lack of research, the present section will limit itself to the enumeration of individual examples, presented in Table 18.4. In some examples, such as *layoff* or *downsizing*, metonymic term formation creates a euphemistic effect.

Table 18.4: Metonymic term formation in the language of economics and business

Examples	source	target
<i>downsizing</i>	'to size down'	'staff reduction'; 'redundancy'
<i>layoff</i>	'to lay off'	'staff reduction'; 'redundancy'
<i>make-good</i>	'to make good'	'a product offered to a client in order to compensate for something'
<i>second-hand</i>	'second-hand' (adj.)	'already-used product'

However, such metonymic creation of new terms seems to be very rare in comparison to the metonymically induced semantic change of established ones (Weidacher 1971: 82; see also Section 4 in Chapter 20 on the language of marketing). For example, Weidacher found that almost 90 per cent of the metonymies in his diachronic corpus were sense extensions of already existing business terms (e.g., *bill* 'note of charges' > 'total charge'). These more subtle, "intra-disciplinary" shifts distinguish metonymic from metaphoric changes of meaning, which generally consist of transfers from one discipline to another (e.g., from science, technology, or agriculture to economics and business) (Weidacher 1971: 82; see also Section 2 of this chapter).

Weidacher classified metonymic changes of meaning into ten different types. His typology was based on previously existing lists of metonymic patterns in general language (Weidacher 1971: 84). By way of illustration, one example of each type is provided in Table 18.5. Given their complexity, no detailed comments on the examples will be made here.

Table 18.5: Types of metonymic semantic change according to Weidacher (1971: 84–91)

Examples	source meaning	target meaning
Type 1: 'activity–result' <i>bookings</i>	'acts of booking orders'	'the orders (so booked)'
Type 2: 'commercial activity–quantitative extent, financial result' <i>sales</i>	'action of selling', 'one act of selling'	'quantity sold', 'gross receipts'
Type 3: 'abstract–concrete' <i>capacity</i>	'ability to produce'	'maximum output', 'plant', 'installation'
Type 4: 'document–content' <i>bill</i>	'note of charges'	'total charge or cost(s)'
Type 5: 'graphic detail–contiguous object' <i>(in the) black</i>	'bookkeeping practice of entering credit items in black ink'	'credit', 'condition of making a profit'

Table 18.5: Continued

Examples	source meaning	target meaning
Type 6: 'field of activity–organisation' <i>fund</i>	'stock or sum of money set aside for a particular purpose'	'organization administering a fund'
Type 7: 'foundation agreement–organisation' <i>conference</i>	'formal meeting'	'cartel'
Type 8: 'person–company' <i>fabricator</i>	'workman who fabricates'	'firm, establishment or plant that (converts metal from one form into another)'
Type 9: further metonymies <i>trade</i>	'exchange of goods'	'economic activity' 'business activity'
Type 10: borderline cases (between narrowing of meaning and metonymy) <i>redundancy</i>	'superabundance'	'superabundance of workers resulting in unemployment', 'unemployment due to a superabundance'

3.3 The analysis of metonymy within organization studies

With the so-called linguistic turn, research within organization studies began paying more attention to language. Metaphor was one of the first linguistic issues treated, followed by the other master tropes, i.e. metonymy, synecdoche and irony (Clegg and Bailey 2008: 773). Tropes have been examined from two main perspectives. The first, the epistemological point of view, is particularly relevant for the analysis of metaphor because metaphors create new relations and are, therefore, especially apt for generating new knowledge (cf. Section 2.2.1). The second perspective, the rhetorical, aims at exploring the use of tropes within organizational discourse (cf. Section 2.2.2; also Manning 1979; Watson 1995; Grant and Osrick 1996; Hamilton 2003; Musson and Tietze 2004; Cornelissen 2008; Riad and Vaara 2011).

As mentioned previously, metonymy has been far less explored than metaphor. The existing empirical studies generally concentrate on the use of metonymical expressions in organizational discourse in order to show how they reflect and express the organizational structure in which subjects are involved. However, these studies are often restricted to the analysis of specific examples within relatively small samples (Cornelissen 2008: 80). Just like linguists, organization scholars are divided as to whether synecdoche, i.e. part-whole relations, should be considered as a trope of its own or as a subtype of metonymy. Consequently, the same phenomenon can be classified differently depending on the author's approach. For example, for Cornelissen (2008: 82) the metonymic relationship (i.e. contiguity) includes part-whole relationships, and thus also synecdoche. As a consequence, linguistic expressions in which a company name is used to refer to members of that company are

considered to be a very common type of metonymy. Watson (1995: 813) and Hamilton (2003: 1571), on the other hand, take the classical rhetoric approach when they classify these examples as instances of synecdoche.

As regards the broad understanding of metonymy (including synecdoche), the most thoroughly examined metonymic patterns within organization studies are, of course, those that take organizations and locations as source domains. For example, Cornelissen (2008: 92) found that the most important conventionalized metonymies in talk about organizations are ‘organization for product’ or ‘organization for members’. According to this author, “people talk about and understand organizations by using one well-understood aspect of a company to stand for the thing as a whole or some other aspect of it” (p. 89). He comes to the conclusion that “metonymies are consistently used by people to talk organizations into existence” and “to give meaning to organizations” (p. 95). In addition, according to Musson and Tietze (2004: 1318–1319), metonymies “gloss over, reduce and simplify what is actually very complex, making the structure of the web/system/cultural order appear simple, constant, ordinary, routine, normal and rational”.

To conclude, in contrast to linguistics, organization studies has mostly investigated metonymy from a social-science perspective. Many investigations may be roughly assigned to the methodological framework of critical discourse analysis. Hence, within organization studies metonymy is attributed a more social dimension, in that it is regarded as symptomatic of internal structures and the functioning of organizations as social entities (Musson and Tietze 2004: 1318–1319). This view is obviously not as central in linguistic studies, which mostly aim at the description and classification of linguistic phenomena, and their semantic-pragmatic effects, in order to learn about their co- and contextual environment and their actual distribution in texts.

4 Euphemism

4.1 Terminological preliminaries

According to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, the term *euphemism* refers to “the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant” as well as to “the expression so substituted”. In the German tradition of studies on rhetoric, it is customary to distinguish two fundamental kinds of euphemism, called *verhüllend* and *verschleiern*d (cf. Dietl 1996: 1), translated by Burckhard (2009: 356) as “veiling” and “concealing”, respectively. The “veiling” subtype closely corresponds to the definition provided by Merriam-Webster, denoting an expression – mostly from the semantic areas of religion, death, disease, handicap, sexuality, excretion, etc. – that is avoided because it is taboo in the speech community. The “concealing” subtype, by contrast, refers to euphemisms that are used purposefully by a speaker in order to influence or, in extreme cases,

manipulate the hearer. While the bulk of traditional linguistic studies on euphemism were devoted to the “veiling” kind, this latter type, as we will see, is the more relevant for the study of the language of economics and business.

Furthermore, traditional studies often focus on the role of euphemisms in semantic change: euphemisms, in fact, tend to lose their “veiling” or “concealing” function over time and can eventually acquire the meaning of the expression which they were intended to avoid. This kind of semantic change, however, seems to have been relatively rare in the realm of economics and business (Latin *usura*, which originally simply meant ‘use’ but ended up with the meaning ‘usury’, would be one of these rare examples). For the study of economics and business language, it is more relevant to gain a precise understanding of the nature of those communicative acts in which euphemisms are embedded. Of paramount importance in this respect are: the societal context of the utterance; the state of knowledge of both speaker and hearer(s); the general communicative habits prevailing in the speech community (e.g., with respect to “political correctness”); and, last but not least, the intentions of the speaker. Bak (2012: 135), furthermore, draws attention to the fact that euphemisms are often addressed not to a single recipient but to a broader audience, which means that a plurality of possible interpretations must also be taken into account.

Despite the importance of euphemistic communication in the language of economics and business, the topic does not seem to have attracted much scholarly attention. In an early contribution, Devoto (1939: 116) pointed out the abundant use of euphemisms in stock-market reports, especially with respect to downward movements, or in referring to the rise of inflation (e.g., Italian *l'affiorare dell'elemento monetario* ‘the emergence of the monetary element’). More recently, the subject has been sadly neglected, with larger-scale studies on euphemism-prone genres from the realm of banking or insurance apparently missing altogether. Apart from my own contributions to the subject (cf. Fischer 2007, 2015), I only know of one recent book (Bak 2012) and one section of another (Resche 2013: 226–242) devoted specifically to the use of euphemisms in economics and business. Resche adopts a terminological perspective and concentrates on English, while Bak’s study falls within the ambit of “anthropocentric linguistics”. Based on an analysis of 1,500 newspaper articles published in the German business press between 2007 and 2011, its originality lies in the focus it places on the recipient, the interpreter of euphemistic utterances. On the basis of a survey conducted among 280 professionals with a business background, Bak demonstrates that the interpretation of such utterances varies considerably from recipient to recipient, and that the two functions of “veiling” and “concealing” do not constitute clearly distinct categories.

4.2 The form of euphemisms

Euphemisms are often thought to be individual words, yet in reality they can be of any length, ranging from individual words up to whole utterances. An example of the latter kind would be the sentence *The party is over*, intended to announce

an imminent downturn in economic activity or on the stock market. At the phrasal level, litotes – an affirmative statement expressed by the negative of the contrary – are often used with euphemistic intentions: German *kein unbeträchtlicher Betrag* ‘not an inconsiderable sum’, referring to a large amount; *ein nicht unerheblicher Instabilitätsfaktor* ‘a not insignificant factor of instability’, referring to the accumulation of huge debts as an important cause of instability. At the word level, many other tropes can be used with euphemistic intent. Thus economic downturns are commonly referred to by metaphors such as contraction, cooling, dent, dip, or slowdown. Metonymy may be employed in order to avoid naming the person responsible for a decision directly, saying “Brussels” instead of “commissioner X”. The use of oxymoron, i.e. the combination of incongruous words, attracted mockery and criticism when economic stagnation was first called “zero growth”, but in the meantime we even swallow “negative growth” (in German, *Minuswachstum*) as a euphemism for recession.

Among the techniques of word formation, abbreviation seems predestined for euphemistic uses. It has become established practice to reduce words one wants to avoid to their initial letter, calling, for example, recession the “R-word”. Further examples of this naming strategy are “D-word” (deflation), “I-word” (inflation), or “s-word” (sell, on the stock market) (cf. Resche 2013: 235). Acronyms fulfil a similar purpose, as when French *SDF*, shorthand for *sans domicile fixe* ‘homeless’, or English “UHNWI”, shorthand for “Ultra High Net Worth Individual”, are used to refer to the two extremes of the “social ladder”. Note, however, that these two euphemisms are used in quite different contexts: while *SDF* reflects the unease of civil servants and society at large, UHNWI is confined to the jargon of private bankers, probably in an attempt to avoid the negative connotations of super-rich.

Last but not least, the use of words of foreign origin or technical terms has always been an effective strategy for mitigating the impact of unpleasant concepts. In German, Anglicisms often fulfil euphemistic functions: when during the current crisis taxpayers were confronted with the grim perspective of having to pay enormous sums to rescue banks “too big to fail”, politicians and members of regulatory bodies resorted to English words such as “haircut”, “bailout” or “bad bank”. Technical terms may perform the same task since their precise meaning is not understood by the general public: when the Federal Reserve created vast amounts of money in order to purchase government bonds, the action was dubbed “quantitative easing”.

4.3 The functions of euphemisms

The reason for the ubiquity of euphemism in the language of economics and business lies in the fact that economic life is rife with situations where divergent interests have to be overcome: between buyers and sellers, employers and employees, savers and bankers, insurers and the insured, or politicians and taxpayers, to mention just

a few. In such situations, the use of euphemisms can be a means to overcoming differences or at least getting along better. Each of these constellations would merit an in-depth inquiry on its own. In the absence of such large-scale inquiries, the following remarks must remain of a purely illustrative nature. They are structured on the basis of the distinction, already mentioned in Section 4.1, between the functions of “veiling” and “concealing”, with the proviso that the two are neither mutually exclusive nor always easy to distinguish in specific instances.

The “veiling” function is certainly less important in economics and business than in other areas of life, but it is not completely absent, finding ample use in advertisements for taboo-laden products. In the workplace, hierarchical relationships are the source of much euphemistic talk: employees will normally be addressed by their superiors as “collaborators” or “colleagues”, not as “subordinates”, “inferiors” or “underlings”. Yet another area prone to “veiling” is the labour market, especially all facets related to unemployment. German *Minijob*, for example, is an official euphemism for a kind of precarious employment (a job paid less than 450 Euros). The concept of firing has sparked off a whole series of euphemisms in different languages, among them English *make redundant*, German *freisetzen*, literally ‘to set free’, or French *remercier*, literally ‘to thank’. The language of social security is another hotspot of “veiling”, where the “paupers” of the 19th century have become “customers” towards the end of the 20th century (cf. Herles 1998) and homeless people in France *SDF*, as already mentioned. The motivations behind such a neologism remain ambiguous: it may have been created as a means of avoiding potentially insulting words in current use, such as *clochard*, but also out of shame or even with intent to “conceal”— three options perfectly compatible with one another.

“Concealing”, for its part, is in itself a vague term which covers a broad range of possible communicative intentions. As already mentioned, this function of euphemism is rampant in economics and business. When managers announce massive lay-offs, they usually speak of “restructuring”, “slimming down”, “downsizing”, “rightsizing”, or even “smartsizing” (Resche 2013: 237). Accounting practices situated in the grey areas of legality are referred to by accountants as “window-dressing”, the German equivalent being *Bilanzkosmetik*, literally ‘balance-sheet cosmetics’. “Tax optimization” is often little more than a euphemism for tax avoidance or evasion. Sometimes it is only a small step from euphemism to manipulation or even lie, as in the case of one former Austrian finance minister, who marketed his budget plan by invoking social justice and promising that citizens would “not be burdened with higher income tax” [*einkommenssteuerlich nicht mehrbelastet werden*]. In reality, although income tax indeed remained at the same level, the introduction of road tax, tuition fees and outpatient charges in hospitals, among other measures, effectively raised the general tax burden from 44.2% to 45.8% of GDP.

However, the ultimate goal of “concealing” euphemisms can also be the good of society. Especially in difficult economic situations, speaking out too frankly would cause damage to the economy by provoking undesirable reactions among the public.

If a central bank governor avoids pronouncing the word *deflation*, it is because by doing so he might provoke or strengthen expectations of a fall in prices, and thereby actually contribute to its coming about, in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is certainly no coincidence that at the moment of writing, when the euro zone is facing the danger of deflation, expressions such as “negative inflation”, “ultra-low inflation”, “lowflation” and “subflation” are appearing in the press. Similarly, a word out of turn can provoke a bank run and thereby precipitate the crisis it seeks to prevent. So when, in 1933, with the US banking system on the brink of insolvency and savers’ trust in the system dwindling away, President Roosevelt shut down the banks for four days, he spoke merely of “bank holidays”. This wording suggested bureaucratic normalcy and allowed Congress to pass an Emergency Banking Act that stabilized the system. The expression stayed in the collective memory and later served as a model for the neologism *CAPEX holiday* (*CAPEX* is shorthand for capital expenditure), which refers to a situation where a company decides to stop investing for some time.

4.4 Dysphemisms

Dysphemisms (cf. Fischer 2015) are the opposite of euphemisms, i.e. offensive or disparaging expressions substituted for more neutral ones. When during the present crisis the prestige of bankers hit a record low, the term *bankster*, a blend of *banker* and *gangster* created in the 1930s, was revived, though seemingly without lasting success. The countries of the (mainly) southern European periphery whose problems at one point risked jeopardizing the Eurozone were given negative names such as English *PIGS* (shorthand for Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain), German *Club-Med-Länder* ‘Club-Med countries’, *Defizitländer* ‘deficit countries’, *Schuldensünder* ‘debt sinners’, or *Pleitegriechen* ‘bankruptcy Greeks’. Such dysphemistic expressions, however, are more typical of political and media discourse than of the language of economics and business in the strict sense.

5 Conclusion

The present chapter has made it clear that tropes play an important role in the language of economics and business. Not surprisingly, metaphor has turned out to be the true master trope in this area. Metaphor stands out not only because of its high frequency, but also because of the important role it is believed to play in developing hypotheses and theories in the fields of economics and business administration. Since these two fields have so far had few areas of contact with linguistics, it seemed advisable – despite the more restrictive subtitle of this handbook – to take into account the abundant literature on metaphor produced by scholars from them.

As is apparent from the discussion, these view metaphor differently from linguists, but there is also much common ground which, in the future, should lead to productive cooperation across disciplinary borders. Of the other tropes treated in this chapter, metonymy has a comparatively low profile in comparison with metaphor, while euphemism is the least tangible, since the euphemistic nature of a word or utterance can only be determined by taking into account a range of contextual factors. Nevertheless, even though our experience tells us that it is of paramount importance in many areas of economics and business, large-scale systematic analyses of the use of euphemism are still largely lacking.

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Michael Betsch

19 Language planning and linguistic purism in the business domain

1. Introduction
2. Theories of language planning
3. Case studies in puristic language planning
4. Evaluation
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

The subject of this chapter is language planning, with a focus on linguistic purism, especially in relation to business language. The focus is on policy at the macro level, that is, at the level of the state (or autonomous sub-state unit). Business language may be affected by language planning in several ways. The way businesses communicate with the public and (potential) customers – for example, via product labelling, advertising and shop signs – is often subject to language requirements, which are frequently justified by consumer rights considerations. Moreover, the use of language within the workplace may also be subject to regulations. Some may cover the choice of a particular language for a particular purpose, while others prescribe or endorse specific words, terms or forms of communication.

The main part of this chapter consists of two sections. In the first, various theoretical approaches to language planning and/or purism are introduced. The second presents an overview of language policy and planning in three polities: the Canadian province of Quebec, the Spanish autonomous region of Catalonia, and France. These examples have been chosen because they are points of reference for the language policies of other regions and countries, as well as for each other. French language policy, for instance, has inspired several European countries (see, e.g., Braselmann and Ohnheiser 2008). In developing his framework of Reversing Language Shift, Fishman (1991) draws on both Quebec and Catalonia as successful examples (see Section 2.3). These two regions share similar political experiences as well as a strong focus on developing terminology for autochthonous special languages (Quirion and Freixa 2013), which obviously also concerns the language of economics and business. For each of the three case studies, both status planning and corpus planning activities will be discussed. A short section evaluating the successes of language policy in these three polities is followed by the chapter's conclusions.

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-019

2 Theories of language planning

2.1 Language planning

There is a long history of conscious efforts to influence and indeed determine language. Nekvapil (2011) provides an overview of its earlier stages, such as the activities of the French Academy, language planning in the early decades of the Soviet Union and the contributions of the Prague school. The modern current of research on language planning, however, emerged from American sociolinguistics of the 1950s. One of its founding figures was Einar Haugen, who developed the notion of language planning in his studies of how the modern standard varieties of Norwegian were created (Haugen 1959, 1966, 1968). After an initial, concrete definition of language planning as the “preparing of a normative grammar, orthography and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community” (Haugen 1959: 8), he proceeded to a more abstract view – language planning as the evaluation of linguistic change (Haugen 1966). Thus language planning research, he argued, should study the agents and stakeholders involved in the process, and describe planning as a decision process in the sense of decision theory (Haugen 1966: 52–53).

In Haugen’s (1983: 270) model, the language planning process consists of four stages: “(1) selection of norm; (2) codification of norm; (3) implementation of function; and (4) elaboration of function”. It has been used widely since its publication in 1966. Thereafter, language planning research was organized around a series of international congresses (see Fishman, Ferguson and Das Gupta 1968; Rubin and Jernudd 1971; Rubin et al. 1977; Cobarrubias and Fishman 1983; Laforge 1987), research projects, and publication outlets. Generally, research focussed on developing countries, but developed ones were not ignored. Thus, cases like Quebec French and Catalan, and the language policy of France, were discussed within this framework. Language planning theory tended to focus on top-down approaches, such as the actions of governments, or specialists, which were seen as rational actors.

The distinction between corpus planning and status planning was introduced by Kloss (1969: 81). Status planning means the allocation of social functions to languages (e.g., through laws and regulations prescribing the use of a particular language), whereas corpus planning is concerned with the language’s form and encompasses, for example, orthography, normative grammar and the creation of new terms. These two concepts are used by most researchers, although some have defined additional objectives of language planning, such as acquisition planning (Cooper 1989: 33) or prestige planning (Haarmann 1986: 86–87). Fishman (2004) discusses the occasionally complicated interrelationship between the two aspects of language planning and the significance of puristic and non-puristic orientations for language planning in societies.

2.2 Language Management Theory (LMT)

As a reaction to the focus of Language Planning Theory on top-down-approaches, Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) developed the framework of Language Management Theory (see also Nekvapil 2006: 96). Rather than considering primarily the actions of governments or other agencies, they focused on the interests of language users, that is, they favoured a bottom-up approach. In their theory, Language Management involves reactions to language problems and occurs in cycles. These (1) start with the occurrence of a problem (deviation from a norm etc.); this deviation may then be (2) noted by the participants and (3) evaluated; if it is evaluated negatively, (4) a correction measure may be designed, which may then (5) be implemented. Thereafter, a new language management cycle may start. Similar cycles may exist between the discourse level, where problems surface, and the level of organizations, authorities etc. (the macro level).

This theory is applied both to actions on discourse, such as self-corrections by speakers, referred to as “simple management” and to language management on an organized level, such as occurs in companies and other organizations, and through state policies (“organized management”). However, the theory stresses the need for connecting organized management to the discourse level: “LMT requires organized management to rely on simple management as much as possible” (Nekvapil 2006: 96). Thus, seen from an LMT perspective, problems may be explained either by the omission of stages from the management cycle or by a failure to connect the level of organized management to the micro level of speakers and participants (e.g., Giger and Sloboda 2008: 330–332).

Language Management Theory has been applied to various problems in diverse settings. These have included the design of policy on linguistic landscapes, or even the language policy of states such as Belarus (Giger and Sloboda 2008), as well as the management of language in multinational companies (e.g., Nekvapil and Nekula 2006; Nekvapil and Sherman 2009a,b; Engelhardt 2011). Studies of language management in corporate environments often rely on participant observation and analyses of transcribed or recorded interactions, and contrast real language behaviour with official language policies. As the volume edited by Nekvapil and Sherman (2009c) demonstrates, the framework has been applied by researchers in several different parts of the world, albeit chiefly in those where its founders had been active (Japan, Australia, Central Europe).

2.3 Reversing Language Shift

The notion of Reversing Language Shift (RLS) was introduced by Fishman (1991; see also his later edited volume, Fishman 2001) as a result of his earlier research on heritage language maintenance by immigrant communities (Fishman 1991: xi–xiii). The languages discussed by Fishman were endangered to widely differing degrees.

To measure the level of threat they faced, or the success of RLS, he introduced the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (Fishman 1991: 87–109), an implicational scale consisting of eight levels. Fishman also used it to indicate possible policies to promote RLS and to compare the situations of different language communities. His conclusion was that, among the speech communities discussed in his book, many languages had serious problems, while three emerge as “success stories”, namely Modern Hebrew, Quebec French, and (behind these two) Catalan.

Fishman’s concept focuses primarily on language survival in family contexts and other rather intimate settings; he describes situations in which all members of a linguistic minority require knowledge of the majority language to operate in wider society in positive terms (Fishman 1991: 84–86). Somewhat paradoxically, however, the “success stories of Reversing Language Shift”, like Quebec or Catalonia, are communities which attempt to resist this obligatory bilingualism, aiming instead at the creation of a monolingual society (Myhill 1999: 39). Societal bilingualism was definitely rejected by many in Quebec as early as the 1960s (Corbeil 1980: 35–36), and Fishman’s acceptance of it was also criticized by the Catalan authors Boix i Fuster and Vila i Moreno (1998: 314). The GIDS would, for example, have been unable to indicate the status problems of French in Quebec because the intergenerational passing on of French was not in danger, even though French speakers had reasons to feel disadvantaged (Bourhis 2001: 111). In fact, Quebec language policy was based on the framework of “group vitality” or “ethnolinguistic vitality” (Bourhis 2012: 26) as first set out in Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977). This model takes into account different factors (demography, institutional support and control, and status). It was originally designed with regard to Quebec language policy problems (Bourhis 2001: 111) and is still applied in that setting (e.g., Bourhis 2012).

2.4 Planning, policy, management?

Use of the terms *language planning*, *language policy* and *language management* is somewhat variable. Sometimes an author changes the definition of a term (e.g., from Spolsky 2004 to Spolsky 2009 with regard to *language management*), or the same research object may be called *language management* by one scholar and *language policy* by another. Today the most frequently used term seems to be *language policy*, with *language planning* a close second. Often they are joined in one noun phrase (*language planning and policy*). *Language planning* is often associated with the school of language planning research (see Section 2.1), while *language management* is used, although not exclusively, by researchers from the school of Language Management Theory (see Section 2.2); other authors use this term to designate decisions about language taken by corporate management (e.g., Feely and Harzing 2003; Gundersen 2009). In this case, *management* is used in the sense of *business administration*. The obvious consequence is that for each publication the reader must check how these terms are defined by its author.

In Quebec, French-language authors coined the term *aménagement linguistique* as a preferred alternative to *planification linguistique* (language planning), which in their view suggested a rigid top-down approach. *Aménagement linguistique*, by contrast, was oriented towards an evolution which involved society (Corbeil 1980: 9). Jernudd and Neustupný's proposal of the English term *language management* (1987: 71) derived explicitly from this use of *aménagement linguistique* in Quebec; they too contrasted it with *language planning*, which they regarded as representative of the top-down approach focusing on state agency typical of language planning research until the 1970s.

In Catalan, *normalització lingüística*, or 'linguistic normalization', is commonly used as a term for policies intended to reverse language shift or to put one language on an equal footing with others (assuring equal status to previously repressed languages), or to reclaim a language's lost social functions and gain new functions for it. In this use, which extends to other Spanish regional languages and carries over to English language publications, it is an aspect of status planning (Boix i Fuster and Vila i Moreno 1998: 317; Vernet and Pons 2011: 58; Cobarrubias and Garmendia Lasa 1987: 148–149).

2.5 Terminology and language planning

Creating and managing terminology obviously shares some objectives with language planning in general. Yet researchers in the two fields have had relatively little contact with each other. In his 1983 report on the state of the field, Jernudd (1983: 350), despite spending considerable time identifying various terminology organizations as examples of corpus planning, stated that “[t]he lack of mutual reference between the term-planning network today and [language planning research] is striking (as any bibliography shows)”. Nearly twenty years later, Antia (2000: xv) came to the same conclusion: “[t]erminology and LP, as academic communities, have had precious little contact between them”. Bibliographies of recent terminological works (e.g., Ballarin 2009) continue to confirm Jernudd's statement.

The central and most important terminological theory is the General Theory of Terminology. Other theories proposed over the last few decades have generally defined themselves against the background of this theory, complementing rather than fully replacing it (L'Homme, Heid, and Sager 2003). The General Theory of Terminology is typically sympathetic to internationalisms and borrowings. In order to facilitate international communication, its proponents have explicitly recommended that terms in different languages should be similar, as in the following citation from UNESCO's Terminology Manual: “In general preference should be given to international forms. Having the choice between two synonyms for designating a concept, the one which appears in the same or a similar form in other languages is to be preferred” (Felber 1984: 176). However, this is a rather extreme point of view. For instance, the current ISO norm on “terminology work” – while generally accepting

borrowings – recommends a preference for native language expressions, which “should be given preference over direct loans” (ISO 704:2009: Section 7.4.2.8.).

Apart from practical considerations, a terminology of their own also has important symbolic value for languages aspiring to expand their social functions, as Cabré (2004: 191) and others have stressed. The socioterminological school, active primarily in France and other French-speaking polities like Quebec, studies the relationship between terminologies and their social environments. It has produced many analyses of how proposed terminologies in specific fields of activity have been implemented (cf. the bibliographies in Gaudin 2003 and Ballarin 2009). Other authors from Quebec have devised theories of terminology planning (*aménagement terminologique*, Auger 1987) and approaches to evaluating the implantation of newly coined terminology (*terminométrie*, e.g., Quirion 2003, 2011).

Term formation, as defined by Sager (1990: 80), can be primary (a term is created simultaneously with the concept for which it stands) or secondary (a term is created in order to correspond to an already existing term in another – or the same – language). Term creation with the objective of replacing borrowed terms – or of preventing borrowing – is thus, by definition, secondary term formation. In evaluating terminologies that result from secondary term formation in this sense, the concept of terminological dependency advanced by Humbley and García Palacios (2012) may be helpful. Such dependency arises when, in a certain subject field, not only individual terms but whole terminological structures are transferred without consideration of other possible options offered by the receiving language (Humbley and García Palacios 2012: 79). These two authors focus on research in the natural sciences since strict terminological dependency (on English) is especially problematic there. However, the concept could be applied to any subject field; in particular, the language of economics and business is also notorious for its dependency on English.

2.6 Purism and language planning

Linguistic purism, that is, the attempt to “purify” a language of foreign or otherwise unwanted elements and replace them with autochthonous or superior ones, has been present in many linguistic communities. It is true that for many strands of linguistics it has been less an object of study than a phenomenon to be violently opposed (see Thomas 1991: 3). Yet puristic activities are actually similar to language planning measures motivated by other objectives and can be described in similar terms and using similar frameworks. Thus, in its structure, Thomas’s (1991: 84–99) model of the stages of puristic intervention resembles models of the language planning process, in particular that of Language Management Theory (see Section 2.2), and it is even cyclical, like the latter model. Generally, Thomas advocates prudent integration of puristic motivations, tempered by rationality and acceptance of compromise, into language planning as a whole. Similarly, Neustupný (1989: 213), one of the founders of Language Management Theory, argued that it is only the way speakers

communicate about specific language corrections, and their ideological motivations, that can be properly called puristic; the language correction process itself follows the same model which in later publications was to be called Language Management (see Section 2.2). Thomas (1991: 190–194) also provides questionnaires for assessing and comparing instances of linguistic purism; these questionnaires have been applied, and tested, in a recent comparative study of linguistic purism in France and Quebec (Walsh 2016). Besides proposing some modifications of Thomas' evaluation tools, Walsh finds that French purism is more focused on quality of language (internal purism) and more tolerant of borrowings than purism in Quebec, which is more focused on defence against foreign influence (external purism) (e.g. Walsh 2016: 233–234; see also Section 3.2.2).

All languages, according to Thomas (1991: 53), fulfil three social functions: a solidarity function (“to make possible communication between members of the group”), a separating function (“to exclude non-members of the group from communication”), and a prestige function. In a similar vein, but with different terminology, Garvin (1974: 72–73) distinguishes three symbolic functions of standard languages; all three are significant for purism. Generally, puristic motivations have been present in many language planning exercises, as the pertinent literature shows (see Section 2.1, and especially Fishman 2004), and this contribution will focus on such efforts.

In the business domain, purism (here mostly in the sense of opposition to the use of foreign or borrowed terms) is often justified by the need to secure the right to use a certain language at work, or to be informed, as a consumer or investor, in one's own language. The latter concern is addressed, for example, by Olbrich and Fuhrmann (2011). They argue that excessive use of English terms in the annual reports of German companies, which are required to be written in German, renders them almost unreadable and tends to obscure their meaning. Similarly, France's *Loi Bas-Lauriol* (1975) used consumer protection legislation to enforce its regulations restricting the use of foreign terms (see Section 3.3.1). The *Loi Toubon* of 1994, which replaced it, refers both to consumer protection and to the protection of workers' rights (Gaudin 2003: 192). Finally, Quebec authors (e.g., Maurais 1993: 115) stress that developing French terminology is the prerequisite for making French the language of the workplace.

3 Case studies in puristic language planning

3.1 Catalan in Spain

3.1.1 General situation and status planning measures

Despite lacking official status, Catalan was the language of nearly all inhabitants of Catalonia up to and beyond the beginning of the 20th century (Vila i Moreno 2008:

159–160). However, the dictatorial Franco regime (1939–1975) vigorously promoted Castilian Spanish as Spain’s sole language while repressing regional languages. At the same time, large-scale immigration from other parts of the country brought massive numbers of Castilian speakers to Catalonia. By the dictatorship’s end, Catalan had been excluded from official activities, the vast majority of Catalan speakers were literate in Castilian and contact with Castilian was eroding language loyalty. In in-group interactions, admittedly, Catalan speakers still clung to their language (Vila i Moreno 2008: 160–161). Moreover, even though Catalan was excluded from modern media, and the reproduction of literacy in Catalan was a minority activity, a certain level of cultural production existed; Catalan was also used in the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, in some places a language shift away from Catalan was underway (Vila i Moreno 2008: 162).

Contemporary Catalan language policy was born during the transition to democracy following Franco’s death in 1975. The new democratic Spanish constitution (1978) may have confirmed Castilian as the only official language of the state (all citizens “have the duty to know it and the right to use it”). But it also allowed other languages to enjoy official status in the self-governing regions set up under it (Vila i Moreno 2008: 163). Accordingly, Catalonia’s Statute of Autonomy (1979) made Catalan co-official with Castilian.

Initially language policy in Catalonia, as set out in the 1983 “Linguistic Normalization Act”, focused on language status in official settings and in education (Vila i Moreno 2008: 164; Branchadell and Melià 2011: 202). Catalan language broadcasting was instituted by the regional government during the 1980s; and Castilian was progressively replaced by Catalan as the language of education (Vila i Moreno 2008: 165). In the 1990s, policy started to focus more on the goal of promoting the “social usage” of Catalan. A Consumer’s Statute established the right to receive information on goods or proposed contracts in Catalan, and required companies active in Catalonia to be capable of communicating with customers in either of Catalonia’s official languages; however, regulations necessary for the Statute’s implementation were not passed (Branchadell and Melià 2011: 204–205). In 1998, the Linguistic Normalization Act was replaced by a new Language Policy Act, which made Catalan the working language of public institutions and sought generally to promote its use. Nonetheless, the act specified very few types of situations in which the use of Catalan was to be obligatory.

Finally, a new Statute of Autonomy was adopted in 2006. It establishes the duty of citizens to know Catalan, as well as the right of consumers to be served in the official language of their choice, rather than merely to be understood in both Catalan and Castilian as was previously the case (Vila i Moreno 2008: 165; Branchadell and Melià 2011: 205–206). In this connection, Vila i Moreno (2008: 169–171) mentions some general problems. The Spanish state is only mildly interested in promoting Catalan; laws on free domestic trade render language requirements (e.g., the requirement to label products in Catalan) illegal, while the introduction of private

TV stations broadcasting in Castilian created strong competition for Catalan public TV, reducing the latter's *de facto* audience to Catalan native speakers.

Moreover, Catalonia's linguistic legislation, like that of other autonomous regions, has often been contested by the Spanish central government and sometimes vetoed by the Spanish Constitutional Court (see the detailed discussion in Cobarrubias and Garmendia Lasa 1987). In particular, in 2010 the Court declared unconstitutional several provisions of the revised Statute of Autonomy agreed by the Spanish Parliament four years earlier (Branchadell and Melià 2011: 207). One result was again to weaken the legal status of Catalan (Quirion and Freixa 2013: 651).

Authors differ as to whether the Catalan story represents a success for language policy. Vila i Moreno (2008), along with Branchadell and Melià (2011), is sceptical. These authors stress that, while the situation of Catalan has improved, it remains to some extent precarious (Vila i Moreno 2008: 178); Branchadell and Melià (2011) are especially sceptical about the effect of language policy in the business sphere. By contrast, a survey of language use in Catalan businesses carried out in 2009 (ELAN.cat) produced rather positive results (Marí 2009; Hagen 2010; Strubell and Marí 2013). Over 90% of the businesses surveyed reported that their staff could handle all situations in Catalan (Hagen 2010: 30), and "there is a very positive tendency for Catalan companies to try to respond to customers in their own language" (Hagen 2010: 38). Interestingly, Marí's report of the ELAN.cat study (2009: 110) is the only one to mention regional linguistic legislation (specifically, the 2006 Statute of Autonomy), and then only briefly. Yet the study itself was meant to inform language policy decisions, and language policy was obviously pertinent to the question of language use (e.g., as mentioned above, businesses are required by law to be able to serve customers in Catalan).

Finally, it must be taken into account that Catalan is spoken not just in Catalonia but also in other autonomous regions, especially the Balearic Islands and Valencia. Although these have their own language policies, both the status of Catalan and its promotion are generally much weaker outside Catalonia itself (for details see Vila i Moreno 2008: 166–168; Branchadell and Melià 2011: 208–218).

3.1.2 Corpus planning

Around the beginning of the 20th century, increased use of Catalan, for example in the press, together with the emergence of a bourgeoisie which identified with Catalan national feeling, made a modern standard language desirable (Argenter 2002: 13–14). It was in this context that modern corpus planning emerged in the region. Following an initial congress on Catalan, the language academy *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (IEC) was founded in 1907. By 1932, under the direction of Pompeu Fabra, it had produced a standard orthography, a normative grammar and a comprehensive dictionary. The resulting modern Catalan language norm was a compromise

between different local dialects, and rather pluralistic in nature (Argenter 2002: 14–15; for an extreme example see Boix i Fuster and Vila i Moreno 1998: 299). The early language planners were interested in specialized and technical vocabulary; Fabra himself was an engineer. That was reflected in their dictionaries and in the several terminological collections published by the IEC (Cabr  1989: 545). This period of intense activity was brought to an end by Franco’s dictatorship, under which Catalan language planning was limited to the private sphere and often clandestine.

Following the transition to democracy, however, the IEC was able to resume its former role, and in 1985 the Catalan Terminology Center (TERMCAT) was founded with the objective of developing and diffusing Catalan terminology for different special languages. TERMCAT has produced several terminological dictionaries for different subfields of economics and business, as have other publishers. A practical application of terminology planning and creation can be seen in the output of public radio and television. This aims, in part, to familiarize the audience with normalized Catalan economic terminology, and the journalists involved are required to use Catalan terms unless there are good reasons not to (cf. Casals i Martorell 2008 on radio as well as Massanell i Messalles and Casals i Martorell 2008 on television).

Catalan economic terminology is, of course, influenced by English models as the concepts underlying economic terms are often developed in the English-speaking world. But, because economic terms often enter discourse in Catalonia via Spanish, that language also has an impact. The Catalan terms created may thus be influenced by Spanish translations of English terms (Silvestre 2008). Silvestre also discusses several key microeconomic terms whose English basis is metaphorical, and notes that the underlying metaphor will not always work in Catalan, one example being the negatively-loaded English term “lemon market”. Lemons having no negative connotation in Catalan, Silvestre suggests replacing them with radishes (*raves*), which do.

3.2 Quebec

3.2.1 General situation and status planning measures

Quebec is frequently seen as an example of successful language policy. Fishman (1991: 287) describes it as a “success story” of Reversing Language Shift (see also Bourhis 2001), while proponents of comparable movements in other regions draw inspiration from Quebec’s perceived successes (e.g., on Catalan: Maurais 1993; Cabr  2004; Budin 2010). The starting point, in the 1960s, was not promising. Despite the province’s large majority of Francophones, English had come to dominate its business sector. Commercial signs were predominantly in English, at least in Montreal (Bourhis and Landry 2002: 108). Due to Quebec’s integration into the Canadian economy, few

large firms were owned by Quebec Francophones; in many, the language of work was English. Anglophones generally held posts higher up the corporate hierarchy, Francophones those further down (Corbeil 1980: 53). The former, even if monolingual, earned a higher average income than the latter, even if these were bilingual (Laur 2012: 89). There was also concern that new immigrants might prefer to assimilate to English rather than French.

From the late 1960s onwards, a series of language laws were enacted by successive provincial governments. The 1969 Law for the promotion of the French language in Quebec (*Loi pour promouvoir la langue française au Québec*) charged the French Language Office (*Office de la langue française*) with elaborating proposals for making French the language of work in private enterprises and public administration. The 1974 Official Language Law declared French the official language of Quebec and made its use obligatory on commercial signs, although bilingual French/English signs were still permitted. In 1977, the French Language Charter (*Charte de la langue française*), came into force. Also known as Bill 101 (*Loi 101*), it remains the most important and effective legislative measure in this area (Bourhis 2012: 27). As a result, most of the literature refers to Bill 101 and regards the various other language laws and regulations enacted subsequently as amendments to it.

Besides declaring French the only official language of Quebec (Corbeil 1980: 100; Bourhis and Landry 2002: 109), Bill 101 had far-reaching objectives in the fields of education, business, the linguistic landscape and the workplace. Future immigrants to Quebec, whether from outside or inside Canada, wishing to make use of public schooling were required to send their children to French-language schools. Access to English-language public schooling was thus effectively restricted to the indigenous Anglophone minority (English-language private schools, though, were exempt from these restrictions). All residents were given the right to be served in French by the public administration and by firms active in Quebec. Information about products and labelling was to be in French, commercial signs and notices exclusively so (Corbeil 1980: 100–102; Bourhis 2012: 27–28). According to Bourhis and Landry (2002: 109), these measures concerning the linguistic landscape had a high symbolic value for Francophones, who saw them as an assurance of their future as a linguistic group. By contrast, Anglophones, for whom the rules on linguistic landscape were also symbolically important, felt threatened. In the following years, the rules on commercial signs were contested in courts. That led to new laws permitting, first, signs in other languages inside stores and, later, additional signs in other languages, on condition that the French-language sign had greater visual impact (Bourhis and Landry 2002: 110–111, 118–119).

As far as the workplace was concerned, Bill 101 gave employees the right to work in French and made it illegal to terminate a contract because the worker was a Francophone monolingual. All firms in Quebec with 50 or more employees were required to implement a policy of “frenchification” (*francisation*) on the company level. This involved establishing a frenchification committee (*comité de francisation*)

and obtaining a certificate (*certificat de francisation*) from the French Language Office (Corbeil 1980: 103,110; Guillotte 1987; Bourhis 2012: 27). As regards immigration to Quebec, the provincial government was able to reclaim some decision-making powers from the central authorities, for example, the ability to influence the selection of potential immigrants and thereby to favour their integration into the French language community. (Given the low birth rates of native Quebecers, immigrants' decisions to integrate with a particular language community will significantly affect the communities' relative sizes).

During the last few decades, the status planning measures adopted in Quebec have largely produced the desired results. It is true that in Montreal the percentage of Francophones has decreased slightly because allophone immigrants – that is, those who speak neither English nor French – have been settling there, while Francophones often outmigrate to the suburbs (Bourhis 2012: 30). However, the proportion of mother-tongue French speakers in Quebec as a whole has remained stable around 80%. Second, whereas in 1971 only 52% of Francophone workers reported to be working mostly in French, in 2001 and 2006 the figure was above 95%. Among Allophones and Anglophones, the increase in the use of French at work was also impressive (Bourhis 2012: 42). Third, a new income hierarchy has emerged: in 2000, Francophone bilinguals were the group with the highest average income, followed by Anglophone bilinguals and Anglo- or Francophone monolinguals, the last two groups having almost the same average income (Laur 2012: 89). Fourth, the percentage of Francophones in administrative and senior posts has increased massively, as has ownership of firms by Quebec Francophones. Conversely, ownership by Canadian Anglophones and by foreign nationals has decreased (Bourhis 2012: 39). Finally, whereas most allophone immigrants used to adopt English as their new main language, French is now about equally as attractive as English. In fact, faced by linguistic conflict, many Allophones opt for French-English bilingualism (Bourhis 2012: 32, 35).

However, to a great extent the improvement in Francophones' status has resulted from large-scale migration of Anglophones out of Quebec, and from the relocation and reorganization of business firms, a number of which have concentrated their Canada-wide French-language activities in Quebec. As a result, the language situation is moving towards territorialization, with French becoming stronger in Quebec but more vulnerable elsewhere in Canada (see Landry 2012). Several authors have voiced concern that the harsh treatment of Quebec's Anglophone minority could have negative repercussions on the standing of Canada's Francophones outside the province (Fishman 1991: 84; Bourhis 2012: 45). On the basis of the experience of Canada/Quebec (and Belgium), Nelde, Labrie, and Williams (1992: 403–404) were cautiously optimistic that linguistic territorialization could attenuate ethnolinguistic tensions under certain conditions: that it was limited in scope; that it was accompanied by measures to support minorities and exclude linguistic discrimination; and that each group was able to form its own networks. Yet, despite all the successes

of pro-French language status planning during the last few decades, Quebec's Francophones continue to view themselves in many ways as a threatened minority (Laur 2012: 78).

3.2.2 Corpus planning

Even before the beginning of systematic language policy in the 1970s, Quebec had a tradition of language cultivation, primarily with regard to general language, which focused mainly on language correctness and was preoccupied with frequent borrowings from English (Ballarin 2009: 83–84, 196–198). In order to enable workers to use French in the workplace, several terminology projects were launched in the 1960s, for example, in the (state-owned) electricity company Hydro-Québec (Ballarin 2009: 114, 162). In the business sector, the Order of Chartered Accountants, which had earlier used English as its main working language in Quebec, started work on French-language accountancy terminology by founding a terminology committee in 1965 (Ballarin 2009: 115). From the 1970s on, terminology publications appeared for a number of domains, usually from the *Office de la langue française* and mostly English-French term lists with or without accompanying definitions (e.g., de Villers 1980). By the 1990s, most domains of management had French terminology at their disposal (de Villers 1994). Quebec terminologists were also leading figures in the development of computer-based terminology. One of the first important termbanks in the francophone world (originally called *TERMIUM*; the current version is *TERMIUM Plus*) was initiated at the *Université de Montréal* at the end of the 1960s and acquired by the Canadian government's Translation Bureau in 1975 (Ballarin 2009: 116).

New terminology was created according to users' perceived needs and social domains, an approach referred to as “fire brigade work” (*travail de pompier*) by critical authors who prefer systematic methods. In response, the official terminologists went so far as to publish a methodology of this “ad hoc terminology” (*méthodologie de terminologie ponctuelle*) (Ballarin 2009: 134–135). Auger (1987) presented a systematic programme of terminology management in the context of “frenchification”, which defines certain stages (here also called “fundamental functions”) similar to those characteristic of other language planning models (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2).

Collaboration with other francophone countries has been important for corpus planning in Quebec, with several agreements reached early in the process. Depecker (2001: 460–463) notes the involvement in French terminology planning of partners from Quebec. His analysis shows that their attitudes were especially motivated by opposition to English elements; in some cases they rejected proposals made by French terminological committees because they were too similar to corresponding English terms (cf. Depecker 2001: 465–466, who cites the examples *discompte/discount* and *zappage/zapping*). In a number of cases, neologisms coined in Quebec

were accepted in France, and several French committees were created on Quebec lines (Depecker 2001: 461). The feminization of professional titles provides one notable instance of French corpus planning lagging far behind Quebec. There the idea was advanced in 1978, with the first official recommendations being published in the *Gazette officielle du Québec* a year later: in France it was not officially endorsed until 1998 (Ballarin 2009: 143–146).

3.3 France

3.3.1 Status planning measures

In France, the *Loi Bas-Lauriol* of 1975 was an important early piece of language legislation in the domain of language status (Hagège 1996: 150). It declared the use of French (possibly together with translations into other languages) obligatory in several domains such as advertising. Breaches were punishable, although only within the limits of a law on consumer protection (Humbley 1997: 264 and Gaudin 1993: 60). The same law was also connected to the corpus planning measures (i.e., the creation of French terminology) described below, insofar as using a foreign language expression was forbidden if there was an officially approved French term (Depecker 2001: 345). However, cases brought under the law were more often concerned with language status problems than with issues of corpus planning or terminology (Humbley 1997: 264). In the 1990s, very few resulted in convictions, so the law was seen as ineffective (Hagège 1996: 150; Gaudin 2003: 191).

In 1992, French was declared “the language of the Republic” by a constitutional amendment. While the change may be seen as essentially a sign of insecurity about the language’s status (Hagège 1996: 151), it was to have real significance, in that it prevented France from ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Decision of the Constitutional Council in 1999, see Oakes 2011: 71–72). A further constitutional amendment, aimed at permitting ratification of the Charter, was rejected by the French Senate in 2015. Given that, and the perception that the *Loi Bas-Lauriol* was ineffective, a new language law was passed in 1994, named the *Loi Toubon* after the then minister of Culture (or, jokingly, as the *Loi Allgood*).

The scope of this measure was greatly reduced by a subsequent decision of the Constitutional Council, which declared several provisions unconstitutional for being incompatible with freedom of expression. Specifically, the Council decided that private individuals or enterprises could not be obliged to use state-approved expressions, so these official terms are now obligatory only for state authorities and agencies (see Section 3.3.2). Furthermore, the law has loopholes and the agency in charge of enforcing it – the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* – is rather weak. As a result, state intervention is largely a matter of persuasion rather than coercion (Gaudin 2003: 190; Saulière 2014). In fact, Saulière

(2014: 225) concludes that all multinational companies operating in France are effectively in breach of the *Loi Toubon*.

3.3.2 Corpus planning measures: Terminology planning

Terminology planning on a broader scale began after the Second World War. In 1952, first initiatives were taken by the Academy of Sciences, and in 1954 a Committee for French technical terms was founded with government support (Humbley 1997: 263). The *Haut Comité pour la défense et l'expansion de la langue française*, reporting directly to the Prime Minister, was founded in 1966 (Depecker 2001: 21), and four years later the then Prime Minister set up a system of terminology committees in different branches of the administration (the so-called *commissions ministérielles de terminologie*). A decree of 1972 instructed them to publish their decisions in official form (*arrêtés terminologiques*; Depecker 2001: 26–27). The *Loi Bas-Lauriol* of 1975 had relatively little effect in this area for the reasons outlined above, and because the majority of prosecutions under it were concerned with language status questions (e.g., whole texts written in English) rather than with specific terms (Humbley 1997: 264).

Subsequently, the Constitutional Council's weakening of the *Loi Toubon* resulted in a partial reversal of the previous policy on loanwords, in that it made officially approved terms obligatory only for public organizations. Elsewhere, the state could resort only to persuasive measures and to setting examples. It is, however, not the case that the obligation to use French was overturned; the problem now is to determine whether or not an expression is to be deemed "French". This question has to be settled by the courts on a case-by-case basis, so that there is now a degree of legal uncertainty (Gaudin 2003: 190–193, 195). Terminology development and publication continues in specialized state committees, although it is now organized slightly differently. A general committee (*Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie*) coordinates the planning activities of specialized committees within the different ministries, as well as discussing their proposals with the *Académie française* and the responsible minister. Finally, approved terms and neologisms are published in both the *Journal officiel* and the general committee's yearly reports (Humbley 1997: 265; *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* 2013: VIII).

The terminological committees' working practices under the provisions of the *Loi Bas-Lauriol* (before 1994) are described in Humbley (1997) and more extensively in Depecker (2001), which includes comprehensive information on the committees, their fields of activity, the term lists produced and the terms themselves. Their approach can be characterized as *terminologie ponctuelle*, or ad hoc terminology work, like that done in Quebec (cf. Section 3.2.2, also Humbley 1997: 265). The present committees' practices are also described in the general committee's reports (*Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* 2013).

Like many other fields of activity, economics and business has its own terminology committee (Depecker 2001: 112–146; *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* 2013: V). A fairly recent list of officially approved neologisms in this domain was published by the *Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie* (2012). Under the auspices of the *Délégation générale*, an association known as *Actions pour promouvoir le français des affaires* promotes French terminology, awards prizes (such as the *Mot d'Or*) to neologisms it considers particularly well-chosen and so on.

Some neologisms have been successful (see, e.g., the list in Depecker 2001: 493–494), while others have not. *Mercatique* (marketing), although officially recommended since 1987, has been much disputed and does not appear to have caught on (Depecker 2001: 135, 472, 494; cf. also Rochard 2004: 188–189; see also Section 4); for example, it is almost absent from a corpus of the journal *Revue Française du Marketing* covering the years 1960–2009 (Göke 2009: 159). Yet *mercatique* still serves as the basis of new proposals such as the officially recommended neologism *neuromercatique* for neuromarketing (*Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* 2013: XXXI–XXXII: cf. also recommended collocations with *mercatique* [*Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie* 2012: 161–168]). Among all those fields for which officially recommended neologisms exist, most authors single out information processing as one where puristic neologizing has been particularly successful (Depecker 2001: 541; Humbley 1997: 90–92). According to Humbley this is due, *inter alia*, to major manufacturing companies' becoming actively involved in the process.

4 Evaluation

As we have seen, status planning measures in Quebec have by and large been quite successful, even if Francophones retain their self-perception as an endangered minority (see Section 3.2.1). In the last few years, however, various studies of Quebec language policy have voiced concerns over the status of the province's Anglophone minority. At the same time, the policy is perceived extremely negatively by US American stakeholders, as a poll carried out in 1999 showed (Bourhis and Landry 2002: 123–124). There is also concern about the social and economic effects of massive outmigration and the brain-drain of Anglophones; a very high proportion of English-speaking university graduates leave the province to find work (Bourhis 2012: 38–39). Another focus of current research is the relationship of immigrants to French.

For Catalonia, the literature focuses partly on legal problems stemming from the conflicts between regional institutions and Spanish ones such as the central government and the Constitutional Court. As for language usage in the business sphere, some recent studies paint a rather negative picture, while others are quite optimistic (although the latter are primarily based on respondents' self-reported language ability). Studies of the use of officially recommended Catalan economic terms on

Catalan public television and radio (see Section 3.1.2) have shown that these media (with few exceptions) use the official terminology – as they are, of course, required to do.

As to the effectiveness of French language status legislation, specifically the *Loi Toubon*, Saulière (2014) arrives at a rather sceptical assessment. The responsible state agency is poorly staffed and must thus rely on allies such as trade unions; its ideology, masked by unconvincing, supposedly practical arguments, often meets with resistance and non-cooperation from business managers. Owing to its various loopholes, the law is poorly observed; effectively, it is unenforceable. As an alternative, Saulière recommends dealing with language problems in the business environment by applying the corporate social responsibility approach. Stakeholders, such as trade unions or managers, should discuss language problems and seek solutions independently of ideological positions, while the state and its institutions limit themselves to the role of mediator and arbiter.

It is easy enough to find overviews of officially recommended neologisms, but much more difficult to tell whether the recommendations were successful or not. The success or otherwise of recommended terminology in France is often assessed by analysing commercial dictionaries, the assumption being that the presence of neologisms in such dictionaries provides direct and indirect evidence about their actual usage. This approach is used by Depecker (2001: 471–544, with economic terms listed specifically on pages 493–495). Humbley (2008) discusses, much more cautiously, its potential for analysing Anglicisms. The dictionary method allows many terms to be analysed without excessive effort. However, it has the drawback that linguists must rely on the possibly idiosyncratic decisions of dictionary compilers. Depecker therefore complemented his analyses of dictionaries with studies based on polls of specialists in the respective fields. Finally, Quirion, who studied terminology implantation in Quebec, argues that, since terminology management is primarily aimed at institutional communication, the implantation of terminological recommendations should be studied using corpora of such communication (including that originating from businesses). These should be selected according to a rigorous research protocol, preferably on a sound statistical basis, in order to enable quantitative research, or terminometry (Quirion 2003, 2011).

Terminology's success can be studied for each term independently. Thus Rochard (2004) compares the success of the two officially recommended French terms *mercatique* (marketing) and *échange* (swap, as in 'interest rate swap' etc.). He finds that usage of the former is more or less limited to educational institutions dependent on the state, whereas the latter is also used by independent businesses and stands a fair chance of establishing itself in French financial language. *Mercatique* probably failed to establish itself because it is a new and artificial term, based on the etymology it shares with *marketing*. A further problem is that *mercatique* is defined in a more restrictive way than *marketing*, so is not synonymous with the borrowing it was

intended to replace. *Échange*, by contrast, is a word frequent in the common language, and similarity to the English term was not a consideration in its selection. It is thus immediately comprehensible and attractive for translators. *Échange* also has better prospects of becoming established because the state (to be precise, the Ministry of Finance) directly influences financial markets through its management of public debt, whereas such direct state influence is lacking in the domain of marketing (Rochard 2004: 189–191). Generally, Rochard recommends a pragmatic approach to replacing Anglicisms and expresses a preference for naturally sounding words over clearly artificial neologisms. Similarly, Gaudin (2003: 200–204) is critical of the output of terminological committees, preferring a bottom-up approach which relies on neologisms being created and spread by language users themselves.

5 Conclusion

Language planning has often been discussed rather sceptically, but it can be successful. If it is, it can have a very broad impact on society, including important repercussions on language use in the business sphere. The examples described above show that backing by a state or a polity such as a self-governing region or province can be important for the success of language planning measures. However, these are often the subject of political conflict or may be challenged in court, and the resulting rulings may, in turn, influence further policy. The involvement of stakeholders is also a crucial factor for the success of language planning: for example, the active involvement of manufacturers has helped to create and implement an autochthonous/purist terminology in France's IT sector (Humbley 2008: 92). On the other hand, language status legislation that is not accepted by key social actors will be unable to shape language use in the business sphere (Saulière 2014). Consequently, in the last few years several authors have recommended bottom-up approaches in language planning, which need to involve language users and their needs (Gaudin 2003; Rochard 2004; Saulière 2014).

Besides language planning measures motivated by national language purism, there are other cases where language, especially in the business domain, is standardized in one form or another. Some examples are internationally agreed standards for accounting (see Chapter 21 of this handbook) or other terminology regulated by international organizations, such as the Combined Nomenclature used in the European Union. Invested with special powers by their organizations, terminology professionals may collaborate or negotiate with national language agencies. Such processes have remained outside the scope of this chapter because they are, as a rule, not motivated by purist concerns. Yet they certainly constitute a promising line of inquiry in their own right.

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Regina Göke

20 The language of marketing

1. Introduction
2. Methods and materials
3. Historical development of marketing terminology
4. The most important trends in marketing language
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Marketing has become an established field within business administration research and practice in no more than a century. From its origins in the US-American culture, it has been transferred to the whole world, especially to countries with a market economy (Holden 1998: 86; Usunier 1992: 26). Today, marketing is a key issue of business administration, which is defined by the *American Marketing Association* (AMA) as “the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”. From this broad definition, it becomes evident why marketing plays such an important role within business research and why it is considered to be of crucial importance for the success or failure of an enterprise.

Against this background, the language used in marketing represents for at least two main reasons a very attractive field of investigation for researchers on languages for specific purposes and marketers interested in linguistic issues. First, as marketing is a young and fast-paced discipline which is highly determined by the societal and economic developments of the 20th century, it is an attractive field for corpus-based diachronic studies on terminology. It offers the opportunity to follow the terminological evolution from the beginning until today on the basis of a complete, uninterrupted corpus of texts. Second, marketing language seems to distinguish itself by a number of linguistic peculiarities which are worth investigating more closely. For example, a closer look at marketing terminologies in different languages shows that the majority of the terms used are based on English. Thus, English remains worldwide the principal language of mediation within this field. Additionally, among marketing terms there appear to be a relatively high number of cases of creative term-coinages, which are worth investigating (e.g., acronyms, blends, or metaphors). Finally, it can be observed that the same marketing terms do not carry the same meaning in different contexts. There seems to be an increasing number of marketers deploring ambiguities within and across firms and languages. Despite all these remarkable specificities, little attention has been paid so far to the

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-020

language of marketing. The present contribution departs from the few existing studies by giving an overview of the state of the art of linguistic research on marketing language and its desiderata.

In this chapter, the term *language of marketing* is understood as the technical language used by marketing experts when communicating with each other for the purposes of their scientific interests, and especially the terminology used within this field. Consequently, the linguistic and rhetoric means of expression employed, for example, in advertisements or other textual outcomes serving marketing purposes, which are sometimes treated under the heading “language of marketing”, are not dealt with here.

Based on the above, the aim of the present chapter is threefold: to provide a summary of the main historical developments of marketing and its specialized language; to describe the growth and dynamics of marketing terminology over time, and to give an impression of the terminological peculiarities and main trends of term formation in marketing. The languages under scrutiny are English, French, German and, to a very small extent, Russian.

In the following Section 2, the underlying materials are enumerated, and the methods used to attain the aforementioned objectives are explained. Section 3.1 briefly describes the evolution of the discipline while keeping the attention focused on terminological developments that accompany it. Section 3.2 deals with the quantitative development of marketing terminology and exemplarily derives the “life-cycle” of a typical marketing term from corpus data about French marketing terminology. Section 4.1 gives insight into how marketers themselves think about their own language, and Section 4.2 attempts to illustrate the most important patterns of marketing term formation. Finally, Section 5 briefly summarizes the results.

2 Methods and materials

For the present contribution three different types of information resources have been used. These are: first, linguistic studies on marketing language and terminology, second, marketing dictionaries and glossaries, and third, journal papers, websites and Internet fora dealing with marketing issues. This section discusses how and to what extent these resources deliver relevant information.

Linguistic studies dealing specifically with marketing language and terminology are rare. Among these are my own studies (Hänchen 2002; Göke 2009, 2010). These corpus-based investigations show how French marketing terminology has developed since the beginning of marketing in France in the 1960s. The underlying corpus was a diachronic sample of research articles published in French in the *Revue Française du Marketing*. The corpus has been updated for the purpose of this article, covering the period 1960–2014. The software program *WordSmith* supported the quantitative

and qualitative linguistic analyses. It was used to identify the central marketing terms and to observe the dynamics of French marketing terminology as a whole. Furthermore, it helped to approximately determine the point of time at which a marketing term was coined and to follow the evolution of the use of a term from a quantitative as well as qualitative point of view (i.e. with respect to frequency and semantic change). An example of a similar corpus-linguistic approach to the investigation of marketing terminology is represented by Burns (2011). Her study is based on a synchronic corpus of selected research articles published in two international specialized journals. It determines the most significant English marketing terms and collocations and also provides an English-Italian glossary.

Besides the above listed studies on Western European languages, there are several investigations on marketing terms and collocations in Russian and other Eastern European languages of the former Soviet Union (USSR) (e.g., Wessel 2003; Holden, Kuznetsov, and Whitelock 2008). They concentrate on the question of how the western marketing terms are translated and to what extent marketing concepts are transferred to the entirely different context of Russia or other former socialist states.

In this chapter, mono- and bilingual dictionaries, as well as glossaries in English, French and German are used as information sources for the description of linguistic peculiarities such as word-formation patterns. They deliver additional examples and give indications on recent trends in marketing term formation. English marketing terminology has been explored by means of three resources: the online dictionary of the *AMA*, the *online Cambridge Business English Dictionary* and the *Internet Marketing Glossary* edited by the marketing journalist Sean O'Rourke. German terms were taken from the bilingual *Praxiswörterbuch Marketing*, a marketing glossary designed by the German marketing expert Karl-Heinz von Lackum and the online glossary of the *Deutsches Institut für Marketing* (Lackum 2010; Glossar DIM). The illustration of French marketing terminology principally relies on the online dictionaries *Mercator-Publicitor* and *Lexicom*, as well as on an updated version of my own marketing corpus and glossary (Hänchen 2002: 157–185).

Finally, marketing textbooks and scientific articles published in marketing journals are exploited from two different angles. The first, quite obvious approach, is to extract relevant technical information about the development of marketing in theory and practice (e.g., Bartels 1988). The second approach consists in screening the articles for self-reflective contents and for meta-discursive text passages explicitly dealing with the concepts underlying marketing terms. These are, for example, texts in which marketers discuss the use and adequateness of terms. Those passages give insight into the internal debate about marketing terminology and supply more information about terminological choices and developments (e.g., Scully 1996; Simms 1999; Cornelissen 2003; Steffenhagen 2008).

3 Historical development of marketing terminology

As the evolution of a terminology is closely related to the history of the discipline, the first part of this section draws parallels between the advancement of marketing as a discipline and the most important terminological developments. The second part describes the evolution of marketing terminology from a quantitative perspective. Both aspects will be illustrated by drawing on the growth of French marketing terminology.

3.1 The history of marketing and marketing terminology

In one of the earliest extensive works on marketing, the American author Robert Bartels describes the development of marketing literature and thought from 1900 until the 1970s. His book offers a classification in which each decade represents a new stage in the evolution of marketing. In order to characterize these stages, he gave them the names displayed in Table 20.1.

Table 20.1: Stages in the evolution of marketing according to Bartels (1988: 141)

1900–1910:	Discovery
1910–1920:	Conceptualization
1920–1930:	Integration
1930–1940:	Development
1940–1950:	Reappraisal
1950–1960:	Reconception
1960–1970:	Differentiation
1970–	: Socialization

According to Bartels, the first use of the word *marketing* for something that can be considered a discipline dates back to 1910, when the American sales manager Ralph Starr Butler attempted to denote a concept that he described as “the whole field of selling” including “everything that the promoter of a product has to do prior to his actual use of salesmen and of advertising” (Bartels 1988: 143). Between 1900 and 1940, the new discipline advanced continuously due to the enormous economic and societal changes brought about by the rapid industrial development. Production and demand increased and, consequently, distributive practices and sales management had to be improved. Marketing concepts were shaped and knowledge from different areas was adopted and transferred to the emerging discipline. For instance, Joseph I. Scully, who examined a corpus of early marketing literature, found in these texts a considerable number of engineering metaphors such as the expressions *marketing machinery* or *acquisitive efficiency* (Scully 1996: 76–80). Furthermore, in a

textbook about advertising dating from 1919, he detected numerous military metaphors such as *advertising attacks*, *battle for markets* (Scully 1996: 76).

The conceptual framework of marketing changed after the World War II. The new marketing concept focused more on consumers and their role within the marketing system. In other words, the examination of consumer interests began to gain importance, and the main reason for this change was the economic shift from a sellers' market, where demand is higher than supply, to a buyers' market, where supply is higher than demand (Pepels 1996: 572). It was the first time that markets were saturated and that consumers were in a more powerful position.

Against almost the same economic background marketing began to establish itself in Western Europe in the 1950s. National marketing associations such as the French marketing association *A.D.E.T.E.M.* were founded, and new specialized journals like the *Revue Française du Marketing* appeared (Hänchen 2002: 50–55). In the late 1950s, the popularity of the word *marketing*, which dates back to 1944 according to the *Trésor de la langue française* (TLF), increased significantly in France. Nevertheless, the modern consumer-oriented concept behind this term was often still not fully understood by practitioners (cf. Fournis 1966: 4; Serraf 1972: 31). According to Villemus (1998: 23), it was not until the 1970s that French companies really implemented the modern conception of marketing. In West Germany *marketing* was adopted at almost the same time, that is, towards the end of the 1960s. The first professorship in marketing in West Germany was established in 1968 at the University of Münster and was taken by one of the most influential marketing experts in Germany, Heribert Meffert (Teia Internetakademie).

The 1970s were marked by the social and economic consequences of the first oil crisis (1973/74). The resulting critical awareness of consumption and the new environmental movement led to a period of socialization in marketing (Bartels 1988: 163). This process was initiated by probably the most important American marketing expert at the time, Philip Kotler, who proposed to broaden the concepts of marketing and market (cf. Kotler 1975). From then on, these terms could and have been used with respect to politicians, non-profit organizations or ideologies. In Western Europe, the respective terminology came into use with the establishment of new commercial forms of large-scale distribution, adopted from the USA (Hänchen 2002: 42, 92).

Also in the 1970s, the French *Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances* officially introduced the *Commission de terminologie économique et financière* in order to prevent the penetration of English terms into French specialized terminology. In 1971 this commission invented the term *mercatique* in order to replace the unpleasant Anglicism, but this artificially created term was rarely used afterwards and French marketers still prefer *marketing* today (Göke 2009: 159; Göke 2010). At almost the same time, in the former Soviet Union, the word *marketing* appeared for the first time in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (Wessel 2003: 16–17; Holden, Kuznetsov, and Whitelock 2008: 476). In this encyclopaedia, marketing was exclusively associated with capitalist economies and the USA, and it was not seen as applicable to a centralized economy.

In the 1980s, as a result of a growing national and international rivalry between companies, business became increasingly difficult (Pepels 1996: 575; Meffert 1998: 258). It was also the beginning of more purposeful marketing methods. For example, the new concept of strategic marketing assumed that firms needed to plan their marketing activities precisely in order to gain a so-called *competitive advantage* in the *struggle* for customers. The development of strategic marketing also manifested itself in marketing language by an increased use of military metaphors (Rindfleisch 1996: 5; Hänchen 2002: 43; Göke 2009: 155–154; see also Section 4.2). Another manifestation of the aggressive market mood at that time was the new concept of *direct marketing*, with an aim to address the customer directly and to bind him/her closer to a company or a brand. Further new forms of marketing were international and global marketing. Supporters of the international marketing approach saw a need to adapt marketing activities to foreign markets, whereas those of the global marketing approach aimed at internationally standardized commercialization (e.g., Levitt 1983).

Towards the end of the 1980s, the reticent attitude in the USSR towards market economy and marketing changed (Rathmayr 1991: 196). During the Gorbachev years, the first marketing chair and the first research institute were created, and a considerable number of Russian managers attended marketing courses in the USA and Western Europe (Wessel 2003: 17; Holden, Kuznetsov, and Whitelock 2008: 477). According to Wessel (2003: 11), a plethora of textbooks and dictionaries have entered the Russian market since then. However, due to the entirely different socio-economic and cultural environment, marketing in Russia could not be adopted without certain modifications (E. *shop* ‘place for the retail sale of goods and services’ > R. *šop* ‘establishment offering ‘up-market’ goods’; Holden, Kuznetsov, and Whitelock 2008: 479). For many Western marketing concepts it was and still is very difficult to find equivalent expressions and thus appropriate translations (e.g., E. *needs* > R. *нужда́* or R. *на́добность*; Rathmayr 2002: 160). As Holden, Kuznetsov, and Whitelock (2008: 480) state: “[...] after some 15 years of transition to the market economy in Russia, marketing terminology is still a translator’s minefield”. These authors also come to the conclusion that “the language of marketing in Russia is still under construction” (Holden, Kuznetsov, and Whitelock 2008: 481).

In the late 20th century, marketing broadened its perspective towards business environment in a yet larger sense, increasingly taking into account social factors, legal and political structures, as well as issues related to sustainability. As with the globalization of trade companies grew and became more complex, marketing measures also began to aim at employees in order to improve internal communication processes. This development led to the distinction between the concepts of internal and external marketing.

The most important change in modern marketing and marketing terminology has certainly been brought about by the Internet, mobile phones and the development of specialized software such as database programs or web applications. With

the following flowery description of the great potential of the Internet as a marketing tool, Simmons (2008: 302) gets to the heart of the phenomenon: “This enticing internet tool offers marketers the ability to enter that postmodern marketing golden age, where consumers joyously skip through verdant fields of product, service and brand experiences, which are touchy-feely tailored just for them, and often by them.”

In short, the new technologies enabled marketers to communicate with customers communally and individually. Within the “e”-arena, new forms of marketing have emerged, and thus, a great number of terms were created whose meanings seem to be very near and are not always clearly distinguishable (e.g., *one-to-one marketing*, *e-commerce*, *e-marketing*, *relationship marketing*, *m-marketing*). From 2005 on, social media and social networks offer even more possibilities to communicate with the customer. *Social media marketing* has become fashionable, as customers nowadays are encouraged to share their knowledge about a company or about a product via social networks.

3.2 The dynamics of marketing terms and terminology – a case study on French

The results presented in this section are essentially based on Hänchen (2002) and Göke (2009), but the corpus has been updated until 2014 for the present publication. One of the aims of this diachronic study on French marketing language was to investigate from a quantitative perspective how the central marketing terminology has grown. Substantial results concerning this part of the investigation will be summarized in the following. They should exemplify the general quantitative dynamics of marketing terminology accompanying the content development described in Section 3.1.

The analysis was based on a machine-readable corpus drawn from the *Revue Française du Marketing* of the years 1960–2014. This corpus was divided into eleven sub-corpora, each representing a sub-period of the observation period. For each of these sub-corpora “central marketing terms” were determined. A one-, two-, or three-word combination was considered to be a marketing term when it was habitually used by marketers in order to denote a specific concept of the discipline, and a term was considered to be a *central* marketing term when it occurred with a minimal relative frequency in at least one of the sub-corpora (see Hänchen 2002: 19–25). The outcome was a list of more than 600 central marketing terms in French that have been coined since the beginning of the discipline until today (e.g., F. *agence de publicité* ‘advertising agency’, F. *campagne publicitaire* ‘advertising campaign’, F. *commercialisation* ‘commercialization’, F. *commerce électronique* ‘e-commerce’, F. *comportement d’achat* ‘buying behaviour’, F. *étude de marché* ‘market research’, F. *leader* ‘leader’, F. *positionnement* ‘positioning’, F. *produit durable* ‘sustainable product’). Figure 20.1 shows the number of central terms that occur in the different sub-corpora (cf. Hänchen 2002: 88; Göke 2009: 155).

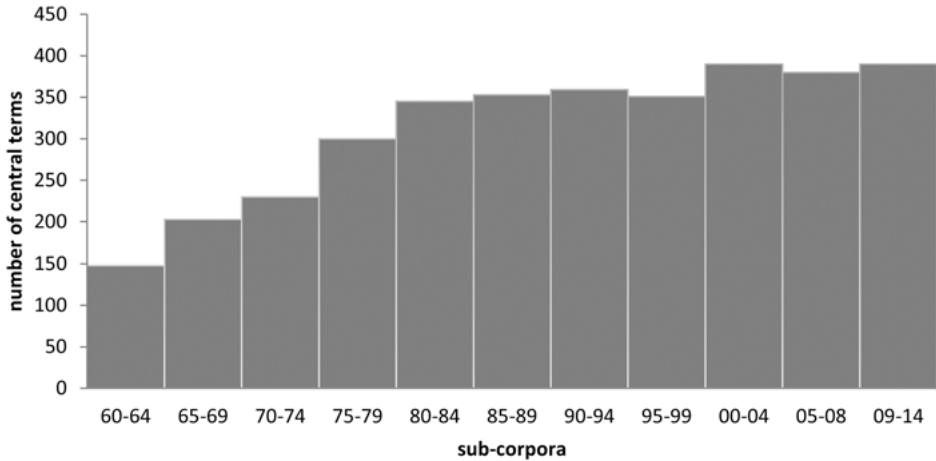


Figure 20.1: The growth of central marketing terminology in French

The above diagram illustrates the considerable growth in the central marketing terminology in French. Since the beginning of marketing in France in the 1960s until the end of the 1980s, there was a regular increase in terms. From the late 1980s on, the total number of terms used in the sub-corpora tends to stagnate. However, this does not mean that no terms have been adopted or created during the last thirty years. A look at the sub-corpora reveals a complex dynamics behind this development (cf. Hänchen 2002: 99–103).

A detailed examination of the relative frequency of the central terms in the sub-corpora suggests that the use of an average marketing term goes through different phases. After an increase in the initial phase, it is very likely that the relative frequency of that term will fluctuate, then stagnate, and in the end probably decline (Hänchen 2002: 102). These results match earlier diachronic studies on specialized terminologies. According to Morgenroth (1994: 8–10), the adoption of a term normally proceeds in two phases which he calls *phase inflationniste* ‘phase of inflation’ and *phase déflationniste* ‘phase of deflation’. Budin (1996: 123) compares the process of establishing a term with a fashion trend. After a significant upward development the use of a term declines, while other new concepts and terms come into fashion.

4 The most important trends in marketing language

The following section focuses on the structure and meaning of terms (for the structure of business terms in general, cf. Chapter 17). In order to do this, in the first subsection we look at what is explicitly articulated in specialized marketing discourse, that is, how marketers themselves assess their own language. In the second sub-

section, the most important word-formation processes in marketing language are illustrated based on examples in French, English and German.

4.1 What do marketers think about their language?

When marketers scrutinize their language, they often complain about its vagueness or ambiguity. For example, some of the most important American marketing associations lament “ambiguity and definitional differences between functions within and across firms and their partners” (AMA Common Language). In order to eliminate these problems and to facilitate communication, they have created a free and open-source online dictionary for practitioners, academics, students, media and press (AMA Dictionary 2014). Similarly, a German expert in corporate communication and author of a marketing glossary for practitioners, Karl-Heinz Lackum, regards vaguely defined and differently used terms as the principal causes of ineffective communication processes in marketing (Lackum 2010: 5).

Within the field of marketing, there are even critical voices demanding a new term for the word *marketing* itself. For instance, according to an American marketing professor Hugh Davidson, the term *marketing* no longer corresponds to the “complexity and sophistication of marketing as a discipline”; on the contrary, it can be used to denote a number of unclear and sometimes negatively associated concepts. Davidson has thus proposed to replace the terms *marketing* and *marketing manager* by *demand management* and *director of demand* (Simms 1999: 22). Similarly, the German author Hartwig Steffenhagen criticizes the dilution of the term *marketing* due to the excessive and sometimes conceptually unmotivated formation of hyphenated compounds such as German *Direkt-Marketing* (direct marketing), *Database-Marketing* (database marketing), *Event-Marketing* (event marketing), *Turbo-Marketing* (turbo marketing), *Öko-Marketing* (eco-marketing) (Steffenhagen 2008: 49).

From a semantic-pragmatic point of view, what marketers notice and criticize here are very common phenomena in general language, i.e. context-dependent meaning and semantic change. In other words, marketers become aware of the fact that the meaning of the word *marketing* strongly depends on the context in which it is used, and that a frequent use in different, more or less unrelated contexts leads to a fuzzy meaning or unexpected connotations. They also observe that the word has undergone processes of metonymic extension relying on contiguity associations within the general conceptual structure of marketing and parts or aspects of this structure (see Section 4 of Chapter 18 on metaphor, metonymy, and euphemism for more details). As a consequence, *marketing* is used with respect to different contiguous concepts such as the ‘process of promoting and selling a product’, the ‘whole discipline of marketing’, the ‘marketing department in a company’, or just ‘advertising’.

Furthermore, marketing specialists regularly discuss stylistic aspects of marketing language and ask for more linguistic sensitivity in the choice of words. For example, in 2007, an American media planner posted a complaint about the “cold” and “clinical” words used in media planning such as *user*, *target*, *prospective consumer*, *share-of-voice*, *capture* and *share of market* (Meskauskas 2007). Rindfleisch (1996), Perkin (2010), Schultz (2010) and Berry (2013) pleaded for a more “human” language in marketing that would address people more directly and personally. They also complain about the fact that marketing still uses so many military metaphors (e.g., *to launch a campaign*, *to battle for attention*, *to measure strike rates* or *impacts*, *to blitz consumers*) which, according to these authors, have become obsolete. The military language in marketing dates from the time of mass marketing. It does not correspond to modern communication practices and stands in contrast to modern relationship marketing and strategic partnerships with direct competitors (Rindfleisch 1996: 3). As Schultz (2010: 14) states: “[. . .] we’re going to have to find a new set of analogies, metaphors and concepts, as well as new ideas and terminology to deal with the radically different marketplace in which we find ourselves today.”

However, there are also authors who argue in favor of the so-called “marketing as warfare-metaphor”. For example, Kolar and Toporišič (2007: 214) come to the conclusion that “the use of military language and examples in marketing can be effective at the metaphorical and symbolic level”. According to the authors military examples “can stimulate fresh views in marketing – if only the metaphors were not trivial and outworn”.

4.2 Word-formation processes in English, French and German marketing language

As already indicated in Section 2, there are hardly any linguistic studies on marketing language, let alone term formation in marketing. So far, no studies seem to have been carried out on English and German, while the most important tendencies of term formation in French have been analysed by Göke (2009: 160–163) on the basis of a list of central terms. Due to this lack of prior research, we do not have reliable statistics about which kinds of word-formation patterns are used significantly more often in marketing than in other discourse domains. The following description is based on the examination of specialized dictionaries and glossaries, as well as relevant language-related comments by marketers. Given that the findings presented in this section are based on a limited number of resources, they should, however, be treated with caution.

In Chapter 17 on the structure of business terms, it has been pointed out that the terminology of economics and business is closer to general language than those of most other disciplines, as far as the processes of term formation are concerned. It is quite safe to assume that this also applies to the language of marketing. In fact,

most terms listed in English and German dictionaries and glossaries are compounds, while multi-word units predominate in French (e.g. E. *unique selling proposition* vs. F. *proposition unique d'achat*). Yet, although the word-formation techniques employed in general language and in marketing overlap to a large extent, some occur in marketing with an above-average frequency, viz. abbreviations and acronyms, the use of certain prefixes, blending, as well as metaphor and metonymy. These “marketing-specific” techniques of term formation will now be treated in more detail.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Marketers emphasize the common use of abbreviations and acronyms in marketing. These terms often denote organizations, marketing methods, consumer segments or

Table 20.2: Abbreviations and acronyms in marketing language

English resources	
B2B	<i>business to business</i>
B2C	<i>business to consumer</i>
BOGOF	<i>buy one get one free</i>
CTR	<i>click-through-rate</i>
CRM	<i>customer relationship management</i>
DINK	<i>double income no kids</i>
LTV	<i>life time value</i>
MIS	<i>marketing information system</i>
MRM	<i>marketing resource management</i>
MLM	<i>multi-level marketing</i>
UAP	<i>unique advertising proposition</i>
USP	<i>unique selling proposition</i>
4P	<i>product, price, place, promotion</i>
French resources	
BAL	<i>boîte à lettres</i>
CGV	<i>conditions générales de la vente</i>
GRM (= E. CRM)	<i>gestion de la relation clients</i>
ISA	<i>imprimés sans adresse</i>
MDD	<i>marque de distributeur</i>
PGC	<i>produit de grande consommation</i>
PMG	<i>petits, moyens, gros clients</i>
QA/NA	<i>quantités achetées/ nombre d'acheteurs</i>
SIM (= E. MIS)	<i>système d'information marketing</i>
VPC	<i>vente par correspondance</i>
German resources	
HIWOK	<i>Hier Informieren woanders kaufen</i>
KBM	<i>Kundenbeziehungsmanagement</i>
KOALA	<i>Kontakt, Orientierung, Argumentation, Lösung, Abschluss</i>
KPI (= E. CPI)	<i>Konsumentenpreisindex</i>

new concepts in Internet marketing (Lackum 2010: 5; Praxiswörterbuch Marketing; Soleposition Web Design Company; Nexus Online Marketing Blog). Most of them are in English. However, especially in the French glossaries, I found loan translations of these terms, whereas the German resources tend to indicate the original English abbreviation or acronym. Language-specific examples in French and especially in German are comparatively rare and seem to be inspired by English in its role as reference language. This is also the reason why Table 20.2 lists fewer examples in French and in German than in English.

Prefixation

The use of certain prefixes is also a peculiarity of term formation in marketing, especially in English and French. In French marketing language, prefixes and combining

Table 20.3: Prefixation in marketing language

English resources

ad-click
 ad exchange
 ad game
 e-business
 e-commerce
 eco-strategy
 e-marketing
 cybercommerce
 f-commerce
 c-commerce
 m-commerce
 multi-level marketing

French resources

co-marquage
 cybermarché
 cyberconsommateur
 éco-stratégie
 e-commerçant
 maxidiscompte
 mono-produit
 multi-marque
 multi-produit

German resources

Cyberumfrage
 E-Business
 M-Commerce
 Öko-Markt
 Öko-Marketing

forms have become popular from the 1990s onwards. Many loan translations from English containing prefixes such as *éco-*, *macro-*, *maxi-*, or *multi-* entered the language (Göke 2009: 161–162). With the advent of Internet marketing in the 2000s, Internet-related prefixes such as *e-* and *cyber-* for *électronique* and *cybernétique*, initially added to the word *commerce*, became fashionable, but in contrast to *e-*, the use of *cyber-* seems to be in decline today (Göke 2009: 162). Both prefixes were borrowed from English. Soon after, with the appearance of Web 2.0, further Internet-related prefixes appeared, such as *f-*, *c-* and *m-*, short for *facebook-*, *collaborative-* and *mobile-*. Another relatively new element of Internet marketing language is *ad-* (short for *advertisement* or *advertising*), as in *ad exchange* or *ad game*: such formations can still be analysed as compounds with the clipped word *ad* as modifier, but one could also argue that *ad* is already on the way to become a true prefix. As Table 20.3 illustrates, German resources delivered only few examples of prefixation and those mentioned often correspond to the English terms. Thus, German marketers again seem to prefer the English terms.

Blending

Another candidate for a typical operation of marketing term formation is blending. Blending combines two or more parts of different words in order to create a new word whose meaning contains aspects of the associated concepts. As with acronyms and abbreviations, a major part of the blends in marketing language are supposed to have been created in English and then transferred into other languages (see Table 20.4). Most of the English blends listed in Table 20.4 also occur in the French and German dictionaries which I have consulted. They are either borrowed directly (e.g., E. *infotainment* > G. *Infotainment*) or transferred to the other language by loan translation (e.g., E. *kidult* > F. *adultescent*; E. *prosumer* > G. *Prosument*).

Finally, with regard to all three aforementioned term-formation processes – abbreviations and acronyms, prefixed words and blends – a general comparative view on the quantity of terms in French and German dictionaries and glossaries indicates language-specific differences, suggesting that these types of term formation are more common in French than in German. The terms found in German dictionaries and glossaries are mostly direct borrowings from English, whereas French dictionaries and glossaries contain more loan translations. There appear to be mainly two reasons for this. First, the English terms based on these patterns can generally be translated with greater ease into French than into German. Second, terminology policy in France may play a certain role here since it is aimed at preventing direct borrowings from English (Hänchen 2002: 33–37; Göke 2009: 163).

Table 20.4: Blends in marketing language

English resources	
bagvertising	<i>bag + advertising</i>
e-zine	<i>electronic + magazine</i>
flog	<i>fake + blog</i>
freeconomics	<i>free + economics</i>
freemium	<i>free + premium</i>
infomercial	<i>information + commercial</i>
infotainment	<i>information + entertainment</i>
kidult	<i>kid + adult</i>
mastige	<i>mass + prestige</i>
prosumer	<i>producer + consumer</i>
French resources	
adolescent	<i>adult + adolescent</i>
consommacteur	<i>consommateur + producteur</i>
flog	<i>faux + blog</i>
prosommateur	<i>producteur + consommateur</i>
pourriel ('junkmail')	<i>pourri + courriel</i>
German resources	
Magalog	<i>Magazin + Katalog</i>
Prosument	<i>Produzent + Konsument</i>

Metaphor

Metaphors represent an important subject area within the marketing-internal debate about the creation of new concepts and theories. They are generally considered to be an appropriate means of generating new knowledge in the field (Arndt 1985; Hunt and Menon 1995; Scully 1996; Cornelissen 2003; Kolar & Toporišič 2007; Fillis and Rentschler 2008; also Section 2.2.3 of Chapter 18 on metaphor, metonymy, and euphemism). Still, despite the important role metaphors play in marketing language, an exhaustive *linguistic* examination of the relevant metaphorical patterns used in marketing remains a desideratum. Due to this fact and in the face of the complexity of metaphor, only preliminary hints can be given here.

Since the early days of the discipline, marketers have used military metaphors in order to describe their strategies and activities, calling consumers *targets*, referring to stores concentrating on only one product category as *category killers*, or using the word *launching* for introducing new products. However, as mentioned in Section 4.1, marketers are becoming increasingly aware of this aggressive wording, and some of them argue against 'marketing as warfare' metaphors. For example, marketing author Jeff Berry (cf. Berry 2013) titled recently on his website: "Let's not kill our customers, okay?" In allusion to the famous anti-war slogan he further invited his

Table 20.5: Metaphors in marketing language

Metaphor	English definition in dictionary
E. anchor F. prix d'ancrage G. Ankerpreis; Ankerprodukt	The reference price or reference product in consumers' comparisons. (AMA Dictionary)
E. birddog	An individual who, for a fee, provides sales leads to a salesperson. The individual also is called a spotter. (AMA Dictionary)
E. boomerang method F. méthode boomerang G. Bumerang-Methode	A method used by salespeople to respond to customer objections by turning the objection into a reason for acting immediately. (AMA Dictionary)
E. brand personality F. personnalité de la marque G. Markenpersönlichkeit	This is the psychological nature of a particular brand as intended by its sellers, though persons in the marketplace may see the brand otherwise (called brand image). These two perspectives compare to the personalities of individual humans: what we intend or desire, and what others see or believe. (AMA Dictionary)
E. buzz marketing	A method of selling a product by getting people to talk about it to other people, especially over the Internet. (Cambridge Business English Dictionary)
E. cash cow F. vache-à-lait G. Geldkuh (rare)	In a growth-share matrix, the market leader or dominant business in a segment with a low growth rate. It should generate resources in excess of those which it needs to maintain its market share, to invest in other group businesses. It requires a conservative style of management. (Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Marketing)
G. Kuckucksmarke	Kuckucksmarken bezeichnen Marken, die sich die Eigenschaften fremder Kulturen zu eigen machen, um von einem bestimmten Stereotyp einer Region bzw. eines Landes zu profitieren. (Markenlexikon.com) [Foreign brands, literally "cuckoo brands", evoke associations of foreign cultures. They make use of certain stereotypes of a region or a country].
E. gatekeeper F. gardien	Usually, the individual who controls the flow of information from the mass media to the group or individual. It also is used to indicate the individual who controls decision making by controlling the purchase process. In a traditional family, the mother often functions as the gatekeeper between the child and his/her exposure to the mass media and the purchase of toys or products. In an organization, the purchasing agent is often the gatekeeper between the end user and the vendor of products or services. (AMA Dictionary)
E. guerilla marketing F. guérilla marketing G. Guerilla-Marketing	An unconventional marketing strategy which seeks the best results with minimum resources. (Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Marketing)
E. product life cycle F. cycle de vie d'un produit G. Produktlebenszyklus	In simple terms the life of a product can be split into four phases namely introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Sales grow in the first three phases and fall in the last, as do profits, although it must be noted that in the introductory stage there may be losses. (Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Marketing)

E. star F. vedette G. Stern	In a growth-share matrix, the market leader or dominating company in a high growth industry. Although the leader may be consuming the same level of financial resources as it is generating, it is an ideal situation that requires an innovative style of management.
E. umbrella brand F. marque ombrelle G. Dachmarke	A common brand under which other brands or products or different companies are protected so as to economize on the marketing and promotion of the entire group. (Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Marketing)
E. viral marketing F. marketing viral G. Virales Marketing	A marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message. Nicknamed <i>viral</i> because the number of people exposed to a message mimics the process of passing a virus or disease from one person to another. (AMA Dictionary)

readership to “Make sales, not war”. Hunt and Menon (1995: 81–84), by contrast, did not condemn ‘marketing as warfare’ metaphors, but they proposed to make additional use of other source domains, such as ‘game’, ‘organism’, or ‘marriage’, in order to make appropriate and stimulating metaphoric transfers and to realize the full potential of metaphors in the domain of strategic marketing (cf. also Rindfleisch 1996: 9).

A closer look at the dictionaries and glossaries observed in this chapter shows that besides military metaphorical expressions, general marketing terminology contains a large amount of metaphorical terms based on a variety of source domains such as animals, human beings, actions, or everyday items. Same as with the previously discussed instances of word formation, a great number of metaphors in marketing language seem to be created in English and then transferred into other languages.

Table 20.5 shows a sample of metaphors used to denote marketing concepts. The second column contains the explanations that can be found in dictionaries.

As illustrated by the Table 20.5, marketing metaphors concern diverse subject areas, from product and branding policy, competitive strategy and customer classification, to selling and advertising methods. Additionally, many metaphors are used in the rapidly developing field of Internet marketing. However, these terms do not necessarily denote marketing-specific concepts, as quite a number of them were coined in the context of the development of new Internet technologies, and have been adopted by marketers in order to describe innovative Internet-related marketing activities (e.g., *bad link neighborhood*, *bounce rate*, *doorway domain*, *stickiness*). Metaphorical terms created within the domain of Internet marketing and denoting new marketing concepts are, for example, *buzz marketing*, *ambush marketing* and *viral marketing*.

Metonymy

Another important semantic process of word formation is metonymy (see Table 20.6; for general information, see Section 3 of Chapter 18 on metaphor, metonymy, and euphemism). Yet, although metonymy, like metaphor, is a very common pattern for creating new words in general language, in marketing metonymic term formation seems to be relatively rare and less conspicuous in comparison to metaphoric term formation. Furthermore, metonymy does not seem to play such an important role in knowledge development in marketing as metaphor. This could be due to the fact that metonymy is based on contiguity relations. The term *contiguity* englobes different kinds of proximity association between concepts in a given context of communication (e.g., producer–product, container–content, property–owner, etc.), and these relations do not seem to have the same creative potential as the relation of likeness or analogy in metaphor.

However, a closer investigation of marketing dictionaries and glossaries reveals a number of marketing terms which are created by metonymization. These are, for example, the uses of the adjectives *brown* and *white* in *brown good* (e.g., TVs, radios or digital media players) and *white good* (e.g., air conditioners, refrigerators). The adjectives are motivated by the color in which the cases of these products are used to be painted. The adjective *green* in *green market* or *green marketing* stands for environmental and ecological issues. The term *redlining* refers to the exclusion of customers from certain marketing activities. Their names are usually highlighted in red in a list of customers. The acronym *DINK* describes the financial and personal

Table 20.6: Metonymy in marketing language

Metonymy	English Definition in Dictionary
E. brown good	Merchandise in the consumer electronic audiovisual field, such as televisions, radios, stereo sets, etc. [. . .]. (AMA dictionary)
E. green market	The market composed of consumers who require eco-friendly products. (Praxiswörterbuch Marketing)
E. DINK	Double Income No Kids (Lackum 2010)
E. dotcom	The name given to companies created taking advantage of Internet technologies and whose main form of communication and interaction with the target public is web based. (Praxiswörterbuch Marketing)
E. make-good	The rescheduling of an ad or commercial by an advertising media operator when it has been incorrectly printed, broadcast, or distributed or when unavoidably canceled or preempted. (AMA dictionary)
E. redlining	The arbitrary exclusion of certain classes of customers, often those from poor neighborhoods, from such economic activities as borrowing money or getting real estate mortgages. (AMA dictionary)

situation of a customer group (*double income no kids*), and the word *teaser* refers to a text that should induce the reader of an advertisement to read on.

In addition to creative term formations, there are also metonymical meaning extensions of established marketing terms which seem to occur quite regularly (cf. Weidacher 1971: 82). In contrast to the above mentioned neologisms, these semantic changes take place over a period of time. They are very subtle and their outcomes are not always appreciated by practitioners (see Section 4.1). For example, the terms *communication*, *market* and *marketing* are universal key terms of modern marketing, which until today have adopted a very wide and sometimes fuzzy meaning as a consequence of more or less unconscious semantic extensions (Stålhammer 1994; Göke 2009: 156–161; see also Section 4.1).

5 Conclusion

The dynamics of the language of marketing relies on the coming and going of concepts, and these concepts, in turn, strongly depend on the ongoing socio-economic changes and technological innovations. A considerable number of marketing terms are created and come into fashion when a new sub-field of marketing emerges, but the use of an average marketing term stagnates and even declines after the first period of extensive use. In languages other than English, a major part of the terms in use seem to be direct borrowings from English, loan translations or hybrid forms containing elements of both languages. Furthermore, the investigation of English, French and German marketing terminology compiled in dictionaries and glossaries suggests that acronyms and abbreviations, blends and metaphors are the most typical term formation patterns in marketing.

A look at meta-discursive text passages in academic writings, i.e. parts of texts dealing with language use in marketing published in the last few years, reveals that marketers themselves reflect their choice of words attentively. Today, they are especially complaining about the large amount of ambiguous and synonymous terms as well the overuse, inappropriateness, and obsolescence of military metaphors dating from the times of mass marketing. Additionally, they are aware of the fact that metaphors play an important role in generating marketing knowledge and in denoting new concepts.

In order to confirm and to deepen the results presented in this chapter, future research should focus on the following areas: as discussed above, there is a need for corpus-based investigations, at least in languages other than French, in order to get a more reliable insight into the peculiarities of term formation in marketing language. Furthermore, it has been found that although metaphors and metonymies are significant for marketing and marketing term formation, the metaphoric and metonymic patterns in marketing language have so far unfortunately not been

systematically analyzed, at least not by linguists. Finally, the meta-discourse of marketers concerning their own language could be an interesting field of investigation in order to explore further how marketers themselves influence and control the development of their language.

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21 The language of accounting

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1 Introduction

Accounting terminology, like that of finance, is rightly seen as one of the central elements of modern business language. This special status of accounting within the various functional fields of business is also reflected by the fact that accounting itself is frequently referred to, metaphorically, as a language. Indeed, it is quite common – if just a bit clichéd – to refer to accounting as “the language of business” in popular parlance, while it is difficult to imagine this honour being bestowed on other fields such as human resources or distribution.

An important field like accounting is, of course, of interest as an object of research beyond the business field itself. Scholars from fields such as sociology or political studies have taken an interest in analysing various aspects of accounting, including the language and terminology used. These analyses are not conducted from a purely linguistic perspective by any means, but nonetheless show how language is seen as an important aspect of this discipline even by non-linguists. The existing literature will be examined in the earlier part of this chapter.

Inevitably, a major consideration in research has been accounting terminology. Over time, this seems to be more rigid than other specialist business terminologies, even that of general finance. Given the importance of companies’ financial reporting to internal and external stakeholders alike, it is not surprising that, in line with ever stricter standards, the terms used in an accounting context change less quickly than in, say, marketing. Ongoing harmonisation in accounting standards in a globalising world further adds to this trend, as does the dominance of English as the language of business and finance.

However, for a number of reasons this standardisation in language is not quite as clear-cut and comprehensive as might be expected. As demonstrated by the convergence between Generally Accepted Accounting Principles in the U.S.A. (US-GAAP) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS),¹ standardisation

¹ The term IFRS is the general term used here for all standards deemed to be part of IFRS, even though the old term IAS is still in use for many of the individual standards as these are not automatically renamed but slowly replaced over time.

in terminology is turning into an extremely long-winded process. This becomes all the more apparent when considering not just English as the predominant language of accounting, but other languages as well. In view of the increasing importance of IFRS and accounting standards in general, this does come as some surprise and merits a closer analysis of potential factors inhibiting linguistic convergence. The second part of this paper, therefore, focuses on one particular area of research: language issues in connection with standardisation, specifically in IFRS. It tries to illustrate some of the reasons for the lack of standardised language, which is due partly to translation problems, but also to some peculiarities inherent in IFRS themselves.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the various lines of research into the linguistic and terminological aspects of accounting. For practical reasons it is restricted to the English-language literature, where most of the pertinent research is to be found, although this is not to deny that further insight could be obtained from consideration of works in other languages. Section 3 then discusses language and standardisation, while Section 4 examines language issues in IFRS, as a particularly pertinent case of standardisation. Finally, Section 5 briefly summarises the paper's main points and findings, and provides a short outlook.

2 Literature review

Although several popular research foci can be detected when surveying research into accounting language, it is not easy to categorise the contributions clearly as the various areas involved show many overlaps. In fact, a distinct classification might not only be impossible, but also misleading, as much research cuts across several aspects: many critical studies of accounting, for instance, tend to engage in metaphor analysis, too, and so in fact would fall into both categories. Nevertheless, the main focus of research seems to have been in certain specific areas.

The first of these is meaning, on which early work involving language in accounting largely focused, usually from a communicative point of view and originally applying semantic-differential techniques. The main researchers in this area include Haried (1972, 1973) and Adelberg (1979, 1982). Much of this work focuses on the perception of accounting terms by different groups involved (e.g., Houghton 1987; Adelberg and Farelly 1989; Bagranoff, Houghton, and Hronsky 1994; Wines 2006).

There is considerable common ground between the works just mentioned and research into the readability of accounting texts. Amongst these we can find Adelberg (1983), Smith and Taffler (1992), Bloomfield (2008a), and Li (2008). These surveys often tend to be quite mechanistic in their approach, as Kettunen (2011: 9) criticises, and focus on longer texts rather than terminology (see also Sydserff and Weetman

2002). A comprehensive overview of this line of research is provided in Hellmann, Perera, and Patel (2010: 4–8).

One of the most bountiful areas of research concerns accounting and metaphors (see also Chapter 18, Section 2.2.4). Generally, most authors in this field seem to define metaphors in the way Lakoff and others see them (compare, e.g., Lakoff and Johnson 1980). There are roughly three (again, overlapping) themes running through this area of research. First, accounting itself is frequently seen as a metaphor, i.e. the metaphor applied to the concept of accounting provides an interpretation of the nature and significance of accounting (Morgan 1988: 481). Second, the use of metaphor in accounting is discussed much more theoretically, and, third, various metaphors used in accounting texts are closely scrutinised, usually from a rather critical point of view as regards their function.

In the first group of studies, for instance, we can find Avery (1953), who was one of the first to discuss accounting as a language from a metaphor-theoretical perspective. Amernic and Craig argue that accounting functions as a lens and an instrument that encourages the perception of accounting as “accurate, objective and a faithful and complete teller of the truth” (2009: 882). Morgan presents a whole list of metaphors for accounting, all reinforcing a myth of objectivity, including accounting as history, economics, information, rhetoric, politics, mythology, magic, disciplined control and ideology, as well as domination and exploitation (for a full list of original sources see Morgan 1988: 481). Finally, McGoun, Bettner, and Coyne (2005) argue that financial statements can function as lenses, photographs and even the board game Scrabble. In their analysis of these pedagogical metaphors, as they call them, the overlap with the second group, which includes (sometimes highly) theoretical treatises, becomes apparent.

As examples of the second group we again find Morgan (1988: 480), who dwells on accountants’ “overarching metaphor encouraging a numerical view of reality”. Robson, not dissimilarly, sees accounting “as a numerical inscription device for long distance control” (1992: 703). Another contribution is made by Walters (2004), who even brings Nietzsche into play. From a metaphor-theoretical perspective, Walters-York sees metaphor as an inseparable component of accounting discourse serving a number of functions, such as fluency, articulation and defamiliarisation, which might also be used rhetorically to “situate and obscure the agents of persuasion in a text” (1996: 60). In a similar vein, Young (2013: 884) argues that metaphors are not just “optional flourishes”, but that they further the understanding of concepts and subject matter. Awareness of the use of metaphors “decreases the possibility that they will be regarded as facts, directs our attention to the inevitable omissions of any metaphor and asks us to recognize the values at work in the selection of features to highlight through metaphor”.

In general, metaphor-related work in the third group overlaps very much with papers of a critical nature as regards the function of language in accounting

discourse. A full enumeration of these critical papers would go far beyond the scope of this chapter, which can only list a qualified selection. Some of the most interesting earlier work in this area, for instance, includes Gambling (1987), Solomons (1991), Tinker (1991) and Cooper and Puxty (1994). Examples of more recent work include Young (2003) on rhetorical strategies applied by the Financial Accounting Standards Board, Courtis (2004) on obfuscation in annual and interim reports, Craig and Amernic (2004) on rhetoric used in a privatisation process, and Amernic and Craig (2010) on the use of accounting language to, as they put it, facilitate a CEO's narcissism. On the language of standard-setters, Hronsky and Houghton (2001: 135) remark that "subtle changes in the wording of regulations are perceived to have differences in meaning, and these differences are detected and acted upon by practitioners", thus highlighting the importance of language choice. Most recently, Merkl-Davies and Koller (2012) employ critical discourse analysis in analysing the use of metaphor in a company chairman's rhetoric.

A further branch of research considers language change in accounting. Most work in this field focuses on a rather narrow range of examples and instances. More generally, Mills (1989: 33) argues that the history of accounting is reflected in the change in the use of certain keywords. Building on this, Potter (1999) illustrates the power of new terminology in the context of public sector reforms in Australia. Parker (1994), on the other hand, suggests reasons for the introduction of new terminology into accounting English. The most comprehensive overview in this area is probably provided by Evans (2010), who not only aims to provide a more structured linguistic approach, but also puts special emphasis on the motivations behind changing accounting language.

Accounting terminology has also been scrutinised from a genre-analytical point of view, where accounting is seen as a language for specific purposes with its own characteristic discourse types and features (see Bhatia 2008). Flowerdew and Wan (2006), for example, examine tax computation letters as a rather specific sub-genre, while in Flowerdew and Wan (2010) they apply a similar approach to audit reports.

Some researchers have also analysed accounting terminology from a lexicographic angle. In connection with an ongoing online dictionary project, Fuertes-Olivera and his co-researchers address the dynamic nature of accounting terminology, particularly across languages (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2013). Fuertes-Olivera and Nielsen (2011) focus on remedying deficiencies in existing dictionaries by using conceptually similar terms in both source and target languages, and, in other work, illustrate how the problem of missing equivalence can be tackled in an online accounting dictionary (Fuertes-Olivera and Nielsen 2012).

Finally, the issue of translating accounting terms has become more and more prominent, together with the growing trend towards standardisation. The next section will therefore focus on these two aspects together, as translation of this highly specific language frequently turns into an obstacle to harmonisation efforts.

3 Accounting language and standardisation

Quite clearly, terminological issues are not the primary focus of efforts to harmonise accounting standards. Beuren, Hein, and Klann (2008: 634), for example, see the main objective of standardisation as reducing information asymmetry in financial reports published in different countries under different accounting systems, and thus ensuring and enhancing comparability. Nonetheless, standardisation is also expected to homogenise the terminology used in financial reporting, if not immediately, at least in the long run.

While the advantages of harmonised accounting standards in general seem obvious, the desirability of terminological standardisation is less so. Again, comparability is the main issue here: unified terminology makes it easier to read, understand and compare financial reports, especially for non-experts and newcomers to the profession. In addition, it becomes more difficult for companies to mislead the reader and employ creative accounting techniques under the cover of obscure terminology or euphemistic language.

As an aspect of harmonisation, language received relatively little attention until roughly fifteen years ago. Baker and Barbu's survey, for instance, analysed more than 200 research articles from 1965 to 2004 on accounting harmonisation and came up with only a single one that, in their eyes, involved language aspects and "studied the impact of language on accounting practices" (2007: 281). On closer study, though, the article they mention does not even mention the word language, but merely attests the influence of political, economic and civil factors on reporting and disclosure adequacy (Belkaoui 1983: 218). The metaphor of a "common accounting language" frequently found in the articles surveyed by Baker and Barbu (2007) was, in fact, in most cases just that, a metaphor referring to accounting standards in general, and no particular attention was paid to language aspects proper.

In contrast, cultural factors in general have long been seen to play a major role in the actual application of accounting standards and in the choices practitioners make within the frameworks of these standards. Gray (1988) was one of the first to focus fully on cultural differences as a determinant of accounting choices and established an early model based on Hofstede (1980). Even earlier, Nair and Frank (1980) took language as a proxy for culture in the same context, albeit in a purely empirical study on accounting policy variation across countries. Other noteworthy papers are Douppnik and Salter (1995), as well as Jaggi and Low (2000). More recent and more specific studies in this area include Heidhues et al. (2011) and Heidhues and Patel (2012), both on Germany and Italy; Jödicke (2009) and Reisloh (2011), on Germany, France and the U.K.; Schultz and Lopez (2001) on France, Germany and the U.S.; and Tsakumis (2007) on Greece and the U.S. Most recently, although they also find cultural factors to be an important influence on the choice of accounting approach, Wehrfritz and Haller (2014: 192–194) argue that an individual's personal preferences might be even more important.

Bloomfield (2008b: 434) raises an interesting point in this context by suggesting that, though standard-setters in general are fairly powerless when it comes to natural language, bodies that set accounting standards exercise significant power. They should, however, expect companies to follow what he calls a “*noncooperative principle*” (Bloomfield 2008b: 434; original italics) in direct contrast to Grice’s cooperative principle, which states that participants in a conversation can assume that everyone cooperates (see Grice 1975: 45–46). As firms try to underemphasise bad news following a “maxim of selective disclosure” (Bloomfield 2008b: 434) and thus obfuscate, it makes sense to force them to disclose more, so that the “benefits of additional explicit communication outweigh the loss of implicit communication” (Bloomfield 2008: 434; see also Li 2008: 245 and Bloomfield 2008a: 251).

Finally, there is a growing body of literature which sees language factors as an integral part of comparability. Amongst these researchers we find Archer and McLeay (1991: 355–358), who conclude that, even if countries have similar accounting systems, cultural differences are much more difficult to overcome in translation. Tsakumis, Campbell, and Douppnik (2009) explicitly list culture and translation issues as the two hurdles “imped[ing] the consistent interpretation and application of converged standards” (Tsakumis, Campbell, and Douppnik 2009: 34). Baskerville and Evans (2011a: 1) even go as far as to say that “standards cannot be applied consistently around the world if their translations are not equivalent to the original English versions”.

A number of other studies focusing on individual concepts have come to similar conclusions. Zeff, in analysing various obstacles to comparability and convergence in accounting standards, explicitly lists language and terminology as potential problem areas, citing the concept of the “true and fair view” as a potential area of contention (2007: 296–297). Further examples dealing with the same concept include Houghton (1987), Nobes (1993) and Alexander (1993), as well as Walton (1997) and Aisbitt and Nobes (2001). A second group of researchers has focused on expressions of uncertainty and probability. Douppnik and Richter (2004), for example, analyse how these expressions, in translation, are interpreted very differently by accountants in a different cultural context. Simon (2002) has a similar focus, interpreting probability expressions used by directors and auditors in the UK. Further examples include Douppnik and Richter (2003), as well as Douppnik and Riccio (2006). Finally, Evans and Nobes (1996) discuss the problematic translation of “prudence” as *Vorsicht* in German, and Evans (2004) elaborates on the German term *Grundsätze ordnungsgemäßer Buchführung* and its inappropriate translation as *GAAP*.

In all these cases mistranslations, and hence misunderstandings, can arise mainly due to cultural differences in the perception of these concepts. As Evans (2010: 447) concisely summarises: “neither the concepts nor the terminology are equivalent”. As a classic example, Alexander and Nobes (2004: 210–211) show how concepts, and thus the meaning, of related, similar-looking terms regarding depreciation differ in French, English and German. They therefore call for more careful

translations. Figure 21.1 shows the true relations between the terms in question, with German terms in bold and French ones underlined. This very problem is apparently not restricted to just these three languages, as a very similar one has occurred in connection with translations into Finnish (see Kettunen 2011: 11–12). This indicates that, although particular problems tend to occur within certain language families only (Baskerville and Evans 2011a: 56–57), others arise across these boundaries. Today the problem of non-equivalence has become particularly apparent in IFRS and therefore the next section will deal with language issues in these standards in more detail.

English meaning	Write-downs	
German meaning	<i>Abschreibungen</i>	
English meaning	Depreciation/Amortization	Impairment/ One-off write-down
<i>French meaning</i>	<i>Amortissement</i>	<u><i>Dépréciation</i></u>

Figure 21.1: Depreciation terminology: semantic relations (adapted from Alexander and Nobes 2004: 210)

4 IFRS and their consequences

4.1 IFRS and language

Although the idea of harmonising accounting standards has been around for well over half a century (see FASB 2014), in the last 15 years IFRS have emerged as the most widely used international standard. While the U.S. still uses its own system, US GAAP, there is also a strong tendency towards what is called “convergence” with IFRS, a term more politically acceptable in the United States than harmonisation or standardisation. Within the EU, IFRS have become even more prominent. Regulation (EC) N° 1606/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 July 2002 has required all public listed companies to present their accounts according to IFRS since 2005. For almost ten years, using IFRS has thus become the norm for large and internationally oriented companies.

English, as the official working language of the International Accounting Standards Board, is the original language of IFRS. In fact, English has long been the lingua franca of accounting, with most firms publishing their accounts in both their respective countries’ languages and English. Nonetheless, one should not forget that there is still some distinction between British and American English in accounting terminology (see Parker 2001: 140–142). In the case of IFRS, there seems to be some

agreement amongst practitioners that the actual language variant used is a hybrid of British and American English (Mourier 2004: 145–148; Baskerville and Evans 2011b: 9–10). This is not wholly unproblematic, as inconsistencies and misunderstandings seem to be pre-programmed. This notwithstanding, with commonly prescribed standards and the near-necessity to publish in a common language, increasingly converging terminology is to be expected.

However, when scrutinising the financial reports of large European companies, this convergence is not always apparent, especially in the English versions of their accounts. Companies show a strong tendency to hold onto their traditional terminology, although this varies depending on the language (see Parker 2001: 141; Cohn 2013). Edelmann (2010: 7–10) illustrates this with the term “property, plant and equipment” and its equivalents in 10 languages used in the annual reports of banks and oil companies. He finds a massive divergence in the use of “old” and “new” terminology, with that of traditional terms being unexpectedly resilient.

Apart from this general tendency in companies to resist changes, several characteristics of IFRS also pose an obstacle to the increased use of standardised language. The five main factors inherent in IFRS that inhibit unified terminology are:

1. IFRS terminology is not binding;
2. IFRS terminology is not the terminology most commonly used in practice;
3. IFRS terminology is constantly changing;
4. IFRS terminology is inconsistent in itself;
5. IFRS terminology is not equivalent across languages.

In the following sections, these five issues will be discussed in more detail.

4.2 IFRS terminology is not binding

For the uninitiated observer, it may seem natural to assume that accounting standards would also imply standardised accounting terminology. In reality, though, standardisation mostly just refers to the content of the rules and not their linguistic form. Most surprisingly, terminological unification does not seem to be an objective of IFRS at all. IAS 1 paragraph 8², for instance, explicitly states: “Although this Standard uses the terms ‘other comprehensive income’, ‘profit or loss’ and ‘total comprehensive income’, an entity may use other terms to describe the totals as long as the meaning is clear.” Similarly, IAS 1 paragraph 10 says: “An entity may use titles

² All references to IAS and IFRS refer to the standards as found in the IDW text edition (IDW 2013). IFRS standards can be found in many different versions, both printed and electronically (e.g., IFRS.org 2014). Basically, although the standards are altered frequently, all these versions are identical at any given time. As the examples used here refer to the respective standards at a particular point in time, I have decided to use a printed version as reference, although this is from now on not explicitly referred to in the text.

for the statements other than those used in this Standard.” As this can also be applied to practically all other terms used in the standards, it is in effect unnecessary to use the official IFRS terminology in financial reporting.

The idea behind this decision might be that, as IFRS follows a principles-based approach, as opposed to the rules-based system of US GAAP, the language used should also not be prescriptive. Furthermore, in view of the large number of languages used in connection with IFRS, developing a uniform terminology that works across all languages is clearly impossible. Because, at least in theory, all languages have the same legal status, and not even English is stipulated as the IFRS language as such, trying to enforce uniformity in English alone makes little sense conceptually. The unfortunate side effect from a harmonisation point of view, of course, is that it takes much longer for companies to arrive at a more uniform terminology, with all the implications this has.

4.3 IFRS terminology is not the terminology most commonly used in practice

Partly from the outset and partly because of changes over the years, the official terminology used in IFRS has not always reflected what is commonly used in practice. This holds true to varying degrees depending on the language, but is especially true for English. It might also be a further reason why IFRS terminology is not binding, as the obligatory use of new and uncommon terms might have met with considerable resistance in practice.

Among the most obvious examples of this phenomenon are the new terms for the components of the annual accounts used by IFRS (see also Table 21.1 in Section 4.4). This can best be seen in the new term *statement of financial position*, which is used instead of *balance sheet*. This move was by no means uncontroversial, as shown by the comment made at the time by the British Accounting Standards Board in line with the views of many similar organisations: although the board did not have any objection to the new terminology, it saw “no real merit” in it other than creating “tidiness” and felt the current titles were “well-established”, if “perhaps less logical” (Accounting Standards Board 2006: 3). One potential explanation for the International Accounting Standards Board’s approach is given by Evans (2010: 448). She suggests that, as the function of the balance sheet changed, a new term was chosen to reflect this shift. It could also be argued, though, that the International Accounting Standards Board simply wanted to create more unified terminology in that all the titles of the components now start with *statement of*. Yet renaming such items despite a century-old tradition of use can also be seen, in line with Young’s line of argumentation (2003), as an expression of power on the part of the standard-setters.

Regardless of the reasons for change, the effect of using terminology quite different to the commonly used terms, though difficult to quantify, is certainly detrimental to standardisation. Companies tend to adhere to traditional terminology, particularly in their “home” languages. As regards English translations, it can be safely assumed that these follow previous translations used rather than some greater strategic drive towards unification. Most people in charge of translations are either professional translators or, where translations are done in-house, practitioners at a lower hierarchical level. These groups are fairly unlikely to have the International Accounting Standards Board’s overall objective in mind when translating financial reports into English, especially as they are frequently under time pressure.

The introduction of new terminology also varies considerably from language to language. In German, for instance, the term *Bilanz* (for *balance sheet*) remained unchanged. Apparently the need for keeping the one standard term for this financial document in German outweighed the desire for uniformity. It is, after all, difficult to believe that this fairly significant decision was made by a translator alone. On the other hand, related terms were indeed changed, even in German. Just as in English there was a shift from *balance sheet date* to *end of the reporting period*, in German *nach dem Bilanzstichtag* was converted into *nach dem Ende der Berichtsperiode*. Yet in German this move had far broader consequences: in English *balance sheet date* was never a particularly widely used term, while *Bilanzstichtag* is indeed an absolutely standard term in German financial parlance, which has now vanished in IFRS. It is, therefore, safe to assume that the term will continue to be used for quite some time, IFRS conventions notwithstanding.

4.4 IFRS terminology is constantly changing

As there is a constant need to adapt and amend accounting standards, the terminology used changes with them, albeit at a much slower pace. In 2009 alone, admittedly a particularly busy year following the onset of the credit crunch, no fewer than 17 EU regulations concerned amendments to IFRS. The (at the time of writing) latest, seventh, edition of the official EU IFRS texts (IDW 2013) lists four completely new standards, one new interpretation (International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee interpretation – IFRIC) and changes to a further ten standards, plus non-specific improvements to IFRS, all since the previous sixth edition some 26 months earlier.

In most cases, changes in terminology are not explicitly commented on, which makes keeping track of alterations difficult even for frequent users. At times there are references to attempts at unifying or improving the terminology used, such as in a footnote to the headline of IAS 29, where it says that: “As part of Improvements to IFRSs issued in May 2008, the Board changed terms used in IAS 29 to be consistent with other IFRSs.” Occasionally, terminological change is in fact the main focus of the standard-setters’ actions.

Possibly the most comprehensive change in terminology in IAS/IFRS history occurred in 2006/2007, when a new version of IAS 1 introduced a number of new terms on a systematic basis. These new terms also replaced the old terminology in the other existing IFRS and were to be used in future regulations. Table 21.1 shows some of the most important terms before and after the amendments.

Table 21.1: Changes in terminology as given in IAS 1 (Source: IASplus 2014)

Term before 2007 revision of IAS 1	Term as amended by IAS 1 (2007)
<i>balance sheet</i>	<i>statement of financial position</i>
<i>cash flow statement</i>	<i>statement of cash flows</i>
<i>income statement</i>	<i>statement of comprehensive income [income statement is retained in case of a two-statement approach]</i>
<i>recognised in the income statement</i>	<i>recognised in profit or loss</i>
<i>recognised [directly] in equity (only for OCI components)</i>	<i>recognised in other comprehensive income</i>
<i>recognised [directly] in equity (for recognition both in OCI and equity)</i>	<i>recognised outside profit or loss (either in OCI or equity)</i>
<i>removed from equity and recognised in profit or loss ('recycling')</i>	<i>reclassified from equity to profit or loss as a reclassification adjustment</i>
<i>Standard or/and Interpretation</i>	<i>IFRSs</i>
<i>on the face of</i>	<i>in</i>
<i>equity holders</i>	<i>owners (exception for 'ordinary equity holders')</i>
<i>balance sheet date</i>	<i>end of the reporting period</i>
<i>reporting date</i>	<i>end of the reporting period</i>
<i>after the balance sheet date</i>	<i>after the reporting period</i>

With the sheer number of changes to IFRS terminology, there is bound to be some confusion when, for instance, perusing texts written before this change (or indeed any other minor changes), although obviously this particular problem will diminish over time. In short, the constant alterations can clearly be seen as a major obstacle to the standardised use of terminology, irrespective of the language used.

4.5 IFRS terminology is inconsistent in itself

Despite the International Accounting Standards Board's efforts to unify, older terminology can still be found at any given time. This may be partly because standards are only altered or replaced one by one. Partly, though, it also reflects the multiple meanings of particular terms in a particular language, which, when subsequently translated into other languages, often seem confusing. Finally, sloppy or careless translations and insufficient coordination with other translators can also be blamed.

For a number of reasons, terms are sometimes interpreted in a particular manner for a particular standard. This is most often true for expressions other than the key words used throughout the standards, such as certain general-language verbs, adjectives or adverbs in a very specific context. One example of such a case, where the standard even makes this explicit, can be found in the footnote to IAS 37 paragraph 23. The English and German versions read as follows:

English: “[1] The interpretation of ‘probable’ in this standard as ‘more likely than not’ does not necessarily apply in other standards.”

German: “[1] Die Auslegung von ‚wahrscheinlich‘ in diesem Standard als ‚mehr dafür als dagegen sprechend‘ ist nicht zwingend auf andere Standards anwendbar.”

Moreover, the fact that a particular interpretation can be explained clearly and seems logical in one language does not necessarily mean that the same holds true in another language. This can result in even more complex translation issues (see the discussion in Section 4.6 below). Overall, a rich variety of inconsistencies can be detected, with a few examples given below.

In some cases, a multitude of terms is used apparently at random. The English term *unrecognised*, or its formal variant *not recognised*, for example, has at least four different German translations. Interestingly enough, all four can also be found in one single standard, IAS 12, putting paid to the argument that different translations will be found in different standards. Table 21.2 shows the variant translations.

Table 21.2: German translation variants of *unrecognised*

German translation	In IAS 12	Other occurrences
<i>nicht erfasst</i>	Paragraph 22	e.g., IAS 18, 34, 39
<i>nicht bilanziert</i>	Paragraphs 21 A, 37	e.g., IFRS 1, IAS 1
<i>nicht angesetzt</i>	Table of contents, paragraph 21A	e.g., IAS 37, 38
<i>nicht berücksichtigt</i>	Paragraph 80	Not with this meaning

Even more interestingly, the term *nicht berücksichtigt* is, to my knowledge, not used in the sense of *unrecognised* anywhere else in the standards. In fact, it is used for a variety of English expressions, as can be seen in Table 21.3.

Table 21.3: English equivalents of *nicht berücksichtigt*

English phrase	Used in standard
<i>not reflected</i>	IAS 34, paragraph 16(h)
<i>no consideration is given</i>	IAS 36 paragraph 107
<i>to be excluded</i>	IAS 1, paragraph 89
<i>not to be taken into account</i>	IAS 37, paragraph 51
<i>not considered</i>	IFRS 4, paragraph 17 (a) (ii)

The overall effect of this plethora of equivalents is, of course, detrimental to the idea of uniform and systematic terminology. Especially those dealing with IFRS on a non-regular basis can easily be confused, and misinterpretations may be the result.

Three more examples of inconsistencies in German are of interest. First, there may be a recurring inconsistency within one standard. IAS 12, for example, uses two different German equivalents for the English term *tax jurisdiction*. In paragraph 63, amongst others, it is translated as *Steuergesetzgebung*, while paragraph 68A, for example, uses the expression *Steuerrechtskreis*. Although both translations seem valid, the use of two different terms might still cause confusion.

Second, inconsistencies arise due to cultural factors, i.e. inequivalence in accounting systems and thus terminology. One good example of a general difference between English and German, apparently also relevant in other cultures, can be found in IAS 16 paragraph 21. The two versions are given below, where the highlighted terms show the divergence in use (bold print added):

English: “For example, **income** may be earned through using a building site as a car park until construction starts. Because incidental operations are not necessary to bring an item to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management, the **income** and related expenses of incidental operations are recognised in profit or loss and included in their respective classifications of **income** and expense.”

German: “**Einnahmen** können zum Beispiel erzielt werden, indem der Standort für ein Gebäude vor Baubeginn als Parkplatz genutzt wird. Da verbundene Geschäftstätigkeiten nicht notwendig sind, um eine Sachanlage zu dem Standort und in den vom Management beabsichtigten betriebsbereiten Zustand zu bringen, werden die **Erträge** und dazugehörigen Aufwendungen der Nebengeschäfte ergebniswirksam erfasst und in ihren entsprechenden **Ertrags-** und Aufwandsposten ausgewiesen.”

In English, the term *income* is used consistently here. Generally the use of terminology in German is also very consistent, maybe even more so than in English. However, in certain instances, there is considerable variety in the terms used, often with very precise differentiations between individual terms. Unfortunately, not everybody uses the many terms available in such a precise manner, which seems to be the case in the example above, as in a narrow sense *Einnahmen* und *Erträge* are not the same thing.

The reason for the divergence here is the different tradition and development of the respective cost accounting systems in German- and English-speaking countries, which developed almost completely independently from each other. The German system is very rich in clearly defined terms and categories. In this particular instance, there are different terms for positive and negative changes in assets, as shown in Table 21.4. Although doubtless of relevance to experts (and much hated by business students), these distinctions are, in all likelihood, rarely made outside the field of cost accounting. Hence the surfeit of terms for very similar concepts is also a liability, as it is folly to rely on the exact use of any of the terms, as the usage in IAS 16 proves.

Table 21.4: German cost accounting terminology (based on Controllingportal 2014)

Asset type	Defined as	Positive change	Negative change
Cash assets	Cash + sight deposits	<i>Einzahlung</i>	<i>Auszahlung</i>
Monetary assets	Cash assets + receivables – liabilities	<i>Einnahme</i>	<i>Ausgabe</i>
Total assets	Monetary assets + non-monetary assets	<i>Ertrag</i>	<i>Aufwand</i>
Operating assets	Total assets – non-operating assets	<i>Leistung</i>	<i>Kosten</i>

The fact that in English there are no clear distinctions between any of the expressions used as equivalents of those in the change columns also gives rise to a related translation problem. Thus the difference between *Kosten* and *Aufwand* in German does not exist in English. Quite often, translators mistakenly use the terms *costs* and *expenses* respectively, assuming equivalence. In English, however, *costs* and *expenses* are used interchangeably. The effect is that the English terms are then interpreted to mean two different things, while they in fact refer to the same concept. The translation of *income* also causes problems in other languages, such as Swedish (Dahlgren and Nilsson: 2009; Norberg and Johansson 2013: 37–42) and Finnish (Kettunen 2011: 12–14). Given the centrality of the concept of income, such inequivalence does not bode well. Barker (2010) even argues that some concepts, including income, are altogether wrongly defined in IFRS.

Third, there are cases of the “exceptional use” of a particular equivalent, apparently unmotivated, when normally another would be used. The term *hedging relationship*, for example, is translated into German as *Sicherungsbeziehung* throughout, but in IFRS 1 paragraph 1 B5 (formerly paragraph 29) it is translated as *Sicherungsgeschäft*. Similarly, the expression *reporting entity* is generally translated as *berichtendes Unternehmen*, which is also used in the definition in IAS 24 paragraph 9. Yet in IAS 26 paragraph 2, the German term is *Berichtseinheit*.

Inconsistencies, though, are by no means restricted to languages other than English, where they might be explained as arising from the translation process. In English, for example, the standard term for profits not distributed to the shareholders is *reserves*, as found for example in IAS 1 paragraph 79 b). In both IAS 16 paragraph 41 and IAS 38 paragraph 87, however, the terms used are *surplus*, *revaluation surplus*, and *retained earnings*. The German term is *Rücklage*. In the German version, in these three instances the terminology is used consistently and thus we find *Rücklage*, *Neubewertungsrücklage* and *Gewinnrücklage*. What is more, in IAS 32 paragraph AG 25, the term *reserves* is used to mean something completely different, namely funds set aside for potential future liabilities (in German, *Rückstellungen*). This is in direct contradiction to the official term *provisions*, which is even the name of IAS 37.

The probable reason for this is American usage, where *reserves*, although generally having the same meaning as in British English, is occasionally used in the sense of *provisions*. This underlines the hybrid nature of IFRS between British and American English referred to earlier, which here causes a language problem.

Finally, while the footnote to IAS 29 mentioned above established that “(a) ‘market value’ was amended to ‘fair value’, and (b) ‘results of operations’ and ‘net income’ were amended to ‘profit or loss’”, both IAS 34 paragraph 16A c) and IAS 32 paragraph 25 still use the term *net income*. Overall, the prevalence of inconsistently used terms is a weakness throughout IFRS as, despite the numerous changes and improvements to the standard, correcting these flaws seems to be very low on the agenda of standard setters.

4.6 IFRS terminology is not equivalent across languages

The problem of achieving equivalence in accounting translations has already been addressed (towards the end of Section 3). This has been a major issue in the translation of IFRS ever since their conception since we find the same distinct lack of semantic equivalence. Professionals closely involved in IFRS are also increasingly becoming aware of the discrepancies. With reference to French and English, Peter Walton, the IFRS director at the ESSEC KPMG Financial Reporting Centre, has come to the conclusion that IFRS mean different things in different languages (reported in Cohn 2013: 1–2). This becomes yet more apparent in the foreword to one of the bilingual editions of official EU IFRS standards, the Wiley version, which simply states that the German translation is “in some places inexact or even wrong” (Wiley 2014: vii).

Part of the problem is that, for IFRS, two different translation systems are currently at work. The European Union handles translations for all EU languages, mostly through its Directorate General for Translations. The actual work is either done by in-house translators or outsourced to external translators, as is the case for more than a quarter of European Commission translations (European Commission 2014). Non-European languages, on the other hand, are the responsibility of the IFRS foundation, where the translation process is fairly complex (see Figure 21.2). This two-pronged approach to translating IFRS is seen in itself as a source of translation discrepancies (Kettunen 2011: 9; Baskerville and Evans 2011a: 6).

- 1) IFRS Foundation extracts key terms from the IFRS >>>
- 2) The key terms are translated by translator >>>
- 3) Translated key terms are agreed on by Committee >>>
- 4) Translator uses key terms and existing IFRS reference material to translate IFRSs, utilising Computer Assisted Translation software where possible >>>
- 5) Committee reviews draft translation for accuracy and consistency and text is finalised

Figure 21.2: Official IFRS Foundation translation process of (adapted from IFRS Foundation 2014)

Quite apart from problems of equivalence, a number of errors and omissions can still be found in IFRS that are likely to be simply a result of inaccurate and careless translations. An example of an omission can be found in IAS 32, paragraph AG 19, where the two versions read as follows (bold print added):

English: “including interest rate and currency swaps, **interest rate caps**, collars and floors”

German: “einschließlich Zins- und Währungsswaps, Collars und Floors”

Here, the German version simply leaves out *interest rate caps*. It is unlikely that this omission was intentional, as the term could easily have been translated into German (e.g., as *Zinscap*, a commonly used English/German hybrid). Another example is found in IFRS 2, paragraph B39, where the English term *held in treasury* is, in German, translated as simply *gehalten*. Again, the expression *in treasury* is not translated into German.

An example of an interpretation error is provided by IAS 36, paragraph (App.) A1. (bold print added):

English: “represented by the **current market risk-free rate of interest**”

German: “der durch den **risikolosen Zinssatz des aktuellen Markts** dargestellt wird”

While in English the expression refers to a *current rate of interest*, the reference has been switched in German, where *current* now refers to *market*, which looks unusual to say the least.

What makes these errors, and many other examples, worrying is the fact that they are apparently not rectified on any systematic basis. They were still part of the official EU texts at the time of writing, some five years after they were detected in the respective standards. Further examples of translation inaccuracies in IFRS abound. Some relating to the German translation of IFRS can be found in Niehus (2005), as well as Hellmann, Perera, and Patel (2010: 12–14). Nobes and Parker (2008: 149) list errors from Norwegian and Portuguese, and Tsakumis, Campbell, and Douplik (2009: 36–37) provide others from Spanish, German and French. All these examples refer to official IFRS documents, so it would be of interest to take a look at the way companies handle things as well.

In companies, foreign language versions of financial reports, particularly English ones, are usually handled by external translators. Such texts include a great variety of terms, to a certain extent due to the problems inherent in translating IFRS terms described in Section 2. However, in the long run, a slow convergence towards IFRS terminology can be expected, as translators increasingly come to rely on documents based on IFRS. The Big Four accounting firms, for instance, all offer a free download of what they variously call “model” or “illustrative” financial statements/reports in several major languages. These materials are already widely used in the translating community, and, as the terminology used is almost completely standardised, this is

bound to have a unifying effect on the reporting terminology used. Table 21.5 provides the links to the (at the time of writing) latest English and German language versions of these documents (accessed 21 May 2015).

Table 21.5: Big Four standardised model financial reports

Deloitte model financial reports			
English	Date	German	Date
http://www.iasplus.com/en/publications/global/models-checklists/2014/ifrs-mfs-2014	2014	http://www.iasplus.com/de/publications/german-publications/models-and-checklists/ifrs-model-financial-statements-for-2014-german	2014
KPMG guide to financial statements			
English	Date	German	Date
http://www.kpmg.com/Global/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/IFRS-guide-to-financial-statements/Pages/guide-IFS-disclosures-sept14.aspx	2013	http://www.kpmg.at/publikationen/publikationen-details/1863-ifrs-muster-konzernabschluss-dezember-2013.html	2013
PwC illustrative financial statements			
English	Date	German	Date
https://inform.pwc.com/inform2/show?action=informContent&id=1414242310168538	2014	http://www.pwc.de/de_DE/de/rechnungslegung/assets/musterkonzernabschluss_8_aufgabe.pdf	2012
EY illustrative financial statements			
English	Date	German	Date
http://www.ey.com/GL/en/Issues/IFRS/Issues_GL_IFRS_NAV_Core-tools-library	2014	http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_IFRS_Muster_Konzern_Zwischenabschluss_2014/\$FILE/EY-IFRS-Good-Group-Zwischenabschluss-2014.pdf	2014

The latest versions available once more show the predominance of English as the language of accounting: while the English versions are practically always up-to-date, the German translations are not. As the changes from year to year rarely affect terminological issues, though, this is of little consequence from a language point of view.

According to Hellmann, Perera, and Patel (2010: 3), (flawed) translation is a “threat to comparability” and an “impediment for a consistent application and interpretation of IFRS”. Norberg and Johansson (2013: 43) also argue that “terminological uniformity is needed to promote transparency and comparability in accounting communication”. Yet this uniformity is not easily achieved because the translation problem can only be solved partially. What does seem important is that translators

have a solid understanding of accounting as well as the cultures of the two languages involved, which is not always the case in practice (Kettunen 2011: 16–17). In an extensive study, Baskerville and Evans (2011a) surveyed a large number of practitioners involved in translating textbooks. Many of these are also active in IFRS translations or involved with IFRS in other ways. The respondents did not see translations as impossible, but generally agreed that “exact equivalence cannot be achieved” and that translators are forced to resort to interpretation (Baskerville and Evans 2011a: 6). The translators, of course, try to remedy this deficiency, but in many cases it is extremely difficult to find a solution. As Kettunen (2011: 9) states, the International Accounting Standards Board, for example, asks for word-for-word equivalents, which is just not possible in most cases. Greater awareness of this situation is therefore crucial in order to minimise misreadings and misunderstandings.

5 Conclusion

Due to the importance of finance and accounting, the terminology used in this field has also been the subject of research in a variety of disciplines and sub-disciplines. This paper has tried to provide a brief overview of the various strands of research. At the same time, an increasingly globalised world economy has made the topic of standardisation in accounting, and particularly financial reporting, a central issue. It would thus be reasonable to expect that, as accounting and reporting systems converge, so will the terminology involved.

However, different traditions and cultures, regarding both terminology and its underlying concepts, have in many cases proven surprisingly resistant to standardisation efforts and effects. In practice, companies seem to use a mixture of terms and definitions drawn from international standards and local practice, with significant differences when using English or their local tongue (Edelmann 2010). Part of the reluctance to switch to IFRS terminology can be explained by factors inherent in IFRS, with the problem of finding accurate translations being of particular importance. Moreover, accounting terminology shows a great deal of variety, ambiguity and inconsistency, not only across languages, but also within individual languages. This further inhibits a faster take-up of new terminology and thus faster harmonisation.

In pointing out these problems, it is hoped that practitioners as well as learners can become more aware of the difficulty, and indeed at times impossibility, of finding terminological equivalence in two languages. That, in turn, can develop a greater sensitivity to the vagaries of terminology in accounting and finance, as well as other lexical fields. Lexicographers and translators can also benefit from research in this field. On the one hand, greater efforts might be taken to rectify inaccuracies. On the other, awareness of the situation and broader knowledge of the factors involved could further new attempts to overcome these obstacles. Simply suggesting that “in case of doubt the original International Accounting Standards Board text should be

consulted when answering accounting questions” (Wiley 2014: xix) might be sufficient for the publisher of a bilingual textbook, but it is hardly a satisfactory solution to the translation problem.

Research into accounting terminology is also of relevance for the teaching profession. Teachers should make sure that students become aware of the irregular use of terminology, the lack of equivalence in both terms and concepts between languages and also the flaws in IFRS from a terminological point of view. This is not only of practical relevance but also fosters critical thinking about the accounting industry as a “hegemonic system for the production of truth”, as Graham (2013: 125) puts it. The findings of this paper and of previous research provide some basis for doing so.

This chapter has only been able to provide a brief overview and sketch out the most pertinent elements involved in the language of accounting in the light of the ongoing standardisation process. Future research can contribute much to providing more detailed and more substantial data. It would be interesting, for instance, to conduct a large-scale study of company reports across multiple languages to establish more precisely the degree of acceptance and use of IFRS terminology. Also, by delving more into the numerous problem areas of translation and inaccuracies within IFRS texts, it may be possible to prompt standard-setters to contribute more to linguistic harmonisation. Existing errors could thus be corrected, and conclusions fed back into existing translation procedures, thereby improving them. Greater awareness on the official bodies’ part might even make them realise that asking the impossible is bound to be less effective than developing more workable solutions. In such ways, language harmonisation could contribute a great deal to the overarching objective of accounting standardisation.

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22 Proper names in business

1. Introduction
2. Product names
3. Organisation names
4. Event names
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Proper names are indispensable in and for business, forming the core of organisations' corporate identity. They establish reference to a single entity, for example, to a specific organisation, good or service. This means that proper names in business refer to a specific object, even if this object is manufactured millions of times. Most business genres cannot manage without using proper names, as these not only allow unequivocal identification through unique reference, but are also essential for marketing. In advertising it is even possible to abandon all usual structural elements like slogans, headers, etc. (Janich and Runkehl 2013: 53–107), but not the name of the advertised product, service or, in the case of image advertising, the name of the advertiser. In some cultures the presence of the company's or organisation's name is common in advertising, in addition to the name of the advertised good or product (Jun and Lee 2007: 478–481).

The following descriptions will deal with the three most common and typical name classes in business: names of goods and services (product names), names of organisations and names of events. Other name classes, for example place names, which are used to localise business units and buildings in an organisation, or personal names, i.e. the names of people or groups of people, can also be used in business. However, they will not be discussed in this chapter as they are not specific to it, being found throughout society.

There is only partial consensus in onomastic literature on how to assign proper names in business to specific classes (Brendler 2004). In this chapter, we will adopt a classification of names according to the object classes named (Brendler 2004: 71–72). Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012) apply such a classification in a fundamental work on onomastics. According to their classification, the names of goods and services, like the names of organisations, belong to the class of “ergonyms”, while the names of events belong to a separate class of “praxonyms” (Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 265–325). In accordance with organisational theory, the term *organisation names* will be used here to include company names. Nübling, Fahlbusch and Heuser make a distinction between company names and organisa-

tion names, which they understand as the names of parties, authorities, museums, educational institutions and associations. For sure, our choice of terminology does justice to the openness of the object class named by these authors. However, it also acknowledges the fact that, in the era of discourse marketization, classes of randomly separated institutional objects are barely different from each other in their pragmatics and structure, as well as in their onymic character. Additionally, there are differences in onomastic literature regarding the term *ergonym*. It is used as the name of a class that encompasses the names of goods and services, of organisations and of further entities (Vasil'eva 2004: 605–606; Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 265–315). Because of this ambiguity, its use will be avoided in this chapter to which Fiorenza Fischer has contributed Section 3, as well as Section 5 together with Holger Wochele, Edgar Hoffmann Sections 1 and 4, and Holger Wochele Section 2.

2 Product names

2.1 Terminology

The analysis of product names falls into an interdisciplinary area: product names are studied not only in linguistics, but also in business administration (marketing, advertising) and in legal studies (cf. Koß 2002: 184). Terminology varies regarding the designation of this subgroup of names. Room (1996) lists the English terms *brand name*, *commercial name*, *promotional name* and *trade name* without differentiating them semantically and mentions the term *trade mark* as a synonym of *brand name*. In contrast to the usual German terminology, he understands *econym/oikonym* as the “name of any settlement, including a town [...] or village [...]” (p. 35), and *chrematonym* as “the name of any unique cultural object of value” (p. 20). Competing equivalents for *product name* in German are *Ökononym* (Platen 1997), *Warename*, *Chrematonym*, *Handelsname*, *Produktename* and *Produktname* (cf. Eckkramer and Thaler 2013: 14). Like Gabriel (2003: 28), Eckkramer and Thaler (2013: 14) state that the terms mentioned lack accuracy. Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012: 266) correctly point out that, both in colloquial speech and in scientific literature, “*Produktname* ‘product name’, *Handelsname* ‘trade name’ and *Markenname* ‘brand name’ are [...] used largely synonymously, though with slightly different emphases” (author’s translation). They assert that onomastics has recognised the term *trade name*, which Eckkramer and Thaler (2013: 14–15) have deemed obsolete as there is no longer a trademark act in Germany. The term *trade name* implies that the name is entered in a national or international register (Austrian Patent Office, German Patent and Trade Mark Office or, at EU level, Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market in Alicante, Spain). Eckkramer and Thaler (2013: 15) suggest restricting use to the terms *trade name* and *product name*, where the latter should be used as a generic

term for material and immaterial products, while trade names should be used exclusively for material goods. In line with Gabriel (2003), who also used the term *product onomastics*, the term *product name* will be used below to denote names of goods and services.

2.2 Functions of product names

In terms of their function, product names are also used as identifiers, i.e. they refer to non-linguistic objects. As Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012: 32) show, referring to Debus (1980), that this happens directly, as with all other names. Thus, in contrast to common nouns, no concept, content or lexical meaning (*signifié*) is connected with the material (graphic or phonic) expression (*signifiant*), but rather the non-linguistic reality is referred to directly. This should not be confused with the semantics of the lexical material used to create product names or with the origin of or motivation for product names, provided that it can be reconstructed. Reference books, such as Praninskas (1968), Room (1982), Lötscher (1987), Watin-Augouard (1997), and Galisson and André (1998), as well as the title of Lödige (2002), testify to interest in the etymology of members of this name class, not least from a lay audience. However, it should be taken into account that the large number of product names (Ronneberger-Sibold 2004: 563 talks of around 30,000 names which are registered yearly with the German Patent Office) and their instability make researching them difficult. Furthermore, Lötscher (2012) rightly notes with regard to company names that in many cases producers' own interpretations of names tend to resemble "private mythologies" which cannot be binding for researchers and need not be universally recognisable (Lötscher 2012: 109).

From a marketing perspective, without doubt the most significant, a further important function of product names consists in their advertising function; the product name should generate attention and positive interest among potential buyers. As Zilg (2006: 14–16) states, the social conditions under which product names are marketed are characterised by information overload and market saturation, so that products are often barely differentiated by their objective and functional quality. A trend can therefore be assumed "from product advertising to communication advertising" (Zilg 2006: 15), in which the product name is accorded a prominent role. According to Ronneberger-Sibold (2004: 563), in order to fulfil its advertising function a brand name must be conspicuous, not too long, easy to say and memorable, as well as invoking positive associations. If the product name is to be protected as a brand name, it has to fulfil further legal requirements (cf. Ronneberger-Sibold 2004: 563–564). For example, descriptive common nouns in current use are barred, while the chosen name may not be identical, or very similar to, names already protected in the same class of goods.

2.3 Product names and globalisation

A further difficulty results from the fact that, in a globalised, multilingual world, product names are often supposed to fulfil their advertising function across languages. An alternative to the strategy of standardising the name for cross-national, universal use, is country-specific advertising, as Zilg (2006: 63–65) mentions. In principle, three strategies can be identified in the case of differentiation:

- 1) the transposition strategy, which gives a literal translation of the name, provided the lexical material constituting the name allows for such a solution (*La vache qui rit* – *The laughing cow*);
- 2) the adaptation strategy, where a name “expresses the same concept” in different languages (Zilg 2006: 65; France: *Cajoline* vs. Italy: *Coccolino*);
- 3) the true differentiation strategy, where a completely different name is used for every country or group of countries: *Eskimo* (Austria, Croatia, Slovenia) vs. *Langnese* (Germany) vs. *Algida* (Italy, Hungary) vs. *Frijo* (Spain), etc.

If a company adopts the standardisation strategy, using the same product name in various markets, it is possible that the name has negative associations in one or more of these due to partial or total homography or homophony with lexemes which have a negative meaning or which touch on taboos. As a result, undesired collisions, so-called “big business blunders”, may occur. Thus *Puff* as a name for snacks in South Tyrol (Italy) is problematic as *Puff* means ‘brothel’ in colloquial German; *Hypercon* for an optical product in France can be linked with *hypercon*, colloquial for ‘bloody stupid’. Platen (1997: 155–159) and Gabriel (2003: 66) list some such big business blunders. In order to avoid the undesired and sales-reducing effects associated with them, potential product names are checked for their international suitability when they are created, often by professional naming agencies. However, this undertaking can never be entirely successful given the multitude of languages worldwide and the number of existing product names. On the other hand, a product name which evokes undesired associations need not be ineffective: *Omo* (homophony to Colloquial French *homo* ‘gay’), *Persil* (French *persil* ‘parsley’) and products from the company *Bosch* (homophony to French *boche*, pejorative for ‘German’) sell well in France.

2.4 The onymic status of product names

The onymic status of product names was long controversial within onomastics. The weightiest argument against proper noun status concerns violation of the unique-reference requirement, i.e. a particular product name does not refer to one single referent, but to a multitude of products. However, at the same time it must be considered that, thanks to modern industrial mass production, the referents are identical and thus interchangeable. It can therefore be said that a particular referent

exists several times: 24 bottles of *Ottakringer* beer can be counted but cannot be differentiated from each other, while the five bearers of the name *Karl Ott* in Vienna simply have the same name, being otherwise clearly different people. In this case, onomastics talks of homonymy (for discussion, cf. Koß 2002: 184–186; Ronneberger-Sibold 2004: 557–558; Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 268–269). In many cases it is argued that product names should be placed in the grey area between proper and common nouns (e.g., Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 269). This conclusion is also supported by the fact that, in contrast to other proper nouns, product names can be used with numerals or determinants: *I have an Apple (computer); I'll have three Red Bulls*.

Especially with successful product names it is often possible to observe across various languages that the prototypical representative becomes a common noun. One instance is sticky tape: English (UK) *sellotape*, English (US) *Scotch tape*, French/Italian *scotch*, German (Germany) *Tesafilm*, German (Austria) *Tixo*. This means that in these cases a “deonymisation” of product names has taken place: in spoken German, any kind of caffeinated fizzy drink is called *Cola* and any kind of paper tissue *Tempo*, irrespective of the producer. This assessment is not contradicted by the observation that dictionaries mark known product names with the “®” symbol as a protected product name (cf. Duden 2009: “Coca-Cola®”).

2.5 Formation and structure of product names

With regard to the creation of product names one can, loosely speaking, differentiate between lexical (*Apple*) and onymic (*Mercedes*) borrowings, on the one hand, and neologisms and new creations on the other (Ronneberger-Sibold 2004: 561). Platen (1997: 38–44) distinguishes borrowings, *Konzeptformen* [concept forms] which still have a certain degree of transparency (*Schauma* [cf. German *Schaum* ‘foam’], *Wella* [cf. German *Welle* ‘wave’], *Nourissa* [cf. *nourish*]) and artificial words, which are “characterised by a particularly high degree of strangification” (1997: 44). Examples of the last category are opaque formations such as *Elmex*, *Exxon* or *Kodak*.

Following Zilg (2006: 73–194), product names can be examined linguistically in terms of their phonetic and graphic structure, their morphological composition, and their semantics and possible lexical features, where these latter should be understood as the contribution of foreign or non-standard language material to the composition of the product name. The first of these factors is of particular relevance in fulfilling the advertising function which, as has already been shown, product names possess, either through phonetic and graphic originality and conspicuousness, or by ease of pronunciation. Names’ conspicuousness can be heightened by means of onomatopoeia (*Tam Tam*, *Tic Tac*), wordplays (Italian *Dieta Lieta* [Happy Diet]), sound symbolism, continuous capitalisation (*OMO*), internal capital letters (*BahnCard* [RailwayCard]) and doubled letters without phonetic value (*Mexx*), as well as by the selective use of punctuation marks (*Come una volta!!*) and diacritics (*NÁTTÚRA*). Such features are called *attractors*.

As regards the morphology of product names, it is possible to differentiate between one-part and multi-part formations. Multi-part formations can be noun phrases (*Red Bull*, *La Braceria* [The Steak Restaurant]), asyndetic sequences (*Quelle Bank Alpen Card*) or a combination of both processes (*Nivea For Men Cool Kick After Shave Balsam*). Alternatively, they can function as a sentence (German *Nimm zwei!* [Take two!], *Du darfst* [You may]). Detailed studies are available on the morphological structure of brand names (e.g., for German, in Ronneberger 2004: 575–592). They show that new names can be formed either through conversion, composition and derivation or using creation techniques such as abbreviation (apheresis, apocope, acronym formation, etc.), strangification (*Vileda* < *wie Leder* [like leather]), and hybridization (*Mentholiptus* < *Menthol* + *Eukalyptus*). Whereas some forms, such as those that use onomatopoeia (*Tic Tac*, *Maoam*, *Ffft*), free creations (*Kodak*) and artificial words, have no basis in linguistic material, others do. In the latter case, the linguistic source material may derive from an original form which then simply changes in terms of its expression (i.e. is strangified or abbreviated: *Isi* from *easy*, *Selters* from *Selterswasser*). Alternatively, as with derivation and composition, both content and expression are changed, in which this case one talks of “extragrammatical” composition and derivation. The notion of “pseudo-affixations” (Ronneberger-Sibold 2004: 585–586) also appears in this context, since in advertising language affixes are used in a way which does not correspond to their other functions and distribution. Foreign-language suffixes such as *-ello/a* or *-ette* can, for example, be combined with German forms, and the same is true of “commercial suffixes”, such as *-lon* in *Perlon* (Praninskas 1968; Koß 2002: 184) and “advertising-language affixoids” (Zilg 2006: 113–118).

In contrast to inherited place names and names of persons, whose origin can be elucidated through etymological research, product names are of recent origin and consciously created. Furthermore, as they have an advertising function, the recipient’s perspective is crucial. This means that the processes of strangification, etc. that have been applied may be retrievable by the recipient, but they need not be. In contrast to scientific etymology, the information provided by producers has been shown to be unreliable on occasion. As a result, non-transparent product names (such as *Rowenta*, from *Robert Weintraub*) achieve an effect with recipients, but these do not necessarily have to know the strangification process associated with it. A recipient may associate the brand name *Aral* with the sea in Russia, whereas in reality it traces back “etymologically” to a hybrid of *aromatic* and *aliphatic*. The big business blunders mentioned in Section 2.3 likewise clearly prove how the perspectives of recipient and producer can diverge.

As an example of a non-transparent or opaque product name, *Rowenta* conflicts with transparent formations (borrowings) such as *Alpirsbacher Klosterbräu* [beer from the Alpirsbach monastery]. However, it is important to bear in mind that the question of transparency and opacity depends on the recipient’s world knowledge: the product name *Lancôme* will seem opaque to someone who does not know that

the name comes from a castle near Paris, *Château de Lancosme*. The question of the product name's motivation, i.e. to what extent the name fits the product and has to do with its nature, should be kept clearly separate from the transparent-opaque opposition. Even if we know that *Lancosme* is the name of a castle near Paris, we do not know why the product was named after it. At the same time the place name *Salzburg* is transparent (German *Salz* 'salt' + *Burg* 'castle'), but – without corresponding etymological knowledge – unmotivated. Something similar can be said for the folk-etymologically strangified *sparrow-grass*, which is seemingly transparent though totally unmotivated.

This leads to the question of the semantic structure of product names. As mentioned at the beginning, proper names have no lexical meaning. However, this does not contradict the fact that lexical material used to create product names can have a denotative meaning (e.g., *Nutella*, cf. English *nut*) and that product names created in this way can evoke associations and connotations. For example, the nominal core of *Red Bull* evokes 'strength' and 'energy', the perfume *Roma*, alongside 'Italianità', the Eternal City itself. In advertising terms, these associations are extremely significant for the motivation to buy. The values that the associations refer to are always a mirror of the society concerned. Consequently, alongside more product-related values ('reliability', 'precision', etc.), product- and consumer-related values such as 'elegance', 'luxury', 'adventurism' and 'cosmopolitanism' also prove to be socially relevant (cf. Ronneberger-Sibold 2004: 571–573).

As product names, by evoking these desired associations, are a mirror of social ideals, they are also subject to historical change. In the German-speaking world one can assume a tendency away from the frequent long descriptive names from the beginning of the 20th Century (*Dr. Richter's Feigen-Brust-Bonbons* [Dr. Richter's fig chest sweets]). Today, half-transparent evocative forms dominate, which simply suggest the nature of the goods and increasingly use linguistic material from English (*Froot Loops*, *Nourissa*, *Flippo*, cf. Platen 1997: 41; more detail on the historical development in Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 272–273).

In order to evoke specific associations, foreign-language material is often used when creating product names or material that is evocative of specific foreign languages. Such formations can be purely in a foreign language (*Lancôme*) or can be hybrid formations (*Vorteilscard* [advantage card]), which combine lexical material from different languages. Of particular note is that the choice of foreign-language or pseudo foreign-language material varies according to the type of product. The names of pharmaceutical products often contain lexical elements taken from ancient Greek and Latin (Anreiter 2002; Fischer 2006), while the country-of-origin effect is frequently used for groceries to advertise the product (Rieger 2008, 2009, 2012; cf. also Platen 1999). Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012: 267) associate elegance and *joie de vivre* with Romance elements, whereas English stands for modernity, progressiveness and coolness. For regional products, dialectal elements are also used (e.g., product names for groceries in Italy, cf. Zilg 2006: 175–179).

2.6 Current state of research and desiderata

Further individual aspects can only be touched on here. These concern, for example, the attribution of gender (German *der/die/das Nutella?*, cf. Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 275–276), which can be based on various principles, or the question of the gender-specific labelling of product names with regard to a target audience (gender marketing: *Purple Passion* vs. *Boost*, *Violet Senses* vs. *Alaska*; cf. Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 274).

As for research into product names, good overviews can be found in Ronneberger-Sibold (2004: 566–569) and Eckkramer and Thaler (2013: 17–27). The historic dimension of product names has been researched for German and Italian, for example by Ronneberger-Sibold (2007, 2008, 2012) and by Cotticelli-Kurras (2007, 2012). Eckkramer and Thaler illustrate in their research that most available publications discuss German, English, French or Italian ergonyms (cf. the diagram in Eckkramer and Thaler 2013: 20), while studies of Russian, Romanian and other ergonyms are mostly individual researchers' own initiatives. Overall, it can be said that in the last twenty years product names have been researched to a formerly unknown extent and, in this respect, have come to occupy a place in onomastics on a par with names of people and places – as the 295 works on ergonyms gathered by Eckkramer and Thaler (2013) prove. However, for the large part these represent “individual studies on often strictly limited questions of ergonymic description” (Eckkramer and Thaler 2013: 26). Still required are studies based on a stronger comparative approach, which take into account various language and cultural areas as well as product groups. A further feature of relevant existing publications is their strongly empirical bias and their corpus-based approach, theoretical-classificatory studies being relatively rare (Eckkramer and Thaler 2013: 19).

3 Organisation names

3.1 Introduction and terminology

In contrast to names of geographical entities (toponyms) or proper names of people (anthroponyms), names of organisations form a peripheral, rather young, and little researched phenomenon in linguistics. Names such as *Trier* (< Latin *Augusta Treverorum*), *Wien* (< Latin *Vindobona*) or *Gerhardt Fuchs* (< *Gēr-hart* ‘spear-hard’ + *Fuchs* ‘fox; i.e. red-haired’) developed over centuries or even millennia. They are the results of an unintended process, which mirrors both the language history and the historical events of a country. Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012: 44) say: “Toponyms such as town names, mountain names and names of water bodies, but also family names, consist of ossified definite descriptions, which have gradually narrowed to this one object and are finally ossified. This is a gradual process of proprialisation [...]”

The origin of names such as *BMW* (*Bayerische Motoren Werke* [Bavarian motor works]), *WKO* (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich* [Austrian Chamber of Commerce]) or *WTO* (*World Trade Organisation*) is completely different. These are the result of an intentional naming process. Such names, consciously created by people for institutions which themselves were created by people, are designated here with the term *organisation names*. Organisation names are omnipresent in contemporary communication, which can no longer do without them. They are used to identify, distinguish and orientate in economic, cultural and social life. From an onomastic viewpoint, the collective term *organisation names* is a pragmatic solution intended to reduce the two classes of institution names and company names to a common denominator. In onomastics, these two classes are generally ascribed to the superordinate name class of ergonyms (from Greek *ergon* ‘work, product’), together with product names, names of art works, buildings and modes of transport (cf. Brendler 2004; Debus 2012; Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012). Vasil'eva (2004: 605) adopts the term *institution names* and criticises the fact that *ergonym* is used with two different meanings, on the one hand denoting a working, acting, operating “entity”, on the other the result or product of its activity.

The terminology selected here tries to take into account this justified criticism of the ambiguous use of the existing term by choosing instead *organisation names*, especially as this term allows the onymic status to be put into better perspective for the first of the two meanings above. In contrast to the class of product names, which linguists cannot agree whether to classify as proper names or common nouns, organisation names are unanimously seen as proper names as they undoubtedly achieve unique reference. Organisation names are the linguistic result of a reference-fixation process when forming or – as prescribed by law – registering a company in the commercial register. An examination of organisation names on the scale of individuality (cf. Szczepaniak 2011: 345; Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 97) shows that they exhibit the features [+human], [+agentive], [+animate], [+contoured], [–countable], and [±material]. These factors confer a high degree of individuality, distinctiveness, perception and identifiability. Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012: 277) have pointed out an important difference between company names in the classical sense and institution names that derives from the different objectives of the respective naming processes. Companies are private firms, which primarily carry on their business activity with the goal of maximising profit. By contrast, institutions operate mostly as non-profit organisations, also generally covering costs, but primarily pursuing political, social or cultural goals. Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012: 277) rightly state: “Different name functions result from this: advertising effectiveness, on the one hand, and factual information on the other. In our opinion, these substantial differences make a separation of the two classes unavoidable.” For this reason, the structures and naming motives of company and institution names will to some extent be examined separately.

3.2 Structure of organisation names

The increasing complexity of modern societies and the progressive development of the economy continually provide new organisation names. Names such as Russian *Konditerskaya fabrika “Krasnyi Oktyabr”* [confectionary factory “Red October”], *Wiener Gebietskrankenkassa (WGKK)* [Vienna regional health insurance company], *United Nations (UN)*, *Royal Lochnagar Distillery*, *Université de Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle* or “*Auge Gottes*” *Apotheke* [God’s Eye Pharmacy] show the variety of linguistic material used to form organisation names over the past century. The majority of organisation names are complex multi-word structures. A synchronic examination of current organisation names shows that such structures can vary drastically. For example, the following variants can be found among the names of educational institutions in German-speaking countries: *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn* [University of Bonn], *Freie Universität Berlin* [Free University Berlin], *ETH Zürich*, where *ETH* is short for *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule* [Confederate Technical University]. Likewise, party names can range from *Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU)* [Christian Democratic Union] to *Piraten* [Pirates] and *NEOS*. With regard to the naming of institutions Vasil’eva (2004: 618) states:

Depending on the structure, the following types of institution names can be distinguished:

1. Simple (i.e. one-word) vs. more complex (i.e. multi-word) names: the complex institution names can then be further classified according to their component parts
2. Various types of abbreviations
3. Homogenous (i.e. consisting exclusively of words) vs. non-homogenous (i.e. also containing Arabic/Roman numerals)
4. Lexemes formed on a native basis vs. foreign words, internationalisms and artificial words.

As far as the linguistic structure of German company names is concerned, Kremer points to legal specifications that such names must adhere to. Company names form a continuum between variance and restriction (Kremer 2012: 130). He refers to names confined to the obligatory component parts as *simple* company names, and to those with (optional) extensions as *extended* company names. According to Kremer (2012: 131), the company name therefore consists of an “obligatory company core” and a “periphery”, the latter being further divisible into an obligatory “legal designation” and one or more optional “extensions” (cf. Figure 22.1). The company core forms the distinctive part of a company name; it can also be constructed differently depending on the type of company. The legal designation indicates the legal form of the company. Today a statutory requirement for all enterprises, it was only made obligatory for sole traderships and partnerships in 1998 (see §17 and §18 of the German commercial code) (cf. Kremer 2012: 131). Additional elements can be added to the optional company extension, which are used for greater distinctiveness or advertising effect. Kremer (2007: 182–183) designates these elements, which are tend-

ing to become more common and conspicuous, as “attractors” (cf. Section 2.5). Such “eye catchers” consist of abbreviations, neologisms, fantasy words, deviations from the orthographic rules, capitalisation within words and foreign-language word material (e.g., the use of the Anglo-Saxon genitive in German, cf. Dürscheid 2005). Here, mention must be made of several papers by Kremer regarding the frequency of the name components in German company names (2007, 2008, 2012; Kremer and Ronneberger-Sibold 2007). These indicate that the most important name components in the field of German company names are the following:

- Name of the owner or main shareholder;
- Description of the company’s purpose;
- Geographical indications (e.g., the company’s place of business, or regional or national connection);
- Naming products with advertising intent, symbol names;
- Neologisms, short forms, abbreviations.

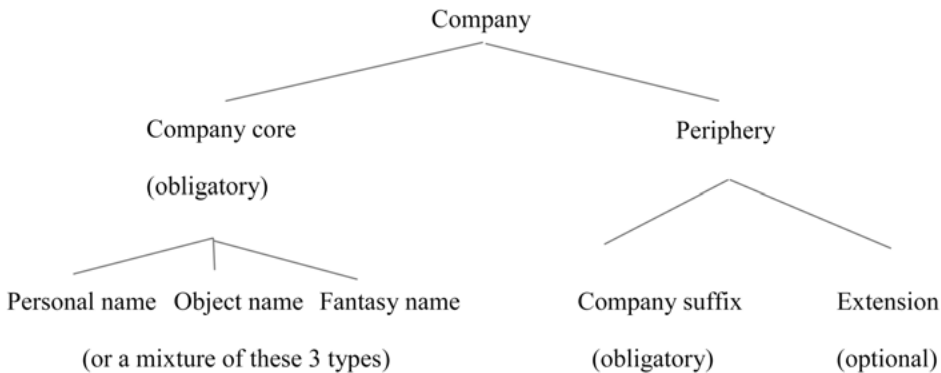


Figure 22.1: Structure of German company names (cf. Kremer 2012: 130)

3.3 Naming motivation and name change

Examination of organisation names from a diachronic perspective reveals different tendencies for institution and company names. While extensive stability is usual in institution names over the duration of the named object’s existence, renaming processes are relatively common among company names. Institutions such as the *Musée du Louvre* in Paris, the *BurgtheaterWien* or the *Confindustria (Confederazione Generale dell’Industria Italiana)* in Rome have had the same name since birth and will probably keep it until death. This is also true for international institutions, like *UNICEF*, *FAO* or *NATO*. Something similar can also be noted for the institution name *Warsaw Pact* (in Eastern Europe, *Warsaw Treaty*) until its end in 1989. For other institutions that succeed each other, for example those for helping refugees in the

Mediterranean, the various names are evidence of the changed underlying political and humanitarian attitudes (*Mare Nostrum*, *Triton*, *Frontex*). Similar motivations can be observed in the name changes undergone by what is today the *Wirtschaftsuniversität* in Vienna: originally titled *Kaiserliche und Königliche Exportakademie* [Imperial and Royal Export Academy, 1898], it next became *Hochschule für Welthandel* [High School for World Trade, 1919] and then *Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien* [Vienna University of Economics and Business, 1975] before acquiring the current brand *WU*. These name changes mirror changing views of the education institution's nature and purpose in light of increasing internationalisation.

These kind of rebranding processes occur much more often with company names and are even to some extent necessary for survival. Companies are private commercial enterprises whose owners can also change in a free market economy. In contrast to public institutions, companies are subject to mergers and acquisitions (cf. the effects of merger processes on company names: *Fiat + Chrysler = FCA* (*Fiat Chrysler Automobile*, previously *Chrysler-Mercedes Benz*). Such transactions, which change the ownership structure, mostly involve other restructuring measures, as well as product or service innovation, or re-orientation towards new key markets. Generally, this results in a perceived need to express the company's changed orientation or identity through a renaming process, particularly as company names exhibit a distinct communicative dimension. Vasil'eva (2004: 607) refers to three important aspects that can influence the choice of name, for organisation names in general:

- The naming situation, determined by the society's social, political, economic, cultural and legislative conditions;
- The character of the eponym, mostly a corporation (in the broadest sense) that names itself (self-designation);
- The addressee-orientation of naming, i.e. the goal of influencing the recipient.

Consideration of these aspects soon leads to the realisation that market regulations can be crucial for nomination processes. For example, the legal framework of the Soviet Union's planned economy made no provision for private ownership. As a result, names of production units tended to contain number elements rather than personal names: *Tkatskaya fabrika Nr. 2* [fabric mill no. 2], *Mytiscenskii mashinostroitel'nyi zavod* [machine plant (in the town of) Mytsci]. At the same time, in the free market economy of Switzerland, many company names were identical to the owner's family name (cf. Lötscher 2012: 103): *Nestlé* (foodstuffs), *Roche* (chemistry), *Lindt & Sprüngli* (chocolate), *Rieter* (textile machines), *Julius Bär* (banking). Cultural elements can also shape company names. For example, bank names in Italy, Portugal and Spain often contain names of religious figures: *Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino Spa*, *Caja de Ahorros de La Inmaculada*, *Banco Espirito Santo*, etc. In Austria, pharmacy names also display a religious cultural background: *Apotheke "zum Heiligen Geist"* [Holy Ghost], *"zur Heiligen Johanna"* [Saint Joan], *"zum Guten Hirten"* [Good Shepherd], *"Dreifaltigkeit"* [Trinity].

Turning to the second aspect emphasised by Vasil'eva (the character of the eponym) it must be remembered that company names are the linguistic result of a process of self-designation. They therefore reflect in particularly clear form the naming motivation of the producer/businessman. This, in turn, reflects his or her country's corporate culture. Thus in Italy, where family businesses are particularly widespread, companies are often named after founders, inventors or owners. Indeed, in certain manufacturing sectors the producer's family name constitutes a type of personal guarantee of product quality. Examples are: in the food industry, the company names *Barilla*, *Buitoni* and *Ferrero*; in fashion, *Gucci*, *Versace*, *Armani*, *Prada* and *Benetton*; and in the automotive industry, *Ferrari*, *Piaggio* and *Ducati*.

The third aspect mentioned above is of particular relevance for company names, since these also represent powerful instruments for enhancing advertising impact. Fischer (2008: 331–350), like Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser (2012), underlines the fact that a good company name represents an asset that can play a positive role in a company's financial success. Using examples from the banking sector, it has been shown how horizontal, vertical and conglomerate merger processes impact on the process of renaming companies, and how the reaction of the customer/recipient is taken into consideration. Thus, after acquiring the Austrian bank *Bank Austria Creditanstalt AG (BA-CA)* in 2005, the Italian bank *UniCredit Spa* did not initially change the name of the acquired bank in order to avoid impairing the degree of familiarity and the good reputation of the Austrian bank, above all in Eastern Europe. In 2008, the second name component (*Creditanstalt*), which had lost its importance anyway, was gradually dropped. Subsequently, the supplement *Member of UniCredit Group* was added in English, as a reference to the parent company and as a sign of internationalisation. Previously the Italian bank had adjusted its name for European expansion and from *UniCredito Italiano Spa* to *UniCredit Group*. Examples from the mobile phone sector likewise show how renaming considers the recipient through the technique of blending. For example, when the British-German company *Vodafone* took over the popular Italian company *Omnitel*, *Omnitel Vodafone Spa* initially became *Vodafone Omnitel Spa*, before the *Omnitel* component was dropped and the name changed to *Vodafone Italia Spa*.

Table 22.1: Naming motives for German company names

Naming motive	Explanation	Example
Person	The legal name takes up the name(s) of the founder(s) or owner(s) of the company	<i>Bilfinger Berger AG</i> <i>Henkel AG</i>
Object, field of activity	Alludes to the field of activity or the location of the company	<i>Heidelberg Cement AG</i> <i>Software Aktiengesellschaft</i>
Fantasy	Makes use of a word or phrase unrelated to the activity of the company	<i>MLP AG</i> <i>Vivacon AG</i>
Mixed	Combines the three options above	<i>Carl Zeiss Meditec AG</i> <i>Infineon Technologies AG</i>

Fahlbusch (Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 280, cf. table 22.1) has very closely analysed how naming motivations for German company names have changed over time. To this end, they compiled and evaluated a corpus of the German names of 160 public companies listed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange and arrived at the following result: “Companies adapt their legal names, as well as their new image, to changed public perceptions or requirements during listings, mergers, strategic realignments, etc. The names therefore reflect the development of the economic, political and social environment, and trace economic history as well as social change.” In Germany personal, product and purpose names are more and more giving way to fantasy names. Examples mentioned by Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser include: *Haarmanns Vanillinfabrik* [Haarmann’s vanillin factory] > *Symrise*; *Norddeutsche Affinerie* [Northern-German Refinery] > *Aurubis*; *Bayerische Warenvermittlung landwirtschaftlicher Genossenschaften* [Bavarian Distributor of the Produce of Farmers’ Cooperatives] > *BayWa*; *Aix-la-Chapelle + Elektronik* > *AIXTRON*. They show how it has become much harder to deduce a company’s domain of activity from its name. Lötscher (2012: 106) notes that modern company names often have a secondary meaning on the level of associations, connotations and metonymic relations. The more unsystematic the formation of company names, the fewer recipients can decrypt the content elements. Recently it has been shown in connection with company websites that many companies are following the successful example of *Yahoo* (< *Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle*) or *Google* (from *googol*, meaning 10^{100}) in using double vowels, as in *Simplee*. Endings like *-ify*, *-ly* or *-li*, like *Spotify*, *Guesterly* or *Zappli* can also be found more and more often. As can be seen, a new method of company naming is emerging that is yet to be researched.

4 Event names

4.1 Demarcation of other name classes

Event names are a name class somewhat neglected by research. They occur in few classifications of names, and are only beginning to be duly taken into account (cf. Brendler 2004: 78–82; Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 316–325). This neglect is apparent in the variety of terms that are used to denote this name class. Alongside *event name* itself, countless Latin and Greek-Latin hybrid formations have been used, like *chrononym*, *documentonym*, *eventonym*, *geortonym*, *machonym*, *politonym* and *praxonym* (Hoffmann 2004: 669). Recently the last of these, coined in opposition to *phenonyms*, the names of natural phenomena, has begun to become accepted, (Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 316–335). For the purposes of this chapter praxonyms are treated as a separate name class in line with Nübling, Fahlbusch and Heuser, even though they could be treated as *ergonyms* in accordance with Eckkrammer and Thaler’s (2013: 14) definition of these as “names consciously created

by people for activities, working processes and their material and immaterial results". In fact, the borders of the term *praxonym*, as with ergonyms in general, remain fluid. All in all, though, it makes sense to examine praxonyms independently of other name classes and to emphasise the coherence of many of their features.

In order to determine the exact extent of the class of praxonyms, it is necessary first to explain the concept 'event'. As a category in the humanities and historical sciences, events are to be seen, according to Rathmann (2003: 12), not just as political and economic processes resulting from extensive planning, but also as contingent outcomes of communicative, discursive or ritual action. It is possible to discern two basic types of event names that arise in both politics and economics. On the one hand, we have the names given to specific wars, protests, strikes, meetings or negotiations (e.g., Russian *6-oi Moskovskii mezhdunarodnyi festival' reklamy* [6th Moscow International Advertising Festival]). On the other, we have names for events in a broader sense, that is, the contents or results of political and economic processes, such as programs, projects, plans and actions (e.g., *programma "Sem' shagov v mir ekonomiki"* [the "Seven Steps in the World of Economics" program]). These two groups are generally designated in the literature as *actionyms* and *actonyms*, respectively (Knappová 1996: 1567). According to the corpus used, 85% of event names in economics are actonyms, while in politics actionyms and actonyms are represented to roughly equal extents. This has consequences for the onymic status of event names in business, as will be explained in more detail below, starting from Hoffmann's (2004) article on the names of political events.

4.2 Name status

The onymic status of event names is generally beyond dispute. Think of names with unique reference such as *World War II*. Sometimes, though, things are more difficult. At first sight, the term *Iraq War* or *Gulf War* refers merely to military events in the area of Iraq or the Gulf. In the absence of a definite description, it cannot be understood exactly. The necessary situational independence of these names, the strong bond to their referents, is not yet there, unique reference being established only by the context. When reading press texts it is apparent only from the context which concrete military event the names refer to, whether the armed conflict between Iraq and Iran (1980–1988), the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq and the following US-led military operation (1990–1991), or the combat operations beginning with the invasion of Iraq by US troops (2003). The names *Iraq War* and *Gulf War* were assigned ad hoc by the mass media on the basis of such descriptions, and are therefore not fixed per se. Only later were the three events differentiated in journalistic or scientific analyses by establishment of the series *First Gulf War*, *Second Gulf War*, *Third Gulf War*. Additionally, countless parallel names (so-called "allonyms") exist. The differentiation of the three wars, by the way, is handled in different ways in individual languages: in German, for example, the name *Dritter Golfkrieg* [Third

Gulf War] did not establish itself, and the series effectively ends with the *Zweiter Irakkrieg* [Second Iraq War].

The names of events in business are predominantly actonyms. This class encompasses, for example, all types of customer loyalty programs, as well as projects and plans. Actonyms are the result of a conscious process of naming; overwhelmingly, they are placed in the mass media or other distribution channels via targeted PR and advertising activities, normally in exchange for payment. For this reason, the corresponding names are adopted unchanged in the media, without editorial interventions. Examples of actonyms used in business are names of trade fairs, exhibitions, charity events, etc. The question of the onymic character arises far less than for names of political events. Neither subgroup of event names necessarily requires context in order to manifest its status. However, as names that are constantly created anew, they still require context in order to unfold their particular referential potential. Hence in the following discussion the necessary context will also be provided. This approach should make it possible to understand both the onymic character of the names of events in business and aspects related to the semantic transparency of these names. At the same time, semantically transparent names will be translated into English, maintaining as far as possible their semantic and stylistic features and those of their contexts.

4.3 Origin of names

For the purposes of the present section, examples are taken from a corpus created for a chapter about names of goods and services, names of institutions and names of events in business to appear in a handbook on business communication in Russian (Hoffmann 2017). This corpus, in its section on praxonyms, consists of two components: event names taken from 1,705 advertisements shown on seven Russian TV stations (1992–2006) and from the website www.showreel.ru (2007–2013); and event names taken from 992 press texts of the *Advertorials* content category in the databases *Factiva* and *Integrum Worldwide*. In total the search yielded 33 names in the *Advertisements* category and 275 names in the *Advertorials* category, i.e. a total sample of 308 names. The names from advertisements were drawn from the whole sample, while those from the advertorials category were determined by inputting the search terms *novaya aktsiia* [new offer] (257 texts with 67 names), *novaiia programma* [new program] (401 texts with 111 names) and *novyi proekt* [new project] (334 texts with 97 names), including all inflected forms. In the process, duplicates in different mass media were removed.

The selection of a Russian-language corpus had, on the one hand, a practical motivation. But, on the other, the material presented can claim an additional interest in the context of the present handbook in that it moves away from the Anglo-American mainstream, while also highlighting some universal features of names of business

events. Finally, Russian event names in business are a relatively young phenomenon, whose formation and development over the last 10–15 years could be tracked very precisely thanks to the corpus, thus allowing interesting insights into the character and functioning of event names in business.

4.4 Emergence of the name class

A fundamental moment that could be tracked thanks to the corpus is the emergence of praxonyms in business as a name class. While in the Soviet era event names were essentially known only as exonyms (i.e. Russian names for foreign events), praxonymy began to emerge in the 1990s in the category of actionyms and from the 2000s onwards also in the category of actonyms. A clear indication of this is the fact that, whereas only 33 event names are contained in the corpus of 1,705 advertisements, 275 were found in the corpus of 992 press texts, most of which are from the years after 2005. Around a quarter of these event names are not genuine names from business, but rather names of state programs or charity programs that companies take part in. Particularly noticeable is the fact that in the advertorials, which usually contain adverts relating to new marketing activities, more than half of the texts contain no praxonyms at all. Instead, most events are specified by definite descriptions.

Thanks to the actions of the service-station division of Gazprom, *Gazpromneft'*, the transition from namelessness to the use of praxonyms can be followed precisely. In 2009 we still read:

« Gazprom neft' » razdaet benzin. Chetyrmdtsatogo maia startuet novaia aktsiia dlia priverzhentsev avtozapravok « Gazpromneft'-Tsentr ». Stat' uchastnikom proekta dostatochno prosto: avtoliubitel' dolzhen zalit' v bak svoego avtomobilia ne menee tridsati litrov liubogo vida topliva. Operator AZS vydast kupon so spetsial'noi stiraiushcheisia poloskoi ... [Gazpromneft' is giving petrol away. On 14th May a new offer for "Gazpromneft'- Tsentr" petrol station customers will begin. Participation is extremely easy: car enthusiasts only have to fill up with at least 30 litres of any kind of fuel. The petrol station operator will give them a special coupon ...] (Volkhov¹¹, 19 May 2009)

On the company's homepage, though, there are references to the fact that offers have been given names since 2011, as in the following examples: *Novogodnee Chudo* [The new year miracle] (2011/12), *Puteshestvie v Disneyland Parizh vsei sem'ei!* [Travel to Disneyland Paris with the whole family!] (2012), *Novyi god na novom avtomobile* [New year with a new car] (2013/14) (<http://www.gpnbonus.ru/services/>, accessed 13 August 2014). Finally, 2012 saw the creation of the first customer loyalty program *Nam po puti* [We are going the same way] (http://www.gpnbonus.ru/on_the_way/, accessed 13 August 2014), which still exists today.

4.5 Name features

A general characteristic of praxonyms in both politics and business is apparent in all names in the above examples. They are all semantically transparent in some way or other, but the semantics do not lead to a characterisation of the object named by the praxonym. The example of *Nampo puti* [We are going the same way] clearly shows that the context must be made explicit for new onymic reference, in order to emphasise the name status and to recognise the character of the corresponding individual object.

Formal criteria for the onymic status of praxonyms have also been drawn up for the German language (Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 320–321). These include the capitalisation of attributes in onymic phrases, non-capitalisation being the norm in definite descriptions. This is also the case for the names in the corpus. In the following example, the typographical quotation marks, along with the initial capitalisation, obscure the fact that the example begins with a definite description that characterises the object marked with a praxonym at the end of the example and makes its identification easier. Therefore, it is not a parallel name. Allonyms, in fact, barely occur in the names of events in business in the corpus.

« *Riabinovo-ialochnaia* » aktsiia. Eto budet krasivaia alleia! Dlia etogo-to vse my zdes' segodnia sobralis' – chtoby nash raion stal bolee komfortnym i ekologichnym. Po initsiative kollektiva Kamskoi GES v permskom mikroraione Gaiva proshla na dniakh zakladka « *Allei pokolenii* ». [The “*rowan-apple tree*” offer. It will be a beautiful avenue! That is why we are all gathered here today: so that our district will become more comfortable and more ecological. On the initiative of the Kama hydroelectric power station team, the ground-breaking ceremony for the “*Avenue of the generations*” took place in the Gaiva district of Perm' in the last few days.] (Permskie novosti, 22 May 2009).

Other formal praxonymic characteristics in German, such as the fixation of the definite article or the avoidance of the genitive -s, are not applicable to Russian. Nor is the use of typographic quotation marks a formal criterion for a praxonym, though it is encountered relatively often. However, internal quotation marks are a feature occasionally observed in the category of institution names (Kryukova 2004: 78). At the same time, the closing quotation marks are sometimes missing, which may be traceable to uncertainty on the part of the writer as to where the attributive components of the name belong. This may also be the origin of doubled internal quotation marks, as in *aktsiia* « *Operaciia „Brilliant“* » [the “*Operation ‘Brilliant’*” offer] (*Komsomol'skaia Pravda Murmansk*, 9 September 2010) or *programma* « *Ak Bars “moi dom”* » [the “*Ak Bars “my house”*” program] (*Tatar-inform*, 13 April 2011). Here the uncertainty in the praxonym is exacerbated by the integration of name components from the bank concerned, OAO « Ak Bars » Bank [Ak Bars Bank plc]. It is characteristic that – unlike the practice with names of political events, e.g., *World War II* – the primary words like *action* and *program* are not integrated into these names, but remain outside and have a classificatory function. It must also be noted

that the question of quotation marks presents itself in the corpus in a way that can differ from other media, e.g., flyers or booklets, with respect to the forms of typographical emphasis.

In many cases the onymic character of praxonyms is emphasised by the creation of a standard order, as in two offers from Intesa Bank called *12-12-12* and *12-12-30* (*Vslukh*, 2 April 2014). In both cases, the first and second numbers stand for the interest rate payable before and after the entry of a property in the land register, respectively, while the third number is the credit period in years. Sberbank runs an offer with the name *888*, where the three numbers stand for the interest rate, the term of the loan and the number of days required for processing. Another name at the same bank that can be traced back to a number is *V desiatku* [literally “to hit the ten”, i.e. ‘to hit the bull’s eye’] (*Vechernii Stavropol’*, 5 March 2011). Other such sequences arise through the semantic reference of an event name to a previous one with the same organisation, as shown by the example of the anniversary offer *Den’ rozhdeniia MKB!* [MKB’s birthday!] and its continuation as *Prazdnik prodolzhaetsia!* [The party goes on!] (*Komsomolskaia pravda, moskovskii vypusk*, 11 September 2007).

Names of business events fulfil important marketing tasks, and their linguistic form is subordinate to these tasks. As there are no systemic constraints on the linguistic material they can use, the forms of praxonyms vary widely, certainly far more than those presented by Ronneberger-Sibold (2015) in the case of brand names. Event names are often based on common nouns. Additional onymic components are possible, as are purely numerical names (see *12-12-12* and other examples mentioned above) and names which consist of combinations of words and numbers. Where actonyms consist of such a combination, numbers need not be ordinal, as is the case for actionyms, cf. the offer *Planeta № 5* [Planet five] (*Tomskii vestnik*, 7 September 2010). The corpus also contains 13 names consisting of a sentence, among them 9 imperative names like *Podruzhis’ s udachei!* [Make luck your friend!] (*Klakson*, 7 July 2011) or names with null copula like *Fond Bortsovykh – veteranam* [approximately: The Bortsovykh Fund has something for veterans] (*Provincial’nyi reporter*, 31 October 2007).

Many names of business events are stylistically very strongly marked. Often created to tie customers to the institutions in question, they make use of dramatic expressions like *Zolotaia likhoradka* [Gold rush] (*Khronometr*, 28 March 2007) or euphemisms like *Universitet lichnykh finansov* [University of personal finances] (*Vechernii Omsk*, 18 April 2007) for a series of popular scientific lectures on financial topics. The borrowing of foreign common nouns, always from English in the corpus, also counts as a case of linguistic markedness. The markedness effect becomes even stronger when the Cyrillic alphabet is partially or completely avoided: partially in *Massovoi ralli-reid « Velikaia step’-2014 » Total Russia* [Total Russia mass rally “Great steppe 2014”], completely in the bonus program *Hyundai Premium Assurance* (both names from *Klakson*, 12 August 2014).

Many praxonyms are formed in such a way that their semantic transparency allows inferences about characteristics of the objects they name: *0% za on-line platezhi* [0% on online transfers] (*Amurskaia pravda*, 28 November 2013), *40 protsentov v podarok* [40% free] (*Rabochii krai*, 20 November 2012). Other names are completely lacking in this characteristic: both *Dvoinoi urozhai* or *Prodovol'stvennaia programma* [Double harvest, grocery program] and (*Vechernii Omsk*, 18 April 2007) are completely opaque as names for bank's bonus programs. However, discourse marketization is generally leading to names that function ever more strongly as advertising, but are less and less semantically transparent. Finally we should also mention here names based on word plays or ambiguity, like *programma loial'nosti « Malina® »* [Loyalty program “Raspberry”, also translatable as: Sweet life, land of milk and honey] (*Novosti Toliatti*, 15 November 2011) or *« FIA-Leta »!* (*Novosti Toliatti*, 15 November 2011). The latter is the name of a summer film festival sponsored by the Fia bank, which contains the Russian noun *leto* [summer] with a capital letter and with its gender changed from neuter to feminine, in order to create associations with the female name *Violetta*.

Whenever praxonyms are not required to accomplish any overt marketing tasks, they attach greater importance to economy of language and the safeguarding of name character than to any possible advertising component. For example, a project predominantly used in communication within the company Rosenergoatom is called *proekt « VVER-TOI »* (The “Two-unit nuclear power plant with VVER-1300/510 water pressurized reactors” project) (*Promyshlennye vedomosti*, 30 March 2013). As an acronym created on surviving Soviet patterns, it cannot be translated directly into English.

The need to accomplish marketing tasks results in a relationship of proximity to the names of goods and services, to the names of institutions, but also to brand names. In many cases, names of events are formed identically to other names. In others, names of events in business contain the names or parts of names of the respective company. Occasionally, names of events in business can also have equivalents in the toponymy and anthroponymy categories.

5 Conclusion

As has been shown in the previous sections, all the three name classes studied (product names, organisation names and event names) are very productive in the sense that they reflect the increasing complexity of economic and social developments as well as changes in values. The large number of research papers is an expression of the increasing interest in these linguistic phenomena. The name classes studied have become recognised categories of onomastics and are no longer treated like black sheep. Nevertheless, these names are not prototypical names (Nübling, Fahlbusch, and Heuser 2012: 99–104).

Onomastically orientated research turned to names in business comparatively late. Important relevant research papers are only documented in the second half of, or towards the end of, the last century. Even if the amount of research in this area has increased, it is still a relatively young branch of onomastics. Its dynamic nature is apparent in its still fragile terminology, as has been seen in each of the three previous sections. Currently every work seems to adopt a different solution, albeit the differences are often small, so that the use of terminology remains vague and inconsistent. There is therefore a need to develop a well-founded and consistent terminology readily translatable into the major languages. Within onomastics, the name classes discussed here are of course of particular interest for economically orientated linguistics, because they express the central role of language for economic activity.

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23 Business lexicography

1. Introduction
2. A comprehensive overview of specialized lexicography
3. Systemizing business terminology and composing business dictionaries
4. Open questions and quality issues
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

In order to be effective, business communication relies heavily on specialized language. Without it, the meaning of the rules governing business practice and theory could not be expressed clearly, and proper understanding of them would be impossible. Thus, resources for the documentation of specialized expressions, that is, their usage and meaning, are vital in ensuring effective business communication. Research in that area ranges from corpus analysis of business language (e.g., Fischer-Starcke 2012) to the investigation of business terminology (Madsen, Erdman Thomsen, and Vikner 2004) with some methodologies combining those different scientific fields (e.g., Budin, Moerth, and Romary 2013). A specialized case of business language research is business lexicography, which studies how the meaning and use of business expressions are specified in dictionaries, encyclopedias, glossaries, and similar reference works.

Lexicography investigates the making, design, use, and evaluation of dictionaries and other reference works that describe general language (Svensén 2009). In contrast, specialized lexicography is concerned with reference works that deal with the language of one specific subject field (e.g., *Oxford Dictionary of Economics*) or several subject fields (e.g., *Oxford's Dictionary of Social Sciences*) (Pearson 1997). Business lexicography is a subfield of specialized lexicography and is concerned with “business” as either a single- or multi-field subject with several subfields (e.g., *Webster's New World Finance and Investment Dictionary*). Besomi (2013) classifies more than 600 business dictionaries from the last 200 years by language, size, and subject field. However, they are mainly published in European languages and paper-based. This bibliography could be updated continuously as business lexicography is a highly productive field, especially if electronic and online resources are considered.

Viewed from a different angle, a business dictionary can be understood as a reference work compiled by and for a business, that is, an organization undertaking economic activities. This type has been studied both in general, under the heading of corporate dictionaries (Leroyer 2007), and by focusing on a specific aspect of a

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-023

corporation, e.g. a product-line (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995). Thus, the term *business dictionary* is ambiguous, referring as it can either to a reference work issued by and dealing with an organization or to a reference work on the subject of “business”. To the best of our knowledge, this ambiguity has not been observed in other fields of specialized lexicography. To clearly distinguish these two meanings, the present chapter will refer only to the first type as *business dictionaries*, the second being termed *corporate dictionaries*.

The objective of this chapter is to define the concept of business lexicography as a subfield of specialized lexicography and investigate its different facets. Although the individualization of specialized lexicography as an independent discipline has been discussed repeatedly (Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp 2014), there is still a certain degree of overlap with general lexicography. Nevertheless, the former is governed primarily by factual knowledge, while the latter focuses more on linguistic considerations (Pearson 1997: 70).

The comprehensive overview of lexicography in the next section emphasizes characteristics specific to specialized lexicography. Section 3 discusses features that differentiate business dictionaries from other areas of specialization. Like Section 2, it is organized according to the four major aspects of lexicography, that is, function, typology, structure, and design and making. Prior to some concluding remarks, we investigate the status and related quality issues of current business lexicographic practices.

2 A comprehensive overview of specialized lexicography

Specialized lexemes, that is, single or multi-word lexical units of meaning in a specific subject field, listed in a dictionary cannot be understood by a user unless an interpretational framework is also provided (Chłopek 2013: 177). In other words, a user will hardly benefit from a stand-alone lexeme without further information on its meaning, its use, or its interrelation with other lexemes. The different types of information a dictionary provides about a lexeme depend on the targeted user group and situation of use, which in turn determine the function and type of dictionary (Bergenholtz and Tarp 2010). All information on a lexeme, and the lexeme itself, are organized into a lexical article, the lexeme heading the article being called the *headword*. The main word list of a reference work is made up of headwords. Articles are interrelated to form a network across the collection, which provides the interpretational framework for a lexicographic product.

Specialized dictionaries are also referred to as technical or subject-field dictionaries but are not to be confused with special-purpose reference works. The latter, for instance, dictionaries of inflections or dictionaries dealing with language varieties, focus on specific aspects of language and are not considered further here.

2.1 Function of specialized dictionaries

Specialized dictionaries cater to specific needs of their targeted user groups (Pearson 1997), but their lexemes might also be included in a general dictionary. To illustrate how these two types of dictionaries treat content differently, Figure 23.1 displays the articles “backwardation” in the specialized business dictionary *Oxford’s A Dictionary of Economics* on the left and the general language dictionary *Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged® Dictionary* on the right. The specialized article on the left consists of a headword, a concise definition with a cross-reference to another headword marked by an asterisk, and cross-references to related articles indicated by “See also”. In contrast, the article from the general dictionary provides the word class “noun”, a phonetic transcription, two general definitions, a reference to a related article indicated by “compare”, and an etymological note on the origin and linguistic stem of the headword. The specialized dictionary does not provide phonetic, grammatical, or etymological information, which are linguistic information categories needed to specify the use of a headword. The selection of information categories in the specialized resource suggests that its function is to clarify meaning, that is, lexical sense, for specialists in the field rather than to specify usage (Pearson 1997: 71). General dictionaries usually specify the usage of expressions by providing linguistic information categories. That claim is further supported by the fact that the business dictionary’s definition is packed with domain-specific lexemes that presuppose a certain familiarity with the topic. The general dictionary’s definition is more likely to be understood by a novice to the field.

backwardation A situation in which the future price (or forward price) of a commodity is lower than the *spot price. See also CONTANGO; FORWARD AND FUTURES

(Black, Hashimzade, and Myles 2012: 23)

back-ward-a-tion *noun* \bakwa(r)dashən\

Full Definition of BACKWARDATION — Cited 8+1 Like

- 1 : the seller's postponement of delivery of stock or shares on the London Stock Exchange with the consent of the buyer upon payment of a premium to the latter
- 2 : the premium paid in backwardation — compare CONTANGO

Origin of BACKWARDATION

²backward + -ation

First Known Use: 1850

Figure 23.1: A typical dictionary article in a specialized and general language dictionary
From Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged® Dictionary © 2015 by Merriam-Webster, Inc.
(<http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/backwardation>, by permission of the publisher)

The fact that dictionaries are used by real people in real situations to seek very specific items of information has not always seemed as obvious as it does today (Svensén 2009: 452). Publishers used to compile resources without ever having conducted any research on their targeted users, even though user needs help to determine the function of a dictionary. In fact, user research is a rather recent sub-field of lexicography. The majority of user-research studies empirically investigate

the dictionary needs of foreign-language learners, mostly of English. Additionally, many of those studies are limited to a specific type of resource, such as learners' dictionaries (e.g., Dziemianko 2012) or specialized translation dictionaries (e.g., Fuertes-Olivera 2013). Few studies (e.g., Gromann and Schnitzer 2016) have investigated how user groups with domain-specific needs actually use lexicographic resources, which ones they select, and how they evaluate them. User research still needs to be broadened, particularly to professional groups, such as human resource specialists or accountants. Furthermore, user needs are not the only determinant of function; the situation from which such needs arise has to be considered as well, e.g., to acquire knowledge, check spelling, understand or actively produce a text.

Within the context of their function theory, Bergenholtz and Tarp (2010) categorize lexicographic functions into communicative and cognitive. A dictionary with a communicative function seeks to assist users with communicative problems in their first or second language arising from situations such as text production, reception, or translation. This function therefore presupposes linguistic information categories that facilitate the use of headwords, such as grammatical information, collocations, or sample sentences. Cognitive situations of dictionary use arise when users need to add knowledge to their expertise, be they novices or experts in the field. Hence the focus is clearly on encyclopedic information, that is, factual knowledge. Depending on the level of expertise of the target audience, the amount and nature of encyclopedic information may vary. In order to reach the same level, those already experts will require less such information than users with little or no knowledge of the domain (Bowker 2003: 157).

The two functions represent the extremes of a continuum along which different lexicographic products can be classified. At the cognitive end, there are encyclopedias, specialized dictionaries, and glossaries. All of those resources have in common that they list words alphabetically and specify their meaning. Few of them provide phrases or collocations, or grammatical, morphological, or phonetic details (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 66–67). Encyclopedias offer systematic and lengthy descriptions of factual knowledge associated with a headword, and frequently include bibliographic references to further reading (Swanepoel 2003: 49). In specialized dictionaries, those factual descriptions are condensed to short and concise definitions, if included at all. Glossaries are alphabetical listings – usually monolingual but possibly bi- or multilingual – of terms with short explanations or glosses. At the communicative end of the spectrum, there are general language dictionaries. As we move along the continuum, we find thesauri, which combine both functions and provide thematically ordered words grouped by their meaning (van Sterkenburg 2003: 8). In practice the distinction between those types of works is rather fuzzy and their names are used ambiguously in literature (Besomi 2012: 4). We will mostly refer to dictionaries because they are the main subject of investigation in specialized lexicography.

2.2 Typology of specialized dictionaries

Subject-field or specialized dictionaries are categorized into single-, multi-, and sub-field reference works (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995). Depending on the perspective of the typology, the same subject field might be considered a single, homogenous field or a heterogeneous collection of various subfields. There is no clear guideline on the delimitation of the subject field, as this always depends on the level of granularity with which it is viewed and the intended function of a resource.

Like general dictionaries, specialized ones can be classified by the number of languages covered into mono-, bi-, and multilingual resources. The amount of information included in a given language depends on whether first language speakers are addressed or not. While a competent native speaker might be able to select a language equivalent from a list without further details, a non-native user might not know which correspondents in the target language to choose. Thus, addressing the latter requires more information, such as connotations or regional variations. Bi- or multilingual specialized dictionaries often omit linguistic information. Furthermore, with the addition of further languages, more and more encyclopedic and defining information seems to be omitted.

The function of a dictionary also depends on the source and target languages. For instance, an English-to-Spanish dictionary constitutes a reception dictionary for the Spanish user but a production dictionary for the English user. If the direction from Spanish to English is not provided, the resource is considered mono-directional, while otherwise it represents a bi-directional resource (Hannay 2003: 149).

Mono-directional resources that only list equivalents in the target language fully ignore cross-cultural differences. The cultural component is central to subject-fields, such as business and economics, which are dependent on local traditions and legislation. Dictionary makers need to consider whether to emphasize local traditions or to address a more international audience. The second approach demands an abstraction away from culture-dependent aspects, which is not always sensible. Of course, some subject fields are less dependent on cultural factors, such as technological processes or mathematical theories.

When talking about dictionary typology, most publications include the representation mode and differentiate printed or paper-based resources from electronic ones. Electronic resources can be subdivided into online or Web-based products accessible on the Internet and offline resources available either as a desktop application or in another electronic format. Substantial advantages of Web-based resources are hyperlinked cross-references and the capacity for their entries to be shared on social networks, as exemplified by the Facebook and Google Plus buttons in the *Merriam-Webster.com* example on the right of Figure 23.1.

With the technological shift since the beginning of the century, a general notion spread within the field of lexicography that the electronic dictionary would increasingly replace its printed counterpart (Lew 2012: 344). Rundell even states that “the

Web-based dictionary [...] looks like the only serious contender” (2012: 15) on the dictionary market. Buyers of paper editions are frequently provided with access to an online version of the same resource; in fact, several major publishers have stopped producing paper-based dictionaries altogether. However, there is little benefit to users from electronic dictionaries which are merely digitalized versions of paper-based editions uploaded to the Web. It requires a genuine e-dictionary designed from scratch for an electronic platform to take advantage of the electronic format (Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp 2014: 17).

When a user community contributes to a reference work, the work is commonly referred to as collaboratively developed resource (Fuertes-Olivera 2009a: 130). For instance, the encyclopedia *Wikipedia* allows users to add content in any language. At the same time, it places great emphasis on gaining a reputation by implementing peer review processes and similar measures (Fuertes-Olivera 2009a: 122). If such quality requirements and processes are not in place, using a collaboratively developed resource may be counter-productive for language learners and novices to a field. If in doubt, it is always better to use an institutionalized resource where a major publisher or organization has tight control over the content. Using institutionalized dictionaries does not necessarily involve a cost as several major institutions offer their products free of charge, e.g., *Cambridge Dictionaries Online*. Furthermore, the line between institutional and collaboratively developed resources is increasingly blurred, with major publishers actively encouraging users to contribute, as in the case of the *Macmillan Open Dictionary*.

Resources based on a prescriptive approach to language cannot be generated collaboratively. Instead, they have to be produced by major organizations or publishers in such a way that they reduce synonyms and equivalents to a minimum in order to avoid ambiguity and standardize the use of words. For this purpose, standardization bodies frequently publish controlled vocabularies such as that of agricultural language issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations called AGROVOC. Any kind of language-planning endeavor would take a prescriptive approach to specialized language. Prescriptive approaches are also by definition synchronic, that is, they omit any consideration of shifts in meaning. The opposite strategy is to adopt a descriptive perspective on lexicography that describes natural language as it is used and thus needs to consider variations of a linguistic, cultural, regional, or other nature. Descriptive approaches may be synchronic but can also be diachronic, that is, they can consider the evolution of words and phrases over time.

2.3 Structure of specialized dictionaries

Information provided by a lexicographic resource is governed by a set of predefined structuring principles. Between three and seven different types of structure are differentiated in the literature. Common to all approaches are the three main structure types: the medio-, macro-, and microstructure. Each of them operates on its own

level. The mediostructure (Wiegand 1989), also called *megastructure* (Svensén 2009) or *hyperstructure* (Gelpi 2004), describes the overall organization of the resource, that is, the system of cross-referencing different components of a dictionary. For instance, the mediostructure is concerned with relations between text in the main lexical articles and sub-articles of the main word-list or external sources. The macrostructure systemizes the order of the main articles across a dictionary, while the microstructure deals with the data organization within a specific article.

In addition, the macrostructure encompasses criteria for selecting headwords. Once that is done, its major task is to order them, the most common ordering being alphabetical. The macrostructure also affects the ordering of lexemes, but more in terms of internal organization, that is, syntagmatic and paradigmatic decisions (Svensén 2009: 78). When articles are ordered alphabetically, the decision on how to present compound terms, for example, noun first, is taken on the macro level. Another way of ordering articles is by semantic relationships between lexemes, as exemplified by the lemma *amortization* in Figure 23.2. This approach is more frequently adopted by specialized dictionaries such as the *EcoLexicon* (<http://ecolexicon.ugr.es/en/index.htm>) than by general language products.

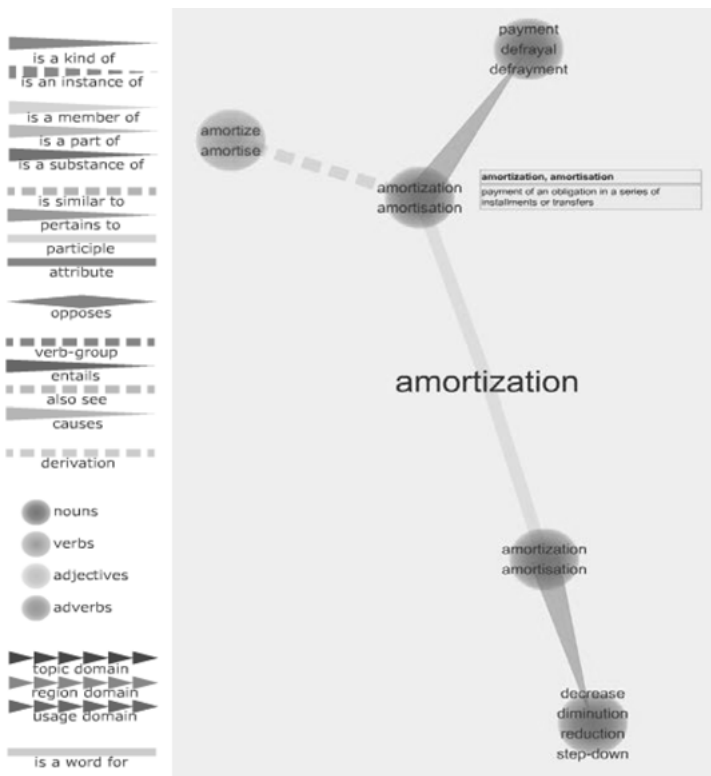


Figure 23.2: Macrostructure based on semantic relationships (of WordNet data)

Source: <http://visuwords.com/amortization>

Decisions at the microstructural level are concerned with the number of information categories to be included in each article, as well as their types. These depend on the lexical categories the design team opts to incorporate, for instance definitions, phonetic transcriptions, or synonyms. This decision is, of course, governed by the user profile and the intended function. Important microstructural elements are definitions and, for multilingual resources, language equivalents. Definitions can either be lexical – i.e., they list synonyms of the headword – or conceptual, providing delimiting and/or essential characteristics of a lexeme.

In general, specialized lexicographers seem still to believe in the existence of simple one-to-one correspondences between expressions in different languages. However, in specialized contexts, too, it is possible to identify differences between semantically corresponding words in terms of synonymy, polysemy, homonymy, historical contexts, regional settings, etc., albeit to a lesser extent than in general language. The degree of equivalence has been classified as full, partial, and zero depending on the semantic coverage of two lexemes (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 109). Full equivalence refers to the situation where two expressions are formally and semantically identical. Partial equivalence can occur on the pragmatic level, that is, differences in use, or the semantic level, that is, differences in lexical sense. Finally, zero equivalence refers to the absence of an equivalent in the target language(s). In the last case, the lexicographer can either construct a translation or limit the entry to a definition in the target language without any translation.

Few approaches have dealt with criteria for the selection of equivalents to avoid endless, and not very helpful, lists as in example (1) in Section 3.3. The most comprehensive set is offered by Werner (1999), who gives a number of factors that determine the selection of equivalents, as follows:

- a. a dictionary's function;
- b. evaluation of expertise and knowledge of intended users;
- c. criteria for selecting specialized lexical units;
- d. degree of parallel structures across languages;
- d. the decision as to whether one or both languages should be restricted to defined or standardized lexemes.

Of course, these criteria are interdependent. A dictionary's function depends on its users' expertise and knowledge, which in turn provide criteria for the lemma selection process. The degree of parallel structures refers to the extent to which full and partial equivalences exist in a specific domain and for specific language pairs. In combination with the general characteristics introduced in Section 2.2., these criteria determine the number of equivalents given in a specialized dictionary. In particular, a prescriptive dictionary will provide fewer equivalents than a descriptive one.

Examples of specialized expressions in a dictionary article are lexicographic features on a microstructural level. They show how a lexical unit is used, which means they are always tied to a specific context. If well selected, they can introduce

the user to a typical context of the expression concerned. In contrast to many other lexicographic features, the information provided by examples is of an implicit nature. In fact, “well-chosen examples provide implicit encyclopedic and linguistic information, including collocational and grammatical construction possibilities” (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 140).

The mediostructure can cross-reference between microstructural elements, for instance by relating compounds of a headword to individual senses, on a macrostructural level between articles, or to external resources (Gouws and Prinsloo 1998). The last type of reference is a common and effective method of enriching a dictionary’s content without using up much space. It is particularly common among multilingual specialized dictionaries in an electronic format, but has also been used for printed resources.

2.4 Designing and making specialized dictionaries

Lexicographers are language experts and require the assistance of subject-field experts throughout the process of making a specialized dictionary. In the case of online dictionaries, the process of dictionary making further involves IT experts to provide the required IT infrastructure (Fuentes-Olivera and Tarp 2014: 193). In specialized lexicography it is essential to clearly delimit the subject field at the outset of the dictionary compilation project and to establish a clear chart of the individual subfields and subdivisions of that field (Bowker 2003: 161). The delimitation of the subject field predetermines the number of domain experts required for the project. Furthermore, such subdivisions can be added as semantic categories to the articles and lexemes in order to clarify the dictionary’s structure. The IT infrastructure is determined by the function, the delimitation of the subject field, the type of dictionary, and the structural organization adopted. All of those decisions should also be communicated to the users in the front matter, so that they can choose a resource that best fits their situation and the needs that arise from it.

The main methods for identifying user needs are to re-use existing classifications or user research results and to conduct new user research, as well as introspection. The last method is reasonable only if the lexicographer knows the target audience exceptionally well. User research to determine lexicographic needs usually relies on conventional social-science methods, such as questionnaires, interviews, or tests with observations. Many specialized dictionaries, whether online or printed, are designed to cover more than one usage situation and consequently require a larger catalog of various users’ needs.

Once user needs are identified, the compiler must decide on the types of information categories or lexicographic features, on all structural levels, to be included, and the sources of information to be employed. The most common types of information categories in general lexicography are senses, part of speech (also referred to as

word class), morphological information, collocations, syntactic valency, and etymological information (Svensén 2009). Specialized dictionaries, by contrast, frequently do not go beyond short definitions.

Specialized lexemes can be selected from general texts (i.e., those not specific to any company, problem or situation) pertaining to the subject field, from private texts (those specific to an organization), or from any pre-selected corpus. (Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp 2014: 201–203). When using corpus data, it is essential to evaluate carefully the appropriateness and quality of the texts it contains, especially if the corpus is actually the entire Web. Any information obtained from the Web needs to be evaluated by the domain expert, who is responsible for accepting or rejecting it. Moreover, the level of specialization of a corpus, which is difficult to determine on the Web, must match the identified user needs.

Whatever source is chosen, the compiler must extract from it lexemes, their definitions, synonyms, and, in the case of multilingual dictionary work, their language equivalents. Of course, data relevant for information categories, such as collocations or idioms, should also be retrieved. Definitions specify the meaning of entries; their type depends on user needs. To assist all potential users, definitions are usually general. However, to accommodate the expectations of experts, or to clarify a particular headword's cultural specificity, specialized definitions are required (Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp 2014: 206). At times several definitions are needed to distinguish different senses of a lexeme, although polysemy is less frequent in specialized fields. Once the headwords are selected and defined, they must be contextualized by including information categories on a microstructural level. Then the macrostructure of the dictionary, that is, the overall arrangement of entries in the data collection, must be finalized. Finally, the mediostructure is characterized by cross-references between all dictionary components and any external references.

The process of dictionary making and design may not always follow exactly this order, and on occasion some of its steps are conducted simultaneously. Furthermore, it does not end with the compilation of the dictionary, as specialized dictionaries in particular require continuous content updates. The overall quality of the resulting reference work is determined by each of the aspects discussed in this section.

3 Systemizing business terminology and composing business dictionaries

Given the importance for society of business in general and business dictionaries in particular, it comes as a great surprise that very little has been published on the topic. Very few lexicographic studies have analyzed business dictionaries in a systematic way. Most analyze only one or a few specific business dictionaries or else merely include examples from these in a broader discussion of specialized

lexicography. On the other hand, studies of business dictionaries from an economic perspective focus on factual content and leave other lexicographic aspects aside. This section takes both the economic and the lexicographic perspective into account and provides an overview of the current state of business lexicography research.

It has to be kept in mind that there are two different definitions of a business dictionary. On the one hand, business can refer to the subject field of the dictionary. In this sense, a business dictionary can be defined as a reference work from which general concepts of business and business language can be retrieved. On the other hand, the term is used to refer to a dictionary created for and issued by a business organization, which we call a corporate dictionary to differentiate it from a business dictionary. The latter usually covers terminology regarding the product(s) or service(s) offered by the organization, as well as the language used within each of its departments, such as marketing or human resources. Thus, the subject field of such corporate dictionaries might not be related to business at all. For instance, a product-line dictionary on refrigerators of one specific organization will cover no or very little factual knowledge from the subject field of business.

3.1 Function of business dictionaries

Of course, there are some dictionaries of economics and business whose intended function is communicative and which provide substantial linguistic information for each article, such as *Harrap's Business Dictionary English French – Dictionnaire Français Anglais*. Such linguistically aware resources are frequently learners' dictionaries, that is, they explicitly target language learners. This particular type of dictionary usually specifies clearly the intended function in the front matter.

Generally, though, business dictionaries are regarded as a “handy introductory reference to terms” (Womack 2005: 4) and are thus located at the cognitive extreme of the function continuum. In this case, several analyses (e.g., Andersen and Fuertes-Olivera 2009) have shown that business dictionary creators rarely specify the intended function explicitly in the final resource. Most of them only claim that they address a general user group interested in business. This renders it difficult for users to choose the best option for their specific needs. To remedy this situation, Caruso (2014) provides a system that evaluates online specialized resources in terms of their communicative or cognitive function and their usefulness for translation and learning situations. The system compares the results of a quantitative analysis of lexicographic features covered in each dictionary (Caruso 2014: 75).

A corporate dictionary, on the other hand, facilitates knowledge transfer and supports specialized communication within a company by providing a consistent use of terms (Leroyer 2007). Such dictionaries are frequently used to familiarize external associates with the company language. In terms of content, a corporate dictionary covers the organization's language and area of specialty with a view to

creating and sustaining a corporate image (Leroyer 2007). Arguably, it covers many subject fields, incorporating as it does language from all the company's departments and activities.

Corporate dictionaries have a designated communication-based function. It is thus even more intriguing that they usually lack precisely the linguistic information required to truly cater to that function. Leroyer distinguishes between two communicative functions of corporate dictionaries: the message-planning function, which is oriented towards the acquisition and verification of knowledge, and the message transcription function, that is, actual text-production activities (2007: 112). The former implies a structure that allows text examples to be found by looking up a message-planning keyword, thereby enabling the user to understand more easily a message composed according to the corporate communication plan. The latter provides the user with message components to be used in actual text production tasks in compliance with the corporate communication plan.

Product-line dictionaries provide information on a specific product line or product group (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995). Most such works are multilingual as their main function is to aid translation of documentation related to a specific product group or line (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 73). If a dictionary only provides language equivalents without any definitions or other information, translators require a lot of previous knowledge to be able to use it effectively.

At times such company- or product-line-specific reference works are restricted in their communicative function to target the very specific needs of clients browsing the company's promotional materials. Such promotional dictionaries explain the meaning of lexemes that refer to the basic characteristics of products and services provided by an organization (Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp 2014: 142). One example is *The Glossary of Mortgage and Home Equity Terms* issued as a monolingual dictionary by the Wells Fargo bank. Given their nature, the usefulness of promotional dictionaries is restricted to disambiguating words used in the promotional materials of the organization that publishes or sponsors them.

3.2 Typology of business dictionaries

Although the typology regarding single- and multi-field lexicography discussed for specialized lexicography also applies to the domain of business lexicography, some features are specific to the latter. Several subfields of business are simultaneously culture-dependent and international because they are torn between local cultural traditions and the forces of globalization (Fuertes-Olivera 2009b: 164). Regional regulations do not necessarily coincide with international standards, such as the International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS). By contrast, business as a subject field can be regarded as culture-independent given its markedly quantitative nature. It relies strongly on mathematical and statistical concepts (Hashimzade, Myles and

Myles 2014: 14) which are frequently equivalent across cultures. It is highly important to consider this ambivalent nature of the field when compiling a business dictionary.

Those opposing forces – global scope and culture-independence on the one hand, national scope and culture-dependence on the other – are also reflected in the different perspectives on business dictionaries. Some approaches encourage international, multi-field business dictionaries (Welch and Merritt 1996); others promote the use of subfield dictionaries (Fuertes-Olivera 2009b: 166). Given the size of most subject fields, multi-field dictionaries are not to be recommended even if they are rather popular in economics (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 59). Although such resources claim to span several fields, space and readability constraints generally preclude proper coverage of any one of them. Even in an electronic format, where space is not an issue, it is still easy to overwhelm the user with too much information.

As it is the creators of a business dictionary that decide on its scope and level of granularity, these choices are subjective and should be documented, which is often not the case in practice. For instance, Womack compares five dictionaries of finance and investment which call themselves *business dictionaries*. Their content ranges from the insider language of Wall Street (*Wall Street Words*) and financial equations (*1001 Financial Words You Need to Know*) to detailed etymological information (*Webster's New World Finance and Investment Dictionary*), the inclusion of social-science concepts (*The Economist Dictionary of Business*) and slang terms (*The Ultimate Business Dictionary*) (Womack 2005). The intended function and scope of each of those dictionaries is poorly documented and their typological features are mixed, with partial diachronic or etymological information being attached to some articles in an unsystematic manner.

In contrast to a business dictionary, a corporate dictionary depends on the culture of the organization concerned and can exist only in relation to the corporation and to its principles, strategies, and identity, that is, to its needs. Thus, such a dictionary is inevitably prescriptive as it must account for the needs of the corporation while still facilitating internal and external communication. Corporate dictionaries are synchronic, documenting the organization's language at a given moment in time. Given the global character of most corporations, they are frequently multilingual, covering English, as the main language across the organization, and other languages spoken locally (Leroyer 2007). Encyclopedic and linguistic types of information are reduced to a minimum or not covered at all.

Product-line or group dictionaries are very simple from a lexicographic point of view, consisting often in mere alphabetical listings of headwords and their equivalents in other languages (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 73). The selection of headwords is determined by the product line or group, so the dictionary does not include general articles on, for example, an engine, but only on the specific engine(s) produced by the company. Such dictionaries provide so little information that they could not exist independent of the corporation. They specifically target a well-informed user

group with a high level of expertise on the product. Any other users would certainly require at least a definition. In fact, adding definitions to such dictionaries would make them usable for external, e.g., marketing, purposes.

3.3 Structure of business dictionaries

The basic structural principles of a business dictionary are equivalent to those of a specialized dictionary, that is, both are organized by a medio-, macro-, and micro-structure. However, from a mediostructural perspective, cross-references within an article to different microstructural elements are rather uncommon in business dictionaries. Cross-references between articles, on the other hand, are very common, as exemplified in Figure 23.1 in Section 2.1. As regards links to external sources of additional information, it is increasingly common to reference online resources. For instance, the paper-based edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Economics* provides links to *Wikipedia* entries.

Most business dictionaries are organized alphabetically. Unfortunately, access to online business glossaries is fairly often provided by means of alphabetical listings with all letters on one page, such as Information International's *Glossary of Business Terms*. It is thus necessary to scroll down the page to the letter needed, which is not a very user-friendly access method. Besomi (2013) found that most business dictionaries provide only a minimum of navigation aids (e.g., lists organized by clickable letters).

The coverage of microstructural elements is usually very low. One of the few exceptions is the financial dictionary *1001 Financial Words You Need To Know*, which provides not only a phonetic transcription, but also an explanation of the phonetic alphabet used. Furthermore, word classes are added to the beginning of each definition; grammatical information, such as the transitive nature of verbs, is provided in square brackets; and usage notes are explicitly highlighted in grey boxes. Such additional information greatly facilitates the use of business dictionaries for communicative purposes, such as text production or translation. However, most such dictionaries include only definitions, equivalences, and examples, so the rest of this section will focus on those three information categories.

With regard to definitions, these can vary significantly even between dictionaries within the same subfield. The style and presentation of definitions range from integrated, discursive entries to short and concise ones that rely on heavy cross-referencing. The problem with lengthy descriptive articles, as provided by the *Oxford Dictionary of Economics*, is the difficulty of detecting different senses if no internal structure is provided. By contrast, when Arabic numerals precede each lexical sense, a user can detect at a glance that a headword has different meanings. If each numeral is also assigned a semantic category or subfield tag, their disambiguation is further facilitated. For instance, *The Ultimate Business Dictionary* provides a semantic tag for each numbered sense, such as “Gen Mgt” for “General Management”

or “HR” for “Human Resources”, to specify the subfield or perspective of a specific definition.

With either strategy it is highly important that all specialized expressions in a definition or reference are also included as headwords in the main word list, which Womack (2005) finds not always to be the case. For a novice, the omission of important information only becomes obvious when comparing different definitions in a range of specialized resources. The expert user might more easily detect that a certain resource does not provide the degree of encyclopedic information needed for a specific situation of use. It is important for the lexicographer to consciously decide on a system of cross-references as well as the macrostructural organization of articles, and then to apply this system consistently to the entire resource.

Definitions in business dictionaries also reflect tension between the local and the global. The addition of culture-specific senses considerably increases the size of a dictionary, makes it hard to choose which information to include and which to omit. For instance, out of the five dictionaries analyzed by Womack, only one, *The Ultimate Business Dictionary*, defines a meaning of *margin* specific to Australia and New Zealand (2005: 10). However, this inclusion of culture-specific information is not done systematically and sporadic regional references are of little use.

As regards equivalences across languages, the current practice in business lexicography seems either to presume exact synonymy and only provide a single equivalent in a highly prescriptive manner, or to list a large number of equivalents in the target language. Dictionaries of the latter type are specifically intended to help translators. However, as the following example (1) from a bidirectional Spanish–German dictionary of economics and law illustrates, dictionaries with random equivalent lists often fail to do even that. Ironically, the dictionary concerned explicitly states that this manner of organizing articles is particularly useful for translation.

- (1) **amortización** Ab(be)zahlung f, (Zu)Rückzahlung f, Abschreibung f, Ablösung f, Tilgung f (einer Hypothek), Aus|tilgung f, Kredit- f, Tilgungszahlung f, Abgeltung f, Abtragung f, Wertberichtigung f (Bilanz), Abbuchung f, Abdeckung f, Abnutzung f, Löschung f, Amortisation f, Refundierung f, Einziehung f (von Aktien), Laufzeit f (Wertpapiere), Absetzung f für Abnutzung, Überführung f auf die tote Hand, Wegfall m (Arbeitsplätze); – (Cat) Kapitalisierung f der „laudemios“, die der direkte Eigentümer bei Veräußerung des „dominio útil“ an die tote Hand behält

(Becher 1999: 78)

There seems to be no rationale behind the order in which the German equivalents are arranged or selected in (1). It is also unclear why a note or semantic category is provided for some equivalents but not for others. As a result, the dictionary does not help the user to choose the correct equivalent for a specific context. Only native speakers of German highly proficient in the subject field would be able to discern

the appropriate equivalent. Adding linguistic information and indicating the degree of equivalence by means of usage notes, semantic categories, etc. would definitely improve the resource's quality.

Examples are particularly important for business dictionaries that intend to fulfil a communicative function. Examples provide a very important aid in deciphering subtle differences; they also outline polysemy of lexical units (Fuertes-Olivera and Arribas-Baño 2008: 109). They are thus multifunctional information categories of a lexical unit (Fuertes-Olivera and Arribas-Baño 2008: 112). These authors provide a very extensive typology of functions fulfilled by an example, ranging from illustration of meaning and grammar to stylistic and cultural aspects.

3.4 Designing and making business dictionaries

The recent technological shift has affected all types of dictionaries and their design and making. In the case of business dictionaries, the advent of cheap electronic publishing has led to a quantitative shift in terms of page count on the market. A possible explanation for this turn might be that such larger reference works contain more detailed information and are usually provided by large organizations with the means to keep the content updated. The ability to do this is an obvious advantage of e-lexicography since there is no longer any need to wait for publication of a new edition in order to adapt a specific element or add more information. As current research suggests, users might still consult both representation modes in almost equal numbers, but the frequency of access is higher for online electronic dictionaries than for their printed counterparts (Gromann and Schnitzer 2016).

The change from paper-based to online dictionaries provides specialized lexicography with a range of new features, but these are yet to be fully explored by business dictionaries. Although they readily employ hyperlinked references and a minimum of navigation aids, such works barely differ from printed editions in other regards. In particular, business-dictionary makers are failing to benefit from the easier direct interaction with readers which is offered by the online format (Besomi 2013). In contrast, general language dictionaries are increasingly taking up the idea of collaborative content development, as discussed in Section 2.2. With appropriate quality assurance in place, the contribution of users can considerably speed up the evolution process of dictionaries, as exemplified by resources such as *Wiktionary*. For instance, *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* mostly addresses researchers and graduate students and is updated on a quarterly basis, yet the updates are not always extended to all cross-references, a process that could easily be accelerated by collaborative interaction with users. The dictionary is based on sound lexicographic practices and remains a standard work with a great impact in its discipline (Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp 2014: 140), but its categorization of online entries relies on a system of codes devised in the 1960s and is hopelessly outdated (Besomi 2013: 25). As a

result, fewer search results than expected and available are displayed when searching for a particular lexeme.

Given the complexity of business and its subfields, we argue that the making of a resource should always involve several domain experts, all of whom should collaboratively take a clear decision on the general approach to be adopted. The larger and more culture-bound the subject field, the more domain experts should be involved in the process. Lexicographic know-how is required to set the reference work within the correct functional, typological, and structural context and help determine the intended user group. In other words, designing and making a business dictionary is a highly multidisciplinary activity – even more so than is the case for other types of specialized dictionary

Turning now to knowledge sources, general texts and private texts differ widely depending on the subject field, intended function, and type of dictionary. For instance, a dictionary of accounting intended for students, experts, and translators using lexicographic data in cognitive and communicative situations should consider national and international standards, financial statements of companies, practical examples of accounting problems, handbooks of accounting, etc. (Fuentes-Olivera and Tarp 2014: 198–201). In contrast, a corporate dictionary will rely only on private texts and knowledge obtained from employees of the corporation in question.

When designing a corporate dictionary, a lexicographer functions as a mediator between different user groups (Leroyer 2007: 111). On the one hand, each department of a corporation should be motivated to contribute to the dictionary with its own terminology. On the other, the dictionary needs to comply with the communication plan as determined by the corporate identity and corporate needs. As regards methods, since the target audience is clearly identified, user needs and situations of usage can more easily be identified by means of introspection.

The design of a product-line or group dictionary is considerably facilitated by the fact that the user group is well-known and well-defined in advance (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 73). Typically the user profile comprises internal staff and translators, as well as customers and business associates. The type of information included again depends on the intended function. If targeted towards production as well as reception, more linguistic information and sample sentences are needed than for a purely receptive function.

Both corporate and product-line or group dictionaries have a prescriptive character that must be considered in planning their design. With growing globalization, an increasing number of companies are opting for English as a common group language. In such cases, dictionary design must consider the pivotal role of English without neglecting the local native languages of its users. If these can be reduced to one, the dictionary may be designed as a common bilingual resource (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 74). If the group language is English, but there are several local, native languages across the group, the design must be that of a multilingual resource

(Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995: 74). The pivotal role of such a resource is always determined by the language in which texts are first produced, as a particular company might wish to add language pairs other than the group language and the local native language.

4 Open questions and quality issues

From a subjective perspective, there are good and bad dictionaries. However, to be of any use, evaluation of a dictionary's quality has to go beyond that basic dichotomy. The overall quality of a resource is generally assessed by the degree of success that users experience in the consultation process and the ability to unambiguously retrieve the information presented (Gouws and Prinsloo 1998: 18). This does not mean that dictionaries must be prescriptive, or that they must eschew synonyms in order to avoid ambiguity. Instead, it refers to the ability of the user to disambiguate articles based on the information provided by the reference work.

In business dictionaries some structural deficiencies have been observed (Schnitzer 2014: 298–300). The most common is the omission of high-frequency headwords in a specific field, such as *consejero delegado* ('CEO') missing in Spanish to German business dictionaries. On the other hand, headwords are frequently included which seem to bear no obvious connection to the business domain, such as *vaquero* (English 'cowboy') in a Spanish-German business dictionary (Sánchez 1993: 357). At times, selection of equivalents seems to be random, with high frequency equivalents in the target language being omitted. This could be the result of a reference work focusing on a specific region without specifying this fact anywhere in the resource.

General quality factors apply to any kind of reference work, such as the factual accuracy of information, readability, and clarity. However, the real difference in dictionary quality is determined by a range of specific criteria. Haensch (2004: 134–135) provides a very comprehensive list of such criteria, including, most importantly, the clarity and completeness of instructions offered to the user of a dictionary, consideration of multi-word expressions and collocations, and the target-oriented inclusion of examples. In fact, many seemingly structural deficiencies can be remedied by a detailed description of objectives in terms of intended use, purpose, and targeted users. For instance, the omission of highly frequent regional variants can easily be explained by indicating in the front matter of the resource that the focus is on one particular region. But few makers of business dictionaries, online or offline, provide users with any genuine introductory or instructive note detailing the intended use.

It is clear that specialized resources increasingly tend towards the electronic representation format. However, serious quality issues are involved in the use of

online platforms. These barely differ from paper-based dictionaries, which sometimes still offer more sophisticated access to articles, and they do not remotely exploit the manifold advantages provided by online representation (Besomi 2013: 18). The world of business lexicography has yet to truly embrace Besomi's concept of "Web-born dictionaries" (2013: 18), that is, dictionaries originally designed to reside on a Web-based platform, and to exploit the resultant advantages. Such advantages include easier cross-referencing by means of hyperlinks, multimodal content (videos, audio recordings, etc.), refined navigation aids, and easier user interaction and collaboration. Yet, even if the electronic format might not be subject to the space constraints associated with paper-based representations, it should not invite dictionary makers to overwhelm their users with details not contributing towards their function.

Future business dictionaries face a range of challenges. A very first step to meeting them is to provide detailed and clear documentation of the decisions about function, typology, and structure taken throughout the entire design and making process. This will help to inform the user about the dictionary's intended purpose and use. On another front, a well-devised and consistent structure based on semantically sound concepts can considerably reduce the time and cost involved in making a business dictionary. For instance, structuring will be facilitated if clear semantic categories are established for the entire subject field and used consistently. Sadly, many business dictionaries still fall short of those requirements.

It seems that financial considerations are becoming increasingly pressing within business lexicography. The rise of the fast moving online format has almost eliminated smaller initiatives in the field. Users expect high-quality online products, which entail a labor- and cost-intensive production process that can only be funded by large international organizations. These, then, must provide the context for future business lexicography. The only alternative is collaborative resource development as exemplified by *Wikipedia*, which might be a viable means of providing business dictionaries free of charge.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented the complexity of business lexicography and its relation to specialized lexicography. Although the former represents a sub-discipline of the latter, several central characteristics are specific to it, such as the differentiation between subject-field and corporate dictionary. The ambivalent nature, at once culture-bound and global, of business dictionaries places special requirements on their design and making. Thus, we contend that such a highly complex national and international field requires that more than one domain expert be involved in dictionary compilation. Moreover, from our analysis of the main traits of business dictionaries and the relevant literature, it has emerged that the team compiling a

business or corporate dictionary must comprise more than domain experts. It must also include both IT experts, to ensure the proper use of technology, and language experts, to provide helpful linguistic descriptions of specialized expressions.

In business lexicography much has been accomplished within the last two decades. First, there has been a general tendency to employ the electronic format. Electronic dictionaries facilitate data access and collaboration with users, aspects still to be fully explored in the practical implementation of business dictionaries. The technological shift has also made data publicly available as sources of knowledge for the design and making of dictionaries. However, the Web as a corpus has to be used cautiously and domain experts should decide which data from the Web to include in a resource. Second, user needs have become increasingly central to the design and making of business dictionaries. This is one major area for future research, as the needs and consultation behavior of working professionals have so far been neglected and most user research studies have been restricted to language learners within an educational setting. The trend towards incorporating technological advances and user needs into the design and making process promises to result in comprehensive and sophisticated lexical resources for business as a subject field, as well as for businesses as organizations pursuing economic activities. We hope that this chapter will foster an understanding of characteristics specific to business lexicography and spur future research in the area.

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24 Corpora and corpus linguistic approaches to studying business language

1. Introduction
2. Corpus linguistics: principles and practice
3. Corpora of business language
4. Corpus research on business language
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Corpus linguistics is primarily concerned with studying language on the basis of large collections of real-life linguistic data normally known as corpora. The term *corpus* has been used in linguistics generally for some time to describe a sample of a language or language variety. However, in corpus linguistics, the term is understood more specifically as a compilation of naturally-occurring texts stored electronically and available for quantitative and qualitative analysis (McEnery and Hardie 2012). The development of corpus linguistics has been largely fuelled by advances in computer technology and the availability of linguistic software that allows linguists to search through corpora rapidly and reliably. Insights derived in this way have significantly increased our understanding of language use by providing empirical evidence for the existence of regularities and patterns that are not immediately visible to the naked eye or simply defy linguists' intuition. As John Sinclair, the father of corpus linguistics, pointedly remarked: "The language looks rather different when you look at a lot of it at once" (Sinclair 1991: 100).

Most work in corpus linguistics, particularly in the early stages, was concerned with the development and study of large reference corpora of national varieties including spoken and written registers. The British National Corpus (BNC), which contains 100 million words of English, is a good example of such large compilations, sometimes also referred to as mega-corpora (Flowerdew 2004).¹ Currently, in the era of Big Data, we are in a phase of giga-corpora with compilations reaching billions of tokens such as the enTenTen12 corpus of English (4.65 billion tokens) available on Sketch Engine, a web-based corpus linguistic software (Kilgarriff et al. 2004). Yet, while large reference corpora have proven invaluable in linguistic analyses, they are less suitable for investigating language use in specific professional domains.

¹ For further information, see the official BNC website at: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

This is largely due to the fact that they are compiled with a view to being a representative sample of a language, and their composition is carefully balanced to include texts and genres that are seen as important in a particular culture (Flowerdew 2004). Hence, text types or genres that are typical only of a specific domain are likely to be excluded from such compilations. Also, certain texts may not be included because they belong to the category of occluded genres that are, for example, difficult to access due to confidentiality or intellectual property concerns. Hence, researchers who are interested in studying language patterns in specific contexts are not much helped by large reference corpora.

It is for this reason that, since the mid-1990s, many scholars have started using the tools and techniques of corpus linguistics to build and interrogate smaller specialised corpora focusing on selected genres, registers and domains. The impetus for this kind of work, perhaps not surprisingly, came from the fields of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), where, given the growing importance of English in professional and academic communication globally, there was an urgent need to create teaching resources (Tribble 1997, 2002; Flowerdew 1998; Ghadessy, Henry, and Roseberry 2001). It is within this realm that the first corpora of business language were created, leading to corpus-based research on language use in a variety of business genres, registers and domains.

Before discussing the main corpus resources of business language and the ways in which corpus-based research has enhanced our understanding of business communication, Section 2 outlines the key analytical tools and procedures commonly adopted in corpus research. These include: frequency, concordancing, collocation, keyword, cluster, and corpus annotation. To demonstrate the benefits and also limitations of these analytical tools, examples will be drawn from CORES, a one-million-word corpus of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports obtained from ten major oil companies and published over the last five years. CSR reports form part of corporate disclosure, and are the most public and visible documents offering insights into organisations' actions and goals in relation to their role in society and their stakeholders. Issues involved in building such specialised corpora, including those of business language, have been extensively discussed elsewhere (Warren 2004; O'Keefe, McCarthy, and Carter 2007; Koester 2010) and for reasons of space will not be considered here. Section 3 outlines the main corpus resources of business language compiled to date, while Section 4 reports on the major studies that have used corpus linguistic tools and methods to investigate aspects of business language. The final section summarises the contribution of corpus research to business language and discusses areas for further research.

2 Corpus linguistics: principles and practice

Corpus-based research often begins with frequency counts. In the simplest terms, frequency can be defined as the number of times an item occurs in a corpus, where

‘item’ can include a word, word form, part of speech (if a corpus was annotated accordingly), keyword or cluster (Baker 2010). Frequencies can be gleaned from frequency lists that normally rank all items (words, keywords, etc.) by how often they occur. Such lists can be generated within seconds by concordancers such as AntConc (Anthony 2011), WordSmith Tools (Scott 2008) or Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2004), the most widely available linguistic software used by corpus linguists. Frequency lists are useful tools in determining the focus of a given data set and pointing to features that are typical of a particular genre, register or domain. For example, Table 24.1 shows a frequency list of the top 12 words from CORES and two other corpora, the British National Corpus (BNC) and the British Academic Written English (BAWE)², which contains over 6 million words of academic assignments collected at British universities in various disciplines. It is important to note that, when comparing frequency counts in different corpora, we need to be aware of the size of the data sets. If we deal with different amounts of data, then it is necessary to normalise frequency counts, for example, per ten thousand words as in Table 24.1.

Table 24.1: The 12 most frequent words in BNC, BAWE and CORES

BNC			BAWE			CORES		
Word	Raw Freq.	Norm. Freq.	Word	Raw Freq.	Norm. Freq.	Word	Raw Freq.	Norm. Freq.
THE	6,055,105	630.4	THE	491,471	705.3	THE	42,832	491.1
OF	3,049,564	317.5	OF	270,136	387.7	OF	30,462	349.3
AND	2,624,341	273.2	AND	207,623	298.0	AND	27,974	320.7
TO	2,599,505	270.6	TO	188,666	270.8	IN	21,284	244.0
A	2,181,592	227.1	IN	137,911	197.9	TO	18,749	215.0
IN	1,946,021	202.6	A	125,736	180.4	A	9,513	109.1
THAT	1,052,259	109.6	IS	110,721	158.9	FOR	8,813	101.0
IS	974,293	101.4	THAT	78,781	113.1	OUR	6,838	78.4
IT	922,687	96.1	AS	62,128	89.2	IS	6,488	74.4
FOR	880,848	91.7	BE	58,053	83.3	WE	5,652	64.8
WAS	863,917	89.9	FOR	54,827	78.7	ON	5,542	63.5
I	732,523	76.3	ARE	42,545	61.1	ARE	5,293	60.7

Considering these lists, we see that the most frequent items in all three corpora are function words, which is not surprising given that in most languages function or grammatical words are used with high frequency. Despite the similarities, these three short lists also reveal a number of differences, for example, in the use of

² For information about BAWE, see: <http://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directory/art-design/british-academic-written-english-corpus-bawe/>

personal pronouns. Whereas *I* is a very frequent item in general English (it occurs 76.3 times per ten thousand words), in CORES it is very infrequent with only three occurrences per ten thousand words. By contrast, the plural pronoun *we* figures among the top ten most frequent words in CORES, just behind a related pronominal reference *our*. Finally, personal pronouns are completely absent from the BAWE top ten and occur much lower on the frequency list, pointing to the impersonal style of academic writing. The use of pronouns can signal personal meanings and identity relations and thus hint at specific aspects of a genre or discourse type that are considered worth investigating further.

The very frequent use of ‘*we*’ in CSR reporting places the genre firmly within business discourse, of which the use of this self-reference seems to be a typical feature (Handford 2010; Lischinsky 2011a). However, depending on purpose, *we* might convey different pragmatic and discursive meanings and these could be further investigated by conducting *concordance analysis*. Concordances are lists with lines that display all occurrences of a search term, often referred to as a *node*. The node is normally positioned in the middle with a few words to the left and to the right. Such a display is known as a KWIC, short for Key Word in Context. Table 24.2 provides an example of a concordance for the pronoun ‘*we*’ from CORES. A close examination of concordance lines is a qualitative technique frequently adopted in corpus-based research. In contrast to frequency lists, which display items in isolation, a concordance analysis enables the researcher to discover lexico-grammatical patterns that offer clues to the uses and meanings of the search term in context.

Table 24.2: A random sample of 10 concordance lines for ‘*we*’ from CORES

energy mix. In looking at these pathways	we	seek to identify forms of energy that can
providing energy security. In transport,	we	believe that making car engines much more
costs and technology. In power and heat,	we	believe an effective pathway would create
production as well as meeting new demand.	We	believe that the oil industry will be required
improvements in SAGD technology, and	we	will incorporate technologies and operating
technologies, and it is these skills that	we	will bring to our projects. Examples where
to use carbon capture and storage (CCS)?	We	recognize that CCS could be a longer- term
to Trinidad and Angola to Azerbaijan.	We	will be following the same principles
is BP doing to provide low-carbon energy?	We	aim to play a leading role in the growing
use of our fuel and lubricant products.	We	strive to produce our hydrocarbons as

The above concordance shows that, in the context of CSR discourse, *we* functions as the corporate *we*. As such, it is used to represent an organisation to the outside world as a unified whole, despite internal hierarchies and sometimes conflicting interests or views. Examination of the verbs to the right of the pronoun reveals that most of them belong to the category of mental verbs, such as *believe* or *recognise*,

which describe human experiences, perceptions and attitudes and do not necessarily involve volition or action (Biber et al. 1999). Action verbs do occur to the right as well, for example, *incorporate* or *produce*, but mostly in the infinitive form following the marker of future tense “will” or another mental verb such as *aim* or *strive*. This short concordance already points to some interesting discursive features of CSR reporting. A personified corporate voice expresses a unified commitment to the improvement of social and environmental concerns, not in terms of concrete evidence or immediate action but as a broad intention to “do good” in future (cf. Lischinsky 2011a).

Conducting a concordance analysis can be a daunting task, especially when analysing a frequent item in a large corpus. Even searches in specialised business corpora, which tend to be smaller, can produce a large number of concordance lines that would take a long time to analyse in depth. One way of helping researchers to identify frequent linguistic patterns in a more immediate manner is the sort function, which sorts concordances according to various criteria, for example, by one word to the left or two to the right of the search term. In this way, items that often co-occur with the search term can be discerned. This phenomenon is known as collocation, a concept which is not a new idea but which was largely developed within the Firthian and, later, Sinclairian corpus approach to meaning (Barnbrook, Mason, and Krishnamurthy 2013).

Conceptually, the idea is based on the observation that meanings of a word are not inherent in its word form. Instead, they emerge from combinations with other lexical and grammatical items with which the word in question frequently co-occurs. Although different definitions of, and approaches to collocation have emerged in corpus linguistics, most would consider collocation as the co-occurrence of two or more words within a certain span (for example -4 to $+4$). A distinction is normally made between co-occurrences determined on the basis of raw frequency, on the one hand, and significance testing on the other (Barnbrook, Mason, and Krishnamurthy 2013; McEnery and Hardie 2012). When using a frequency-based approach, we can expect that many of the frequent collocations will be function words, which may be of interest to those concerned with grammatical relations but less so to researchers interested in lexical meanings and discursive aspects. Furthermore, if we determine collocations on the basis of frequency alone, we cannot be certain whether a co-occurrence is a true reflection of a relationship between two items or whether it emerged by chance, for example, due to the fact that one of the items is a frequent word in the given corpus (Baker 2006). To eliminate this concern, various statistical tests are used, of which the most popular are Mutual Information (MI), Log-Likelihood, T-score and Log Dice. The tests yield different results because they favour different types of words.³ For example, MI tends to emphasise low frequency words, whereas t-scores favour words that have a relatively high frequency.

³ Baker (2006) offers a comprehensive discussion of the differences between these tests and their uses in corpus linguistics.

Table 24.3 provides an example of the different results that these tests produce by retrieving the most frequent collocates of the lemma ‘employee’. This word is particularly interesting in the context of CSR because alongside the self-reference ‘we’ and companies’ names it is the most frequently mentioned social actor in CORES. The collocations were retrieved using Sketch Engine, which offers a choice of different statistical tests.

Table 24.3: The 10 most frequent collocations of the lemma ‘employee’ in CORES using different statistical tests within a –4 and +4 span

T-score	LogDice	MI
and	contractors	life-long
of	all	salaried
the	their	contractors
to	retirement	wages
in	plans	uphold
for	benefits	negotiated
our	for	rewarded
are	number	eligible
contractors	remuneration	post-employment
with	management	motivated

Apart from the term *contractors*, the lists contain different sets of collocates. The question ultimately arises: which set is the best reflection of the issues truly associated with employees in CORES? The answer is that they all point to statistically significant or strong associations, though the results vary in terms of frequency and exclusivity, with MI showing the most exclusive associations and T-score the most frequent. LogDice, which is based on the Dice coefficient, can be positioned in the middle as it combines the relative frequency of the relation X (headword) + Y (collocate) with frequencies of X in the same syntactic position and with any collocate, and Y in any syntactic position (Rychlý 2008). Some researchers see LogDice as the best method of determining collocations (e.g., Baker 2006).

Collocations merit special attention when studying business language. As Nelson (2006) argues, many of the lexical items that are frequently used in English business communication are also typical of everyday English. However, what distinguishes business language from everyday language is precisely the way in which these lexical items combine with other items. The combinations often display associations that are unique to business communication and rarely appear outside this context. Let us take as an example the above list of collocations retrieved by using LogDice. There seems to be a group of items that point to advantages such as *benefits* and *remuneration*. If we go down the list, we find even more indicators of such benefits including *health*, *share* and *training*. This indicates that in the context of CSR, companies strongly emphasise their concern for the financial, educational and physical

well-being of employees. Linking the lemma ‘employee’ with the determiner ‘all’ also creates an image of non-hierarchical inclusive relations and equality. Another frequent collocate is ‘their’, which could potentially indicate workers employed by other companies or items belonging to the employees of the oil industry. Such uncertainties can be quickly resolved by examining concordances. In this case, ‘their’ is mostly (78 out of 88 occurrences) associated with the employees themselves, their families, needs or interests (see Table 24.4).

Table 24.4: Concordance lines of the collocation pair ‘employee’ and ‘their’ in CORES

their individual performance review	employees	set priorities on <i>their</i> contribution to
differentiated approach to motivating	employees	based on <i>their</i> contribution to achieving
sports and fitness events; assistance to	employees	in acquiring <i>their</i> own housing; social
gations are gradually delivered as the	employees	reach <i>their</i> retirement age. pension plan
the crisis rather than on confrontation.	Employees	retained confidence in <i>their</i> future
physical culture among the company’s	employees	and <i>their</i> families: they can attend a
sports, sports and fitness events for	employees	and <i>their</i> family members. Support of
olders include shareholders, investors,	employees	and <i>their</i> families, trade unions, the
workers in the Moscow region. The	employees	can realize <i>their</i> professional and creative

Such evidence would seem to emphasise the image of the oil companies as caring institutions that not only look after their employees but also extend benefits to their families. In this context, employees are strongly connoted with positive things, something which is not always the case in everyday English where *employee* mostly indicates a contractual and transactional relation. Such networks of positive or negative associations are referred to as *semantic prosody*, a concept which goes back to Sinclair’s (1991) claim that some words have a tendency to occur with pleasant events, while others may be generally associated with negative situations. The term semantic prosody was coined by Louw (1993: 157), who defined it as the “consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates”. Stubbs (2001) prefers the term *discourse prosody* to distinguish between lexical choices that express speakers’ attitudes and, on the other hand, associations that are more or less explicit in the semantics of a lexical item (semantic preference). Partington, Duguid, and Taylor (2013: 58–61) propose the term *evaluative prosody* to emphasise the inherent potential of a lexical item to express evaluative assessments. The combination of ‘employee’ with ‘benefits’, ‘shares’ and ‘health’ is a good example of positive discourse, or evaluative prosody, which construes the employee of the oil industry as a well-looked-after person – associations that are not as such inherent in the semantics of the word.

Thus, an analysis of collocations and discourse/evaluative prosodies in a business context might point to recurrent, typical lexical choices and evaluations that are

preferred in business communication. Such recurrent preferences are not just a matter of individual choices but largely reflect the community of practice, and are a means by which the community expresses, interprets and evaluates its goals, actions and concerns (Handford 2010). In short, collocations and discourse/evaluative prosodies do not just reveal phraseological tendencies but also expose practices performed by institutions and the people acting within them.

Another useful corpus technique is keyword analysis. In corpus linguistic terms, a *keyword* is a word which occurs statistically more often in a given corpus (sometimes referred to as the target corpus), as compared to another (sometimes described as a reference corpus) (Scott 2010; Partington, Duguid, and Taylor 2013). Keywords are seen as robust indicators of the text's aboutness and style, but there are also some restrictions. The type of keywords retrieved from the target corpus will greatly depend on the selection of the reference corpus, its size and contents, as well as the statistical procedures used for keyword retrieval. Table 24.5 lists keywords obtained from CORES by using WordSmith Tools (Scott 2008) and Log-Likelihood as a metric of statistical significance. The BNC, which is the most popular reference corpus (RC) in corpus research of professional/business discourse (Nelson 2006), was selected as the reference corpus (names of companies were removed).

Table 24.5: Keywords in CORES

Keyword	Freq.	RC. Freq.
our	6,838	93,455
oil	2,597	10,158
gas	2,332	7,434
energy	2,446	12,098
operations	1,867	6,017
sustainability	1,059	155
production	2,343	15,476
financial	1,887	16,534
emissions	975	1,450
employees	1,278	5,817
projects	1,203	5,676
environmental	1,335	8,411
management	1,804	21,610
company	2,156	35,947
assets	1,023	4,313
safety	1,230	8,519
products	1,293	10,587
corporate	989	4,562
business	1,958	35,127
com	533	281

Table 24.5 shows words that one may reasonably expect in texts produced by the oil industry such as *oil*, *energy* or *production*. Interesting is the use of *our*, *environmental* and *sustainability*. These items indicate potential key goals or concerns of CSR activities,

but, in order to see what functions they serve, they need to be examined in context via concordances. One of the keywords is the abbreviation ‘com’, which in this context is part of weblinks. This does not mean that referring to websites is something typical of CSR discourse. Rather, this shows a limitation of keyword analysis in that the choice of a reference corpus may slightly skew the results. The BNC was compiled at the beginning of the 1990s, at a time when web-related terminology was only starting to reach public domains. Hence references to the Web are not frequent in BNC, but because they appear more frequently in CORES they were identified as key. Such aspects need to be considered when conducting a keyword analysis. Nevertheless, keywords are useful pointers to lexical items that are unusually frequent but might otherwise go unnoticed. They give us a flavour of the data as a whole and signpost features that might prove salient for a genre or a discourse type. Keywords are especially useful when comparing data sets that present two different registers or different arguments in a debate (Baker 2006). However, any examination of them needs to be complemented by concordance and collocation analysis.

Another frequently used corpus-technique is that of clusters. In corpus linguistics, *clusters* are normally understood as recurrent sequences of two or more words identified on the basis of a frequency cut off-point⁴ and retrieved automatically from a corpus. Clusters can include both complete multi-word combinations such as *as a result of*, and strings that are incomplete lexico-grammatical fragments, for example, *to our attention that*. Corpus research on clusters is mostly associated with work by Biber and his colleagues (Biber and Conrad 1999; Biber, Conrad, and Cortes 2004), who prefer the term *lexical bundle*. Other scholars use the notion of n-gram adopted from computational linguistics (e.g. O’Donnell, Römer, and Ellis 2013).⁵ In corpus research on business language, the term cluster seems to be preferred (O’Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter 2007; Handford 2010). Once automatically retrieved, clusters are often manually classified according to their structural and functional properties (Biber, Conrad, and Cortes 2004; Handford 2010).

Corpus studies on recurrent word combinations have demonstrated that clusters are a far more ubiquitous phenomenon in speech and writing than previously thought (e.g., Erman and Warren 2000). As suggested by Sinclair (1991) and his idiom principle, language users have a pool of ready-made prefabricated chunks at their disposal that they use frequently and consistently. Such chunks, even if incomplete, function as important structuring devices and building blocks of discourse,

⁴ The number of clusters retrieved will depend heavily on the cut-off point used. Some researchers argue that a string is significant if it occurs at least 20 times per million words (Biber and Conrad 1999: 184). Others suggest 10% of all texts as the cut-off (e.g. Hyland 2008). Dispersion across the corpus is also an important factor to consider, and tools such as WordSmith Tool (Scott 2008) display the number of corpus texts in which each cluster occurs. The researcher may want to look at sequences that appear in, for example, five or more text so as to guard against idiosyncratic use.

⁵ McEnery and Hardie (2012: 110) point out that the terms *lexical bundle* and *n-gram* are methodologically and technically the same, although the former is more often associated with retrieval procedures and the latter with a functional and structural interpretation of recurrent strings.

and can reveal interesting “fingerprints” of a given text or discourse type (O’Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter 2007: 61). This is also true for business language, much of which consists of recurrent clusters that have been shown to perform a variety of discursive functions (Handford 2010). Table 24.6 shows the 10 most frequent 4-word clusters retrieved from CORES.

Table 24.6: The 10 most frequent 4-word clusters in CORES

4-word cluster	Freq.
the board of directors	615
a member of the	249
board of directors of	230
of the management committee	163
in accordance with the	152
at the end of	123
the corporate management board	101
by the end of	99
as a result of	97
by the board of	96

Structurally, most of the frequent clusters are either noun phrases with a post-modifying fragment, e.g., *the board of directors*, or prepositional phrases such as *at the end of*. This reflects a factual and formal style of CSR reporting similar to that of academic prose or textbooks (Biber, Conrad, and Cortes 2004). In order to fully assess such a similarity, all clusters would need to be carefully examined. Functionally, the clusters listed above are mostly referential expressions that specify the senior management. Examination of the cluster *the board of directors* in context shows that it often collocates with verbs in the past tense such as *approved*, *established* or *proposed* (see Table 24.7). Interestingly, when completed actions or strategic plans are mentioned, then the executive management *the board of directors* is foregrounded as the instigator or the responsible body. This contrasts with the use of the inclusive corporate *we*, which, as discussed above, is mainly adopted when referring to future plans that are not necessarily formulated as concrete actions but rather as intentions to do good.

Table 24.7: Selected concordance lines of the cluster ‘the board of directors’ in CORES

During the reporting period	the Board of Directors	<i>approved</i> interested-party trans
sactions were <i>approved</i> by	the Board of Directors	through absentee voting. Strateg
rting year. In December 2011,	the Board of Directors	<i>approved</i> the Strategic Develo
ork of the board of directors.	The board of directors	has <i>established</i> procedures
f the executive management.	The board of directors	has <i>established</i> guidelines for

The greater use of the cluster *in accordance with* stresses compliance with rules and procedures, whereas the discourse organiser *as a result of* is an example of a bundle marking cause and effect (cf. McCarthy and Carter 2002). The two strings ‘by the end of’ and ‘at the end of’ are time references that are mostly followed by a year. Due to the confines of space, only a small proportion of clusters have been examined here. However, even these few recurrent strings already hint at some discursive practices evident in CSR reporting. The focus on compliance, achievement and the supreme role of the executive in accomplishing socially responsible tasks seem to be one such recurrent practice. However, like other computer-based approaches, a cluster analysis needs to be complemented by further qualitative procedures. Lists of strings do not necessarily tell us much in isolation and it is only through extended context analysis via concordances, additional classifications and researchers’ interpretations that further insights into a genre or text type are gained.

Finally, a few words need to be said about corpus annotation. The examples presented so far have been retrieved from raw text data, that is, text data that has not been supplemented with any additional information. In many instances, however, researchers may want to mark the data, or selected items from the corpus, in order to document the corpus structure or to be able to retrieve specific items. Usually, two methods of annotation are used in corpus linguistics: the first being part-of-speech (POS) tagging and the second markup. The latter is based on a standardised coding system, for example, the Text Encoding Initiative⁶ and is normally used to mark structural units of texts such as headers, paragraphs or to add additional meta- or paralinguistic information, for example gender, age, first language and so on (Baker 2006; Partington, Duguid, and Taylor 2013). It ought to be kept in mind that the process of markup is time consuming and not always necessary. The type of annotation known as POS tagging assigns to each item in the corpus a label or tag which points to its grammatical status (noun, verb, preposition, etc.). The tagging process can be done automatically or semi-automatically. For example, Sketch Engine allows its users to tag automatically their own data set with POS, and for written texts the level of accuracy is high (at around 97%). Having one’s own corpus annotated with grammatical information enables the researcher to retrieve specific items or combinations of items and compare them across different texts and registers. Table 24.8 shows the 10 most frequent combinations of adverb + adjective in CORES, which was automatically annotated with POS in Sketch Engine using the TreeTagger software.

⁶ For more information about the Text Encoding Initiative, see the project website <http://www.tei-c.org/index.xml>

Table 24.8: The 10 most frequent adverb + adjective combinations in CORES

Adverb + Adjective	Freq.
environmentally friendly	19
socially responsible	17
increasingly important	13
commercially viable	10
fully integrated	9
environmentally sensitive	9
commercially available	9
very important	8
socially important	8
jointly liable	8

By taking as an example data from a larger corpus of CSR reports, the purpose of this section was to demonstrate the key techniques adopted in corpus based research and to show their benefits and also limitations. Section 3 offers an overview of corpus resources that have been created to study business language.

3 Corpora of business language

The first electronic compilation that was used for corpus-based research on business language is the Business English Corpus (BEC) created by Mike Nelson (Nelson 2000, 2006). This corpus consists of just over 1 million tokens with almost an equal proportion of spoken and written registers. It includes a variety of business genres, broadly divided into texts used for doing business and texts that talk about business (Nelson 2006). The former are texts produced by businesses for internal and external purposes including annual reports, minutes and negotiations, whereas the latter are samples from business journalism and business education. The full composition of the corpus can be seen on the author's webpage at: <http://users.utu.fi/micnel/BEC/bec2/corpus-makeup.htm>. This corpus is currently unavailable to the general public.

The second independent corpus of business English is the Wolverhampton Business English Corpus compiled by the Computational Linguistics Group at the University of Wolverhampton (UK). With over 10 million words, it is much larger than the BEC but consists mainly of written materials retrieved from web sources. Whereas the BEC contains examples of the American and British varieties, the Wolverhampton corpus includes Englishes from countries in which English is the second, or a foreign language, such as Hong Kong, Switzerland and the Netherlands. This corpus is not freely available; information on how to obtain access to it can be found on the following website: http://catalog.elra.info/product_info.php?products_id=627.

Another large compilation of business language is the CANBEC corpus, which stands for the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Business English. The project was initiated by the School of English Studies at the University of Nottingham and was funded by Cambridge University Press. Currently, it is part of the Cambridge English Corpus and, together with a vast amount of written business data, forms the 200-million-word Cambridge Business English Corpus (CBEC). CANBEC itself is a one-million-word compilation that consists of spoken business language recorded in a variety of business settings (McCarthy and Handford 2004; Handford 2010). The data was derived from diverse sectors of mainly British industry ranging from self-employed people to large multinational companies. Neither CANBEC nor its parent CBEC corpus are freely available, except to those who write materials published by the licence holder – Cambridge University Press.

Those who would like to gain a flavour of a corpus of business language can access the seven-million-word Hong Kong Financial Services Corpus (HKFSC) compiled and made publicly available by the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE) at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The HKFSC contains texts produced by the Hong Kong finance industry and, although it contains a variety of genres (25 in total), it is limited to this sector and region only. Another freely available corpus is the one-million-word Business Letter Corpus containing texts produced in the context of UK and US business (more information about the corpus can be found at: <http://www.someya-net.com/concordancer/>). A very specific corpus – also freely available – is the compilation of over 600,000 emails produced by the senior management of ENRON. This data set was made publicly available following a fraud scandal involving the corporation. It can be downloaded from William Cohen's website at: <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~enron>. Unfortunately, the downloadable version cannot be immediately used for corpus research as it contains a large amount of metadata and repetition (De Felice et al. 2013; Kessler 2010).

There are also some samples of business language available as part of larger English corpora. For example, the written part of the BNC includes over seven million words of texts from the field of commerce and finance, while the spoken part contains a 1.3-million-word sample of spoken business communication covering sales demonstrations and business meetings. Also, the International Corpus of English (ICE) includes a 20,000 word sample of spoken business transactions. A much larger 500,000-word sample of spoken business language forms part of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) mentioned in Section 2. The business subcorpus contains data sourced from various professional and business contexts in Hong Kong including business meetings, service encounters, job interviews and workplace presentations (Warren 2004). One of the unique features of this corpus is its prosodic annotation, which allows researchers to study intonation patterns of business discourse. The corpus is freely available and can be searched online (<http://rcpce.engl.polyu.edu.hk/HKCSE/>).

The corpus resources discussed so far all involve business communication in English. For other languages even fewer resources are available, but some do exist. For example, the *Hamburger Zentrum für Sprachkorpora* [Hamburg Centre for Language Corpora] has created a corpus of business communication in German and English for translation purposes (for further information including the accessibility see http://www.corpora.uni-hamburg.de/sfb538/de_k4_busi_new.html). Currently, Hernández and Krishnamurthy (2013) are compiling the multilingual COMENEGO corpus, which stands for the *Corpus Multilingüe de Economía y Negocios*. The current pilot version contains data from Spanish and French with approximately nine million tokens for each language. It is made up of texts from a variety of business domains including legal, technical, academic and educational settings. The Centre for English Corpus Linguistics at the Université Catholique de Louvain has recently created two 500,000-word corpora of business news reporting in French (FRENews) and in English (BENews). The data has since been used to study quantifications in both business French and English (De Cock and Goossens 2013). A sample of business communication is also included in the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), which has been compiled with a view to documenting the use of English as lingua franca. The corpus can be used free of charge and is accessible online via the VOICE project website at: https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/what_is_voice.

As the above brief survey demonstrates, business language corpus resources are few and far between. Whereas researchers interested in academic discourse, for example, have a wider range of corpora at their disposal, including written and spoken registers and also for languages other than English (Krishnamurthy and Kosem 2007), those intending to conduct corpus research on business language are less fortunate. Moreover, of the few business corpora that exist only a small proportion are publically available and most of those are restricted to a particular sector (e.g., finance) or region (e.g., Hong Kong).

4 Corpus research on business language

This section reports on several major studies of business language that have utilised corpus tools and methods. Although a number of research projects have been based on large amounts of data⁷, only those studies that used computerised corpus resources are considered here. Section 4 is divided into two parts. After highlighting a useful distinction made by Nelson (2000, 2006), it first outlines corpus research on language used for “doing business”, focusing on genres produced by businesses for

⁷ A good example is the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP), which is based on approximately 2,000 interactions (see Holmes and Stubbe 2014).

internal and external purposes and including communications with customers and shareholders. This is followed by a discussion of research that explores language used for the purpose of “talking about business”, that is, studies that examine representations of business and the economy in media and educational settings.

4.1 Doing business

One of the pioneering corpus studies on business language was conducted by Nelson (2000, 2006). His main aim was to identify lexical features of Business English (BE) and establish how they differ from those of General English (GE). Nelson’s research, which was based on the Business English Corpus (BEC) described above, reveals that BE shares most of the lexical features with GE, especially when measured by raw frequencies. At the same time, BE contains a number of unusually frequent words – keywords that constitute BE as a distinctive lexical variety. These include items such as ‘company’, ‘market’ and ‘customer’. Moreover, Nelson’s (2006) research shows that BE includes word combinations that often display prosodies unique to this variety. Interestingly, most of them seem to have positive associations focusing on success, dynamism and action. For example, the term *manager* shows a tendency to be linked with positive items such as *excellent* and *forthright*. On the basis of his research, Nelson (2006) suggests that business English teaching materials should focus not only on single lexical items but also on unique word combinations and prosodies. This might ensure that students are exposed to language which is more likely to accurately reflect the actual business world.

Lexical features of BE were also of interest to McCarthy and Handford (2004) and Handford (2010). Whereas Nelson (2000, 2006) examines both written and spoken genres of BE, McCarthy and Handford (2004) and Handford (2010) look specifically at Spoken Business English (SBE). The data under study was the CANBEC corpus mentioned above, which was compared with one corpus of everyday speech and another of academic discourse. As in the study by Nelson (2000), SBE has been shown to share a number of similarities with the two other discourse types in terms of word frequencies, though some differences regarding rank were noted (McCarthy and Handford 2004; Handford 2010). For example, *we* features much higher on the frequency list of CANBEC than in the corpus of everyday speech, pointing to the significance of group membership and unity in SBE. A subsequent keyword analysis demonstrated considerable differences between SBE and everyday conversations. Apart from a number of typical business nouns such as *meeting* and *sale*, SBE includes more general functional items such as *problem* and *issue*. Conversely, words such as *family*, *home* or *music* were identified as so-called *negative keywords*, that is, words that are significantly uncommon in SBE.

McCarthy and Handford (2004) and Handford (2010) also examine two-, three-, four-, five- and six-word clusters, revealing a number of recurrent and distinctive patterns. An interesting finding that has emerged from this cluster analysis is that

the frequency of the most frequent clusters, for example *you know*, is higher than that of some of the common single words (Handford 2010). This points to the pervasiveness of routinized chunks in “doing” business. Such clusters index a range of practices and are used for a variety of purposes such as checking/showing shared knowledge (*you know*), hedging (*I think, sort of*) and signalling obligations (*we need to*). Moreover, one chunk can perform different functions. By taking as an example the cluster *so I think*, Handford (2010) shows how in SBE this chunk is used for summarising, explaining and elaborating. Furthermore, and contrary to the common perception that business communication is mostly transactional, Handford (2010) demonstrates that SBE involves a considerable amount of interpersonal language (vague language, hedges, backchannels and deontic modality) mostly used in negotiating relationships, power and solidarity. The importance of clusters and keywords in business communication across languages is shown by Barbara and Berber Sardinha (2007), who examine a corpus of business meetings in Portuguese. Clusters involving personal pronouns (e.g., *I think*) seem particularly salient in this context.

Interpersonal talk in the context of workplace communication was also examined by Koester (2006). By combining corpus linguistic methods with conversation and genre analysis, Koester offers a systematic analysis of workplace talk. Corpus tools were specifically used to study selected lexico-grammatical features of interpersonal language such as modal verbs, hedges, vague language, idioms and metaphors. The analysis reveals that modal verbs are, by far, the most frequent means of interpersonal communication at work, followed by hedges and intensifiers. Interestingly, the use of different interpersonal markers seems to depend on genre and context. For example, modals and idioms appear to be used predominantly in collaborative types of workplace talk involving decision-making, whereas vague language seems more frequent in unidirectional genres and often functions as face-saving politeness. Alongside specific lexico-grammatical features of SBE, corpora of spoken business communication have been scrutinised for patterns of intonation. Using the prosodically annotated Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE), Cheng (2004) examines checking-out discourse in hotel interactions. The item *minibar* appeared very frequently in all relevant interactions, and so was further scrutinised by examining concordances. The analysis shows that turns with *minibar* ended mostly with rising intonation creating a sense of forcefulness not necessarily appropriate in this context. On the basis of such findings, Cheng (2004) proposes a number of practical suggestions for the improvement of customer relations in hotel interactions.

Parallel to the interest in SBE, there have been a number of studies investigating written genres of business communication and their typical lexico-grammatical, pragmatic and discursive features. One of the earlier studies in this area is Hyland's (1998) corpus-based research on CEO's letters. Its focus is on the role of meta-discourse as a strategy of persuasion. The results show that CEO's tend to rely on a number of metadiscursive markers, especially hedges, emphatics, relational

markers, and attributors, “all of which help to indicate writers’ assessments of truth and their convictions in their views” (Hyland 1998: 16). Barbara and Scott (1999) compare keywords in invitations for bids (IFB) in English and Portuguese. The analysis demonstrates that regardless of language or topic, the IFBs studied shared most of the key vocabulary, thus highlighting the highly routinised form of this genre.

Combining corpus linguistic tools with Swales’ (1990) moves analysis and with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model of politeness, Upton and Connor (2001) examine strategies of politeness in a corpus of 153 application letters written in English by Finns and Belgians as compared with those produced by Americans. Americans tended to be the most formulaic of the three groups. Belgians showed a more individualised style, and, in terms of politeness, their letters seemed to demonstrate a greater lexical variety. Finally, Finns’ letters shared some characteristics with both the American and Belgian styles. Similarly, Henry and Roseberry (2001) investigate moves in a corpus of letters of application. The analysis was based on a small specialised corpus manually annotated for moves and strategies. The authors were able to identify the most frequent strategies employed in this genre, as well as the wide ranges of linguistic features used to accomplish some of the typical moves, which included: listing relevant skills and abilities, and predicting success.

Rutherford (2005) investigates word frequencies in corporate annual report narratives in order to assess the effect of the Pollyanna principle, which presumes that positive, affirmative words are used more frequently than negative words. His analysis shows that the Pollyanna principle is deployed especially frequently by poorly performing companies, which make more references to positive terms such as *profit* than negative ones, for example, *loss*. Using the Wolverhampton Corpus of Written Business English (WBE), Fuertes-Olivera (2007) examines forms of lexical gender in business communication by focusing on the forms of address, professional titles and the generic *man*. Although some gender neutrality was noted – for example, the form *Ms* was found to be nine times more frequent than *Mrs* or *Miss* – overall the analysis confirms the prevalence of a male bias in business communication. Of the 2,663 forms of address used, more than 93% referred to men. Business really is a man’s world.

There has also been some interest in lexical and pragmatic features of online business communication. For example, Samson (2010) explores features of promotional discourse in a corpus of business to consumer webpages, while Kessler (2010) investigates the shifts in meaning of the word *virtual* in the corpus of Enron emails previously mentioned. This corpus is currently being used for pragmatics research aimed at developing automated procedures for tagging speech acts in business English (De Felice et al. 2013).

While the studies mentioned thus far focus mostly on selected lexico-grammatical and pragmatic features, recent research in the area of business language has shifted to the examination of rhetorical and discursive strategies. An example of this work

is current research by Lischinsky (2011a, 2011b). By combining corpus linguistic tools with methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) – a method pioneered by Hardt-Mautner (1995) and Krishnamurthy (1996) to study social representations in texts – Lischinsky (2011a) investigates the discursive constructions of corporate identity in a corpus of 50 CSR reports issued by large Swedish companies during 2009. The focus of his analysis is on referential forms, especially instances of self-reference. The study demonstrates that third-person self-references in the form of company's names were by far the most frequent, followed by first-person plural pronouns. This suggests that businesses communicate social agendas with a mixture of institutional and affiliative voices. The institutional tone as represented by companies' names provides the necessary legitimacy and credibility, whereas the use of *we* and *our* seem to indicate group dynamism and unity.

Lischinsky (2011a) further supports this claim by analysing the choices of verbs that accompany the different forms of self-reference. Whereas companies' names tend to be followed by verbs pointing to the involvement of the institution as a whole, such as *conduct* or *support*, the pronoun *we* is accompanied by verbs such as *believe* and *want*. In the author's opinion, such usage is probably intended to "maximise the affective impact by personifying the corporate rhetor (. . .). This fosters a view of the organisation as a cooperative whole, while maintaining a level of generality that hampers criticism and falsification." (Lischinsky 2011a: 272). Similarly, Lischinsky (2011b) interrogates a corpus of annual and CSR reports to examine the constructions of the 2008 financial crisis in order to see how corporations define a crisis situation, especially in terms of causes, consequences and remedies. The analysis shows that, in the context of CSR reports, crisis is consistently constructed as an abstract phenomenon mostly associated with economic and financial data, with social and environmental consequences, or references to remedies, barely figuring at all. Moreover, *crisis* is frequently utilised to justify "difficult" managerial decisions, especially those involving staff reductions. This appears rather ironic in the context of CSR, which normally foregrounds the positive impact on stakeholders, society, wellbeing and the environment.

4.2 Talking about business

Parallel to the corpus-based interest in lexico-grammatical, pragmatic and discursive features of language used for doing business, there is a growing volume of published studies focusing on language used to talk about business, especially in public discourse and in education. Given the significance and wide-ranging consequences of the recent global financial crisis, much attention has been given to the ways in which it was represented and reflected in media. For example, Koller and Farrelly (2010) use corpus tools and methods to examine keywords and metaphors in articles discussing the economy published in British print media just before, during and after the financial crisis. The corpus used in this study consisted of press articles

from four major British newspapers and magazines, viz. *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail*. The analysis demonstrates interesting shifts in the use of keywords and metaphors. For example, at the beginning of the financial crisis there were more keywords from the area of markets and the economy, but, as the crisis evolved, the focus moved towards politics. Similarly, Storjohann and Schröter (2011) examine collocations and semantic frames of the term *Wirtschaftskrise* ‘economic crisis’ in a subcorpus of the *Deutsches Referenzkorpus* (DeReKo) [German Reference Corpus] that included newspapers articles from 2009 only. The study reveals that, in the German press, the global financial crisis was mostly collocated with items that indicate consequences. Interestingly, collocations pointing to causes and responsibilities were insignificant. Overall, the term *Wirtschaftskrise* was given a great degree of agency, as it was frequently accompanied by verbs such as *zwingen* ‘to force’ or *zuschlagen* ‘to hit’.

Talk about business in education was examined in a study by Crawford Camiciottoli (2007). The focus of her research was on business studies lectures in the context of an MBA programme. Using a combination of corpus approaches with ethnographic research methods, it offers comprehensive insights into the unique lexico-grammatical, pragmatic and discursive features of the genre, including keywords, idioms, metaphors and nonverbal communication. She concludes her analysis with pedagogical implications for the development of interactional literacy in academic contexts, especially by speakers of English as L2.

Whereas Crawford Camiciottoli investigates spoken language used to talk about business in education, Skorczynska Sznajder (2010) examines business English textbooks. She focuses especially on the use of metaphors. By adopting Deignan’s (2005) corpus approach to metaphor identification and interpretation, she compares the use of metaphors in one textbook with a corpus of business periodical and journal articles (BPJA). Her results suggest that there is little overlap in the use of metaphorical expressions between the two data sets. Nearly one third of the metaphors used in the textbook were not evidenced by the BPJA corpus data. By way of conclusion, the author argues for stronger consideration of corpus-based evidence when designing textbooks and teaching materials for business English.

5 Conclusion

As much of the discussion above demonstrates, the use of corpus tools and methods has significantly enhanced our understanding of business language. It is true that the number of studies using corpus approaches to business communication is, if compared with other domains, relatively small. Yet research in this area has examined a wide range of linguistic phenomena, over a variety of genres, registers and contexts. The use of quantitative techniques (e.g., frequency, collocation, keywords or clusters) to study large amounts of business language has provided significant, empirically

founded insights into the frequent and distinctive features of the variety, be these lexico-grammatical or pragmatic. It has also pinpointed the characteristics that business language shares with other varieties, thus bringing into focus its multi-dimensionality.

Moreover, contrary to some criticism, corpus research goes beyond counting lists of words or keywords. Many studies show how quantitative corpus techniques can be used as a starting point for nuanced qualitative analyses that shed light on the goals, strategies and practices of the business community. Most combine corpus techniques with other linguistic methods, including genre analysis, ethnography, (critical) discourse analysis, conversation analysis, frame semantics and cognitive metaphor theory. And they show, on the basis of examples, how such methodological synergies enrich research by yielding results that would otherwise go unrevealed. Insights derived in this way have proved invaluable in developing better resources for business communication, for example in the area of customer relations and the teaching of business language.

There are, nevertheless, three sets of challenges that future corpus research on business language needs to consider. The first of these consists of practical issues pertaining to the use of corpora and corpus tools. One problem here is the scarcity of freely-available business language corpus resources, partly because of the nature of business communication, which often involves issues related to intellectual property or confidentiality. Moreover, even if access is granted, managers may not allow materials to be made publicly available. Researchers interested in a corpus analysis must thus rely mostly on their own, purpose-built compilations, so that virtually every study is based on a distinct corpus compiled for distinct purposes, containing certain specific genres and interrogated using specific tools. This makes comparisons difficult and does not allow for more general statements about the nature of business communication. A second problem is the fact that, even though corpus software can nowadays be operated rather easily, each package uses different parameters, statistical tests and designs. This can be daunting for novice corpus researchers, who may require considerable time to become a confident user of the methodology. Their task would be made easier by professional training in corpus tools and methods, especially in the statistical procedures involved and their limitations in studying natural languages, but such opportunities are not widely available. Despite the enthusiasm it evokes, corpus linguistics features on the linguistics curriculum of few higher education institutions and is practically unknown in other educational sectors.⁸

⁸ The recently developed MOOC in Corpus Linguistics at the University of Lancaster is an important step in making Corpus Linguistics accessible to the wider community, <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/corpus-linguistics-2014-q3>

The second set of challenges facing future corpus research is concerned with methodology and arises from the nature of business communication, which – like most types of professional communication – is inherently multimodal and increasingly multimedia. While many of the studies discussed above have focused on some aspects of multimodality (e.g., Handford 2010; Cheng 2004), there is a clear need for further corpus research that addresses the visual dimension of business language, not to mention its burgeoning use of social media.

Third, there are issues relating to research interests and areas. Most corpus research on business language has focused on English – understandably, given the significance of English as the lingua franca of business communication – and specifically on its “inner circle” varieties (Kachru 1985). However, of the 75 countries in which English is an official language, most come from the outer and expanding circles. What is more, speakers of English as a second language outnumber those who speak it as a first.⁹ This has implications for business communication, in which different Englishes are used on a regular basis. Hence more corpus research is needed into the subtleties of these business Englishes and their usage for the purposes of doing and talking about business.

Not only that: growing mobility and migration mean that workplaces around the world are becoming increasingly multilingual. It is not unusual, especially in large multinational companies, to find teams consisting of people from many different business traditions and cultures. While this can be a source of innovation and creativity, it can also lead to misunderstandings caused by different attitudes and beliefs, as well as by cultural and linguistic conventions. Combining corpus approaches with other, qualitative methodologies (e.g., ethnography, interactional sociolinguistics) could shed light on the patterns of interaction in multilingual workplaces as well as the challenges that arise in such scenarios.

This multilingual reality also calls for more research into business languages other than English. Notwithstanding the lingua franca role of English, or Englishes, in local business contexts especially other business languages are of considerable importance. Compiling and analysing corpora of them would thus not only offer insights into the linguistic features of these varieties but also enhance our knowledge of different business cultures. Moreover, through cross-language comparisons, it could also contribute to a better understanding of business Englishes themselves. As Partington, Duguid, and Taylor (2013: 12) pointedly remark: “[W]e are not deontologically justified in making statements about the relevance of a phenomenon observed to occur in one discourse type unless (...) we compare how the phenomenon behaves elsewhere.”

⁹ <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-faq-the-english-language.htm>

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V Building bridges across disciplines

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25 Organizational discourse

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1 Introduction

The study of organizational discourse is a broad church. Under its roof, researchers have gathered with varying disciplinary backgrounds and a correspondingly wide spectrum of theories, methods, and views on both research designs and practical applications (Grant et al. 2004; Fairhurst and Putnam 2014). They are united by their interest in the way in which discourse – that is, text and talk in context – contributes to creating, sustaining and changing organizations. There are linguists among them, though perhaps not as many, proportionally, as one might expect. The field has huge potential for interdisciplinary collaboration as well as cross-overs between academia and management practice. Both types of link remain underexplored. Broad the church may be, but, for better or worse, not everyone sings from the same hymn sheet.

A good place to start is the shared concern with language. And indeed, the so-called linguistic turn in the social sciences has had a major impact on how social structures, processes and relationships are conceived (Alvesson and Kärreman 2000a; Mautner 2016). It brought language to the fore, highlighting its role in constructing reality, and thus mounting “a radical challenge to the idea that language is merely a conduit for communicating information” (Philipps and Oswick 2012: 439). The constructionist underpinnings of the approach resonate strongly with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and other research traditions inspired by Critical Theory, such as Critical Management Studies (Alvesson and Willmott 1992).

It is against this background that the present chapter unpacks organizational discourse. It is guided by three core questions, namely the why, what and how of relevant research endeavours. The section asking *why* explores the rationale for studying organizational discourse (over and above, that is, any general motivation to create knowledge). In the two sections that follow we are going to look at two aspects of what there is to study: key themes in Section 3, with special emphasis on identity and power, and key linguistic devices in Section 4, focusing on metaphor and narrative. The chapter then moves on, in Section 5, to outline the most impor-

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-025

tant challenges that organizational discourse research involves. Finally, the Conclusion returns to the question of interdisciplinary dialogue.

Overall, the account will be necessarily selective, as much for reasons of manageability and clarity as for reasons of space. It addresses two kinds of reader whom one might sketch crudely as follows. On the one hand, there is the linguist who knows a fair amount about discourse but has no experience studying it in the context of organizations, least of all commercial ones. On the other, there is the organizational discourse researcher, possibly with a background in sociology or management studies, who knows their organizational theory and organizational behaviour, but may be less au fait with how text and talk are involved. In reality, of course, the two groups thus characterized form but the two ends of a spectrum, with any particular reader probably positioned somewhere along it. At any rate, the nature of organizational discourse as a field is such that readers are likely to bring very different things to the table. A key mission of this chapter, then, is to help different kinds of researchers find common ground.

2 Why study organizational discourse?

In economically developed societies, organizations are part of the fabric of everyday life. As Etzioni (1964: 1) remarked,

Our society is an organizational society. We are born in organizations, educated by organizations, and most of us spend much of our lives working for organizations. We spend much of our leisure time paying, playing, and praying in organizations. Most of us will die in an organization, and when the time comes for burial, the largest organization of all – the state – must grant official permission.

As a result, it is virtually impossible for most people not to be involved in organizational discourse on a daily basis. Frequency of exposure would in itself be sufficient reason for organizational discourse to be a worthwhile object of study. Yet, even more importantly, the organizational structures which discourse is embedded in also shape that discourse, while the discourse, conversely, shapes the organization. By investigating the former, we also learn something about the latter, and vice versa. Thus, studies in organizational discourse provide compelling test cases for the dialectic between language and the social.

What is more, research into organizational discourse can illustrate very powerfully how the micro-level of person-to-person interaction, the meso-level of the organization, and the macro-level of social structure are mutually dependent. Social categories such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class are played out discursively on all levels of the organization, with various trajectories of influence between them. Likewise, phenomena such as identity and power, which discourse is heavily involved in constructing, exist both inside and outside organizations. Structures

and patterns of behaviour from “outside” have an impact on what goes on “inside”, just as structures and patterns originating from inside organizations may diffuse outwards.

Indeed, all organizations’ boundaries are permeable; some more, and some less, but in one way or another all organizations have to interact with their environment through a multitude of exchange relationships – employing staff, for example, or buying raw materials and selling finished goods. Furthermore, in an organizational society, everyone has a number of roles and identities that are embedded in or related to organizations. Indeed, some roles and identities are exclusively defined by the work environment both in legal and social terms (such as being a “sales assistant”, “police officer”, “customer” or “hospital patient”). For others, the connection with organizations may be more tangential and less immediately obvious, but present nonetheless (think of a parent’s connection with their child’s school; or of a citizen’s relationship with state or local authorities – when they are casting their ballot on election day, for example, or paying a parking fine). To varying degrees, then, and in a number of different arenas, organizations impact our lives.

At the same time, organizations themselves are constituted by language – not exclusively, of course, but to a significant degree. Every step in the life of an organization, from its foundation to the moment when it is wound up, is also a discursive act of some sort. Articles of Incorporation need to be filed with the relevant authorities, tax returns submitted, contracts signed, and so on. Equally, day-to-day activities in organizations are either accompanied by texts and interaction or consist entirely of them. Interviews, meetings, and reports, for example, as well as the archetypal “watercooler chat”, are just a few of the myriad genres without which organizations simply could not function. Thus, while most organizations need a great deal of hardware as well, such as buildings, raw materials, machinery, computers and so on, they are also crucially dependent on discourse. Hence observations such as Fairhurst and Putnam’s (2004: 5), that “discourse is the very foundation upon which organizational life is built”. In fact, it is now common to view organizations as discursive constructs, and managing as a discursive practice (Kornberger, Clegg, and Carter 2006). Accordingly,

a discursive approach to organizational phenomena is more than a focus on language and its usage in organizations. It highlights the ways in which language constructs organizational reality, rather than simply reflects it (Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant 2005: 60).

Ideally, research into organizational discourse works from solid foundations in organization theory and also explores the conditions specific to the company and industry concerned. Only then can we hope to do justice to our discourse data, and make sure that we neither over- nor underinterpret them. That would be the message for linguists who consider tackling organizational discourse projects. There is a corresponding message for researchers with a background in sociology or management studies. For them, a reminder is in order that for the so-called “linguistic turn” to be more

than a mere catchphrase, discourse should not only be couched in “macro” terms, looking at broad themes, but also in a “micro” manner, where one investigates the linguistic devices that are used to express these themes. It is where the micro, meso and macro intersect that a truly interdisciplinary approach can come into its own.

3 The broader picture: A review of key themes

3.1 Embarras de richesses

It was noted in the previous section that discourse permeates organizational life and that organizations, in turn, are ubiquitous, so that we are constantly steeped in organizational discourse. Yet sadly, as always in empirical work, not everything that one feels *should* be studied actually *can* be. Certain research questions may have to remain unanswered because of legal, ethical or practical hurdles. Even so, a wide variety of organizational genres are open to scrutiny and have indeed been studied through the language lens: for example, mission statements (Koller 2011), annual reports (de Groot 2014), job interviews (Roberts and Campbell 2005; Lipovsky 2006; Lipovsky 2008; Roberts 2012), meetings (Rogerson-Revell 2011; Angouri and Marra 2011; Clarke, Kwon and Wodak 2012; Kwon, Clarke, and Wodak 2014), blogs (Puschmann and Hagelmoser 2014) and corporate apologies posted on Twitter (Page 2014).

Furthermore, rather than homing in on particular genres, organizational discourse research can also be organized around *themes*, such as gender (Mullany 2007), emotions in the workplace (Boudens 2005), humour (Heiss and Carmack 2012), disagreement (Angouri 2012), leadership (Saito 2011; Genoe McLaren 2013), multilingualism (Gunnarsson 2014), corporate social responsibility (Brennan, Merkl-Davies, and Beelitz 2013), organizational change (Airo, Rasila, and Nenonen 2012; McClellan 2014), or indeed various combinations of such themes (e.g., Mullany 2004; Ladegaard 2012). The point of listing all these themes here, together with a few (egregiously selective) references, is to give readers a sense of the richness and variety of the field, and to suggest a few entry points, should they wish to forge their own path through it. Two *uber*-themes that have been investigated particularly widely and deeply are identity and power, and we will look at these in more detail shortly.

Finally, the perspective applied may be neither genre- nor theme-based, but train the analytic lens on specific linguistic devices, such as metaphor, or forms of representation, such as narrative. Both will also be discussed further below. Of course, in actual research projects, “themes” and “devices” may be conjoined, as in cases where the role of metaphor for identity construction is discussed (see, for instance, Jacobs, Oliver, and Heracleous 2013). What is more, looking through the linguistic lens also enables one to identify more fine-grained levels of meaning-making, such as syntactic and lexical choices (Mautner 2016).

3.2 Identity

Identity is a hotly debated theme in the social sciences generally, and one with numerous applications in organizational discourse research. The complexity involved can be staggering. What at first glance may seem like a perfectly straightforward research question – “how is the professional identity of older workers in Company X constructed”, say – will soon turn out to be a rather messy affair. For not only will “identity” emerge as multi-layered – located, among other things, on the individual, organizational and societal levels – but the layers themselves often turn out to be neither stable nor neatly separable.

Taking a closer look at our fictitious example of a research question, we can see that it is not too difficult to pick holes in the concepts, categories and hidden assumptions it includes; and these holes would in fact *have to* be picked, if we wanted to get any analytical purchase on the role that discourse plays in constructing identity. For example, does the phrase *the professional identity of . . .* imply that each individual has only one such identity? By referring to *older workers* collectively, do we assume that that identity is shared and generalization therefore possible? What about an employee who first trains as a chemical engineer and works in production, then half-way through their career does a law degree, specializes in crisis communication and joins the public relations department? Over the course of such a career, does the employee’s professional identity, and the discourse that goes with it, change completely – the lawyer casting off the chemical engineer’s identity like a snake’s skin, as it were – or are they more likely to develop a hybrid identity the components of which can be activated as and when required? Moreover, at which point in the life-span does the label *older* apply? Should the definition be imposed by the researcher or be developed subjectively (that is, quite literally, driven by the subjects being researched)? And what about other identity categories, such as gender or ethnicity? How will our research design reflect the fact that these categories may in fact be intertwined (as sociologists have long recognized, and captured in the concept of “intersectionality”; see Choo and Ferree 2010)?

Embracing the complexity involved, identity research now tends to take certain things as read.

- a. Identity is as much about who you are *not* as about who you *are*; that is, there is a relational, boundary-setting element to it. Social and discursive acts of aligning oneself with one group and distancing oneself from another often go hand in hand.
- b. Identity is best conceived of as dynamic rather than static, and as something that people *do* rather than *own* (Lawler 2008: 121); hence the concept of “identity work”, defined as “the range of activities that individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept” (Snow and Anderson 1987: 1348).

- c. Identity is “semiotic through and through” (Blommaert 2005: 203–204), that is, it is created by a process of symbolic representation. And while language is not the only “identity resource” (Beech, MacIntosh, and McInnes 2008: 964), it is certainly a central one.

From a linguistic perspective, then, identity work is regarded as being carried out in and through language. Potentially, choices on all linguistic levels are involved. For example, bilingual or multilingual speakers may align or distance themselves from other people or groups by choosing one language rather than another; and within one language, speakers may express their personal, professional and group identities by using the jargon distinctive of these groups. Personal pronouns, too, play a key role, as strategic switching between *I*, *we* and *they* indexes tensions between individual identities and different group affiliations. All these choices may be made flexibly, “on the hoof” while an interaction is ongoing. Koester (2010), for instance, shows how different aspects of people’s identities may be foregrounded or backgrounded even during a rather short stretch of talk (see also Chapter 26 of this handbook), again pointing to the fluid and negotiated nature of identity.

For employees, the use of identity resources is not always a matter of choice however. Many employers engage in “identity control”, often in the name of forging a consistent *organizational* identity. In a number of ways – persuasively, contractually, coercively – staff may be made to comply with regulations governing anything from language use to dress and personal grooming styles (Mautner 2016: 105–107). Paradoxically, some organizations – such as the Australian call centres studied by Fleming and Sturdy (2009) – use a form of normative identity control which focuses on “authenticity” and a “Be Yourself” philosophy, apparently eschewing coercion. Yet at the end of the day such policies are also made with the intention of increasing output and profit, and are thus, as Fleming and Sturdy caustically put it, a “managerial manoeuvre” with “exploitative intention”. Whether or not one agrees with their critical stance, what deserves the linguist’s attention in such cases is that “control is exercised through the language of non-control” (Peter Fleming, personal communication). Thus, identity is closely intermeshed with power, the focus of the following sub-section.

3.3 Power

Power is a foundational concept in the social sciences: multifaceted and ideologically loaded; fought over in academia as much as in politics; with an intellectual pedigree reaching back as far as Plato and Macchiavelli, while also including contemporary thinkers such as Bourdieu and Foucault. Yet the concept remains “unclear and controversial” (Göhler 2009: 27). Not an auspicious start, then, for researchers embarking on projects in organizational discourse, who might be forgiven for wanting to give power a wide berth. However, power is such a central feature of social life

generally, and organizational life in particular, that if you try to blank it out, you are likely to miss out on information that is pivotal for making sense of your data.

Before we move on to the significance of power for organizational discourse, a few observations are in order about the nature of power in more general terms. The definition given by Stokes (2011: 121) is a good entry point. “Power”, he explains, “can be described as the possibility, control and ability to do something”, and “it can also point at having authority over something or somebody”. Frequently, that authority is asserted not overtly and coercively, but covertly and persuasively, with the apparent consent of those over whom it is exercised. At the same time, power inevitably provokes resistance, which is also enacted through discourse (Zoller 2014). Accordingly, organizational discourse has been described as “a dialectical phenomenon characterized by interdependent processes of struggle, resistance and control” (Mumby 2004: 240). When we set out to describe dominant discourses, therefore, we should be equally alert to the presence of marginalized counter-discourses (Heracleous 2006: 184).

In critical paradigms, and in keeping with the constructionist approach sketched out in the Introduction, power and discourse are treated as “mutually constitutive” (Hardy and Phillips 2004: 299). In other words, power relations shape the way we use language, just as language use supports power relations. A distinction is frequently drawn between power over, in and of discourse. Power over discourse refers to an individual’s or group’s access to the public, usually through media, and thus their ability to air their views (Wodak 2012: 217). Power in discourse describes the degree of control that participants have in making linguistic choices. More powerful people typically have more freedom to determine the structure and process of interaction. They decide who speaks to whom when and about what, and they dictate which level of formality is appropriate. Finally, when the power of discourse is discussed, the perspective is shifted to the power that discourses themselves exert (Holzscheiter 2010), as they do when certain ways of talking and writing have become the taken-for-granted norm. Under the influence of neo-liberalism, for example, “marketized” discourse is now widespread in public-sector and non-profit organizations (Mautner 2010).

With this conceptual grid laid out, one is well placed to analyze specific manifestations of power in discourse. For obvious reasons, interactional genres with steep power differentials, such as job interviews, offer particularly rich pickings in this regard. Yet power is invariably intertwined with other issues, and it would be simplistic to assume that job interviews were based on a sharp binary distinction between an interviewer who has all the power and an interviewee who has none. In actual fact, the situation is usually a lot fuzzier than that, on a number of levels (Mautner 2016: 187–192). First, the job applicants’ position is strengthened considerably if their skills and/or personal characteristics are much needed by the organization concerned. In such cases, the interviewer may well be under more pressure to “sell” the prospective employer than the interviewee is to “sell” him- or herself.

Second, and in conjunction with such power issues, interviews are events in which participants on both sides attempt to establish their joint membership of social and discursive communities – of a particular role, a profession, an industry or a social class. On that basis they wish to create trust and solidarity (Kerekes 2006, 2007; Lipovsky 2008). Third, over and above what may be happening in the microcosm of the specific interview, the macro social world outside the event, and indeed outside the organization, will have an impact too. Compliance with wider cultural norms, rather than merely the narrower requirements of a particular job, clearly increases an interviewee's chances. For example, as Roberts and Campbell (2005) have demonstrated, job applicants in the UK are evaluated more positively if they are able to tell stories that conform to the typical “Anglo” narrative structure. Pursuing a linear path from an introductory abstract through to a coda (cf. Labov 1972), that structure is more likely to be known and mastered by those who grew up in the UK (whether or not they are ethnic minority members). By contrast, those who were socialized abroad, in cultures with different narrative traditions, suffer a “linguistic penalty” (Roberts and Campbell 2005: 47), that is, they are rated less favourably because they do not meet interviewers' expectations of what makes “a good story” in an interview.

Thus, a compelling nexus exists between linguistic and social capital (Bourdieu 1991). That nexus is also borne out by the way in which job interviews reflect the so-called “new work order” (Gee, Hull, and Lankshear 1996). Under that regime, work is conceptualized as a discursive rather than merely material endeavour; it has become “textualized” (Scheeres 2003: 332). Employees are expected to adopt the branded discourses of their organization as well as to achieve what Campbell and Roberts (2007: 244–245) refer to as “the seamless synthesis of work-based and personal identity”.

Incidentally, such melding of spheres also underpins so-called “personal branding”, which encourages people to view themselves as saleable commodities (Oswick and Robertson 2007; Mautner 2010: 124–145). Self-help books in this area give readers advice on how best to “package”, “brand” and “sell themselves” (rather than only their labour). To argue that such turns of phrase are “merely” metaphors is to underestimate the power of metaphor to influence perception. This brings us to the next section, where we shift our focus from macro themes to linguistic devices and forms of representation.

4 Close-up on language

4.1 Metaphor

Metaphors are figures of speech (or “tropes”), which carry meaning from one domain to another. In organizational discourse research, metaphor is a popular staple. Morgan (1986) put it on the map for scholarly audiences outside linguistics, and

it has since been taken up by many organizational researchers (cf. Grant and Oswick 1996; Tietze, Cohen, and Musson 2003: 33–48; Koller 2004; Cornellsen 2007; Woodhams 2014).

The popularity of metaphor may be partly due to the fact that, as analytical categories go, metaphors are relatively easy to identify and describe – easier, certainly, than many phenomena on the levels of syntax and textual structure. Moreover, metaphors appear to have immediate and intuitive appeal for researchers who in the wake of the “linguistic turn” want to “do discourse” but are not necessarily au fait with linguistic methodology and jargon. That said, there are of course other and more substantive reasons for focussing on metaphors. Over and above their “decorative” uses (Deignan 2005: 2), enhancing a text’s aesthetic and persuasive effect, metaphors are “rich summaries of worldviews” (Putnam and Fairhurst 2001: 107). At the same time, the worldview that a given metaphor summarizes – that of an organization as a *machine*, a *family*, a *battleship* and so on (Mautner 2016: 88–94) – then goes on to structure thinking (a shared central tenet, incidentally, of both Critical Theory and Lakoff and Johnson’s [1980] Conceptual Metaphor Theory). From a critical perspective, the act of structuring, as such, would not be so objectionable if it did not entail what Deetz calls “discursive closure” (Deetz 1992). In other words, not only is one worldview privileged, but debate about possible alternatives is forestalled too.

These effects become more salient when the metaphor in question does not occur in isolation, but as part of a cluster: when, for example, in addition to the organization being described as a *battleship*, employees are called *combatants* who *fight*, *man battle stations* and *celebrate victories*, and are contrasted with employees who prefer their organization to be a *cruise ship* offering comfort and convenience.¹ Such clusters are referred to as “extended metaphors”. Some also have a stark binary contrast built into them – as in the *battleship/cruiseship* example – which further increases the degree of discursive closure. That is, a third or fourth option – would the organization perhaps best be described as an explorer ship? – is not even considered, although from a functional, managerial perspective, it might make as much or perhaps even more sense than the original pair of metaphors. After all, the idea of the explorer could help crystallize employees’ curiosity, creativity and entrepreneurialism.

Finally, however compelling a particular metaphor may be in purely rhetorical terms, it may nevertheless meet with resistance in social terms. The managerial élite may be promoting a particular metaphor as foundational for the organization’s identity and culture – for example, companies are often portrayed as “families” – but employees may be unwilling to accept the specific “spin” that the metaphor imposes

¹ Cf. “Is Your Organization a Cruise Ship or a Battleship?” (<http://www.wholeheartedleaders.com/?p=417>, accessed 14 January 2016); see also Mautner (2016: 92–93).

on reality. Ironically, they can do so by ostensibly accepting the form of the metaphor while challenging its content, describing the organizational “family” as *dysfunctional*, for example, or calling for a *divorce*. Such acts of resistance are useful reminders that power is co-constructed and relies heavily on the consent of those governed.

4.2 Narrative

In the wake of the linguistic turn, the social sciences, including organization studies, have developed a keen interest in narrative approaches (Bruner 1991; Gabriel 2000; Tietze, Cohen, and Musson 2003: 54; Rhodes and Brown 2005: 168; Czarniawska 2007; Maitlis 2012). They are based on a constructionist and critical heritage: the idea, that is, that a story never merely reports “facts” but offers a representation, and that the perspective from which it does so is likely to be that of the most powerful story-tellers. As Putnam & Fairhurst (2001: 110) explain:

Storytelling is not a neutral process; rather, stories function ideologically to represent the interests of dominant groups, instantiate values, reify structures, and reproduce power (Mumby 1988). In Witten's (1993) view, narrative discourse is a mode of persuasion used to create and maintain a culture of obedience, to invent a credible history, and to exert covert control.

That said, the point made earlier, about power invariably giving rise to dissenting voices and resistance, also applies to power manifested through narrative. When retold, stories originally owned by those in power may be reframed to suit the interests of those with less power.

At any rate, organizations are replete with stories which cover the whole spectrum between formality and informality. Stories feature in watercooler chats as much as in annual reports, job interviews (see Section 3.3) and many other genres. Stories help reduce the complexity of organizational life and therefore play a pivotal role in organizational sense-making (Rhodes and Brown 2005: 170). Specifically, they are involved in change processes (Buchanan and Dawson 2007), including so-called “work role transitions” in which “narrative identity work” is carried out (Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010). Moreover, stories are used as public relations tools in order to promote brands, enhance organizations’ reputations and convey their public images to the outside world (Herbst 2015).

The ubiquity and relevance of narratives has led researchers to make the even broader claim that organizations are constructed through narratives and are in fact “story-telling systems” (Boje 1991). Such a view has immediate conceptual benefits because it highlights two key features of organizations. On the one hand, narratives have plots, and plots evolve over time, so that a focus on narrative foregrounds the processual, dynamic nature of organizations. On the other, narratives can open up discursive space because they can be told from different perspectives and allow a plurality of voices to be heard (Rhodes and Brown 2005: 177–178).

5 Challenges

To wrap up the present account, some thoughts are in order about the methodological challenges involved in studying organizational discourse. Broadly speaking, these can be grouped into three different categories, depending on whether they are associated with (1) the interdisciplinary nature of organizational research, (2) data collection or (3) the boundaries between prescriptive and descriptive angles, and between academic research and practitioner's applications. Each of these will be dealt with briefly below.

5.1 Interdisciplinarity

The chapter began by noting that organizational discourse research straddles many disciplines, including sociology, management and linguistics. Each of these, in turn, comes with its own set of methodological preferences: for particular analytical tools, types of data, and interpretative lenses. There is clearly no shortage of pegs on which aspiring discourse scholars may hang their own work. Instead, the problem is likely to be an oversupply of theories and methods, with few bridges between them. On the plus side, in order to do organizational discourse research, one does not have to learn any new analytical techniques, as such. You should be able to apply whichever theory and method of discourse and/or textual analysis you are already familiar with.

Recently published handbooks and review articles in the area bear vivid testimony to the wide range of approaches currently available. The picture that emerges is bewildering, to say the least. In their review article, Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) list no fewer than nine strands of research that have been applied to organizational discourse: sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, literary and rhetorical analyses, critical language studies, and postmodern language analysis. This plethora of research traditions is equally characteristic of discourse analysis generally. In the *Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Gee and Handford 2012) we find twelve approaches to discourse analysis (each deemed distinctive enough to be given its own chapter): critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics, multimodal discourse analysis, narrative analysis, mediated discourse analysis, multimedia and discourse analysis, gender and discourse analysis, discursive psychology and discourse analysis, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, discourse-oriented ethnography, discourse analysis and linguistic anthropology, and corpus-based discourse analysis.

The jury is still out on whether such variety is a blessing or a curse. On the one hand, methodological diversity makes it more likely that the qualitative data which organizational discourse studies generally work with – in other words, situated and messy data – can be dealt with flexibly in a way that a one-size-fits-all method can't.

On the other hand, diversity may encourage randomness. The chances are that the researcher's reasons for situating their work in Approach A rather than Approach B are not based on a suitably detached appraisal of the approaches' respective merits, but on the researcher's academic socialization, or their personal skills and preferences, or all of those things wrapped together. There is only a fine line between eclecticism, which is disinterested, and cherry-picking, which is not.

In the face of such diversity, what is the novice researcher meant to do? Sadly, there is very little guidance on how all these models and techniques relate to each other. Wooffit's (2005) *Conversation analysis and discourse analysis: A comparative and critical introduction* is a rare example of a book-length treatise examining the relationship between two research traditions and their associated methods. Many others would be needed if we were serious about making "discourse studies" less fragmented, less fuzzy, and more robust methodologically. At this stage, then, the best advice for the novice is to keep an open mind, scrutinize rival models (not least to see whether they are more compatible than their advocates themselves make them out to be), and then make an informed choice.

Of course, an "informed choice" need not be in favour of one, and only one, school or method. So-called *mixed-methods research* is now well-established (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner 2007; Myers 2014) and potentially very fruitful in unravelling complex issues. Yet again, for the whole to be more than the sum of its parts, considerable expertise is required not only in the methods that are to be mixed, but also in synthesizing the results gleaned from them.

5.2 Data

In organizational discourse studies, the range of what can be considered data is as rich and varied as organizational life itself. Informal e-mails, for example, are as constitutive of the organization as formal articles of association (though obviously in a different way); so are hastily scribbled post-it notes and glossy annual reports, negotiations which perform "boundary-spanning" vis-à-vis the outside world (Kuhn 2014: 491–492) and meetings that face inwards. Add to all that the fieldnotes that the researcher may have taken, plus background information from a range of sources – on politics, the economy, the legal framework and so on. To account for this variety, Rapley (2007) proposes dispensing with the term *data* altogether and replacing it with *archive*. Although his suggestion does not appear to have caught on, it is a useful reminder of the variety, value and significance of the material foundations of organizational research.

Unfortunately, the discourse data that are most interesting are arguably also most difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Due to confidentiality requirements, researchers often find themselves barred from observing organizational life as it unfolds, and have to content themselves with the limited textual residue that is allowed to reach the public domain. Or, if researchers are granted access and can

observe organizational interaction first hand, then data recording, storage and publication – essential steps if studies are to be replicable – may be severely curtailed or prohibited altogether.

Another set of challenges arises when the data to be studied are web-based, such as websites, blogs, tweets and facebook messages. They may be easily accessible here and now, but are notoriously ephemeral in the medium and long term (Mautner 2005). No longer can diachronic analyses rely on organizational “textscapes” (Keenoy and Oswick 2004) to be preserved on paper. Researchers have to intervene to freeze the data – typically, by storing them in a file and printing out a hard copy – but that freezing, ironically, robs the texts concerned of the very fluidity that is most characteristic of them. At the very least, that loss needs to be acknowledged, and at best factored into the interpretation.

Web-based data are also particularly rich in terms of the semiotic modes they employ, combining text, still and moving images, as well as sound. Yet even more conventional text is never totally “bare”; even an unadorned, ostensibly neutral text which appears to include only words – a contract, say, or an internal memo – has a strong multimodal component. How the text is laid out, which font is used and what type of paper, and indeed the very absence of pictures also creates meaning. *Multimodal* does not necessarily equate with “colourful”; it simply refers to the inevitable multi-layeredness of semiosis, the construction of meaning. And here lies another difficulty. Although the study of multimodality is a burgeoning new field where both theoretical and methodological innovations are constantly being proposed (Ventola, Charles, and Kaltenbacher 2004), the terrain is still rather difficult to negotiate. As a result, multimodal data is often shied away from, and continues to be the exception rather than the rule.

5.3 Researcher’s stance

One of the key questions that researchers need to address is: How close or distant do they position themselves vis-à-vis those people and organizations that are the subject of the research? Does that position lead to bias, in terms of how research designs are drawn up, which research questions are asked, and how the results are interpreted? These questions are as relevant for organizational discourse studies as they are for any other empirical work, though they are perhaps brought into rather sharper relief when academic interests are intertwined with commercial ones. Possible links are located along a spectrum. At one end, there is in-house research, done by people employed by the organization being studied; at the other, there are researchers as detached lookers-on, fully independent socially and financially from those they investigate. In between, there are various shades of grey – hybrid positions, that is, where dependencies and loyalties may be hard to pin down, but can nevertheless give cause for concern (witness part-timers with double affiliations in both academia and industry, or faculty with lucrative consulting contracts).

Yet closeness or distance need not be merely a question of direct financial links. Much more broadly, as Critical Management Studies reminds us, business studies has a long tradition of servicing the corporate world in a number of ways, through educating future executives, for example, and providing the tools for running businesses efficiently. This “performative” orientation – driven by the profit motive, or at least a willing accessory to it – may result in a lack of critical distance, and slippage between the descriptive and prescriptive perspectives, so that “what is” becomes practically indistinguishable from “what ought to be”, with the latter defined by corporate, rather than more general social interests. Not surprisingly perhaps, Critical Management Studies has found it difficult at times to deal with the resulting tensions (Grey and Willmott 2002), agonizing over whether it should be “hellraising and muckraking” (Adler 2002: 390), from a broadly left-wing perspective, or move on to the politically more neutral ground of a “pragmatist-reflexive” stance (Zald 2002: 382).

The melding of academic and managerial standpoints is pervasive. It begins early on in managers’ socialization, with the typical business school curriculum incorporating a heavy dose of functional expert knowledge, most of which rests on the seemingly immutable conceptual foundations of the market economy. By contrast, ideas, models and discourses that challenge these foundations are generally marginalized, if present at all. The pattern is repeated in and constantly reinforced by popular textbooks, often sold in their tens or hundreds of thousands, and by the dissemination of canonical knowledge in lecture halls across the globe. Management textbooks have been shown to be a case in point (Genoe McLaren and Helms Mills 2010), as have marketing textbooks (Mautner 2016). Although on one level, they are of course “about” management and marketing, respectively, on another they “sell” the ideological underpinnings of managerial control and the market society. This blurring of boundaries continues to be an issue in research as well. For example, Tourish and Tourish (2010) show how the discourse around “spirituality at work” – a recent trend in leadership development which they examine critically – is not confined to the popular management literature but also has vocal advocates among academic management experts. It also comes with the usual institutional paraphernalia such as dedicated journals, handbooks and special interest groups.

Why should this be of any concern to the organizational discourse researcher? Simply because boundaries matter, defining, as they do, what constitutes authoritative knowledge within a given field. You may want to challenge that definition, but you are not in a good position to do so – particularly as a linguist entering the field from outside – if you are unaware of where the boundaries are and why they have been drawn in the first place. Such awareness is also the best insulation against being sucked into an uncritically prescriptive position, advising managers how to communicate effectively rather than analysing how they actually do communicate within complex webs of power and control.

The issue at stake is not whether researchers should be allowed to take a stance. In fact, those working in critical paradigms would argue that stance-taking is not only inevitable but also desirable, and that claims to objectivity are in any case bound to be spurious. In organizational discourse studies, as elsewhere, the real issue is not whether a particular perspective has been applied but whether it has been declared openly; whether what is only one of many possible perspectives is tacitly passed off as “the truth”; and whether the diagnostic and advisory stages of the project are kept sufficiently apart. Should a research project lead to practical recommendations, it is always vital to ask who these benefit most. *Cui bono?* is arguably the single most important guiding question in any critical researcher’s armoury.

6 Conclusion

The chapter began by pointing out that organizational discourse studies is a rather crowded space, with a bewildering number of schools and approaches vying for the researcher’s attention. More specifically, the two most firmly established research traditions appear to be, on the one hand, a Foucauldian, mainly sociologically-inspired variety and, on the other, a branch of applied linguistics. The two are not incompatible, by any means; the “linguistic turn” and their shared interest in key themes such as identity and power should see to that. In practice, however, people socialized into either tradition often seem to have rather little to say to each other. Sociological discourse analysis tends to be located in business schools and the social sciences, whereas linguistic discourse analysis is generally an arts-and-humanities venture. There is no hostility between them, but not as much productive dialogue as one would wish. As always, there are exceptions, and earlier in the chapter we saw several examples of research that spanned disciplinary divides (such as Kwon, Clarke, and Wodak 2014).

Yet how might this dialogue be further encouraged and advanced? Clearly, flexibility is required on both sides. Those who view discourse primarily in broad, macro terms need to become more receptive towards the analysis of linguistic detail, rather than dismissing it as “myopic” (Alvesson and Kärreman 2000b: 1145). Conversely, those who are preoccupied with deconstructing texts need to remember that there is a whole community of researchers out there who quite happily analyse discourse without delving too deeply into the complexities of linguistic choices. The difficulty is that both communities are successful on their own terms and ostensibly have little incentive to move out of their respective comfort zones. However, in organizational discourse research as in other fields of knowledge, progress is more often achieved outside comfort zones than within. In that spirit, let macro and micro perspectives converge, and we will stand a fairer chance of unravelling the complexities of organizational discourse.

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Almut Koester

26 Spoken workplace discourse

1. Introduction
2. Defining and describing workplace discourse
3. Theoretical and methodological approaches: Institutional order versus interaction order
4. Linguistic approaches: Genre analysis, corpus analysis and CA
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

A chapter dealing with spoken workplace discourse in a book on business communication first needs to address two questions:

- How can “workplace discourse” be distinguished from “business discourse” or “business communication”?
- Why focus on spoken workplace communication?

To begin with the first question, “workplace discourse” refers to a broader range of communicative contexts, and can be seen as including contexts in which business communication occurs. So while business discourse occurs within and between commercial organisations (Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2007: 3), workplace discourse occurs in all workplace contexts, including factories, hospitals and the voluntary sector (as well as, of course, in commercial organisations). However, the distinction between these two terms appears less clear-cut if we consider that communication in commercial organisations includes both company-to-company and company-internal communication. Such internal communication between colleagues in business organisations is not clearly distinguishable from communication between co-workers in non-commercial organisations, thus blurring the boundaries between specific “business discourse” and more general “workplace discourse” (Koester 2010: 5–6). Nevertheless, the notion of workplace discourse as a more general term that includes business discourse is useful, and underpins this chapter. Thus, while business discourse will be treated as part of workplace discourse, somewhat more emphasis will be placed on communication in non-commercial organisations in order to broaden the scope in relation to the main topic of this volume. Other terms sometimes used interchangeably with “workplace” discourse or communication are “institutional” and “professional” communication; therefore reference will also be made in this chapter to studies investigating institutional and professional communication (e.g., Drew and Heritage 1992; Candlin 2002; Gunnarson 2009; Schnurr 2013). More restricted

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-026

definitions for both these terms have also been put forward (see Sarangi and Roberts 1999: 15–19; Koester 2010: 6–7), but will not be elaborated on here.

Turning to the second question (Why focus on spoken workplace communication?), the most obvious answer is that a substantial body of research into spoken workplace interaction already exists, so that it is worth devoting a separate chapter to this area of research. Considering the challenges faced by researchers in obtaining permission to record and transcribe spoken interactions in businesses and organisations, this is a rather impressive and fortunate state of affairs. Pioneering work on workplace talk was carried out by conversation analysts (Drew and Heritage 1992), and since then there has been a growing body of research into spoken workplace interaction using conversation analysis, as well as other approaches such as sociolinguistics, corpus analysis and genre analysis. In recent years, a number of medium to large-scale projects involving the compilation of databases and corpora of spoken workplace and business interactions have been conducted. Two notable examples are 1) the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project, consisting of approximately 2,000 spoken interactions from across a range of workplaces in New Zealand, both public and private, including government departments, commercial organisations, small businesses and factories (see Holmes and Stubbe 2003), and 2) the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Business English (CANBEC), consisting of one million words of (mainly UK-based) spoken business interactions from a range of commercial organisations (see Handford 2010). The literature also abounds with a variety of individual case studies on different forms of spoken workplace discourse, a number of which will be referred to and discussed in this chapter. Given the extent of this research, it is impossible to do justice to the large number of studies already carried out on spoken workplace discourse in one chapter; rather, an attempt will be made to highlight some of the key areas of investigation and types of interaction investigated, as well as the approaches and methodologies used, and the topics and issues explored.

A further point worth highlighting is the fact that spoken language is largely dialogic and interactive, and thus substantially different from written language, as attested by a large body of linguistic and applied linguistic research (e.g., Biber 1988; Carter and McCarthy 2006; McCarthy 1998). While this fact is largely taken for granted within applied linguistics, it is far from recognised within businesses and organisations, notably by those responsible for communications-based training. Recent research on call centre communication has highlighted this discrepancy, pointing out that language training within the industry focuses largely on discrete, decontextualized grammatical items, ignoring the discursive features of dialogic speech (Lockwood 2010; Forey 2014). Indeed, much research on spoken workplace communication is carried out with the explicit aim of contributing insights of practical relevance to the community of practice studied. Devoting a separate chapter to this area of research thus also has the aim of highlighting the distinctive features of spoken workplace communication and the need to reflect these in work-based language and communication training and in teaching languages for specific purposes.

While recognising the distinctiveness of spoken workplace discourse, it is important to point out that spoken and written forms of communication in the workplace are obviously not entirely separate. Rather, they are linked and interact with one another (Koester 2010: 41–43). Accomplishing a workplace task frequently involves both spoken and written genres (Cook-Gumperz and Messerman 1999; Louhiala-Salminen 2002); Louhiala-Salminen, for example, has shown how email communication and phone calls are “totally intertwined” (2002: 217) in the daily routine of a manager.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of research carried out on spoken workplace discourse so far. However, given the space limitations of a single chapter, some areas of research can only be glossed over, while the topics covered and works cited will necessarily be selective. The chapter begins by outlining some of the key characteristics of (spoken) workplace discourse, and then provides an overview of types of workplaces, activities and key topics that have been the subject of research (Section 2). The next section (3) then reviews the main theoretical and methodological approaches that have been adopted to investigate spoken workplace discourse. The final section (4) is devoted to three approaches to examining spoken workplace discourse, which, it is argued, adopt a specifically “linguistic” approach in line with the main focus of the present volume: genre analysis, corpus analysis and conversation analysis. Here, examples of case studies illustrating these approaches will be presented and some key findings highlighted.

2 Defining and describing workplace discourse

2.1 What is special about workplace discourse?

Someone approaching the topic of workplace discourse for the first time might well be justified in asking what distinguishes spoken workplace discourse (which, as outlined above, is in itself quite a general category) from spoken discourse in general. Here conversation analysis, within which much foundational work on spoken workplace discourse was carried out, provides a systematic approach to workplace talk and has identified a number of key criteria which distinguish “institutional talk” from informal everyday conversation (Drew and Heritage 1992; Heritage 1997). The most significant of these is “goal orientation” which involves “an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity... conventionally associated with the institution” (Drew and Heritage 1992: 22). Furthermore, institutional or workplace conversations are governed by “constraints on allowable contributions”, which means that what is considered appropriate to say within the context is more restricted than in ordinary conversation. In addition, participants’ interpretation of the discourse is guided by “inferential frameworks” which are particular to the institutional or workplace setting (Drew and Heritage 1992: 21–25). Workplace

interactions are also frequently “asymmetrical” (Heritage 1997), with an unequal distribution of institutional power or expert knowledge between the participants. Finally, orientation to the workplace context is also reflected in lexical choice, most obviously when technical or professional jargon is used, but also more subtly, for example by a speaker using *we* to signal membership of an organization, or through “institutional euphemisms” (Drew and Heritage 1992: 3–65; Heritage 1997).

The following brief extract from a workplace conversation illustrates all the key features of workplace talk outlined above:

Extract 1

- 1) Meg Before I get going to: onto another computer, here I wanna ask you,
...
LAnn: Okay.] about things I wasn't sure about sorting,
[1.5] Bills of *la:d*ing?
 - 2) Ann Tha:t is... comes with every /??? / an' it can be thrown away
 - 3) Meg Okay,
 - 4) [Meg shows Ann something]
 - 5) Ann ↑ Uh:m... *that* is for the Restore the Earth stuff, and... I will- it will eventually probably get thrown awa:y, but... if you haven't come across a packing ↑ list for Restore the Earth products? =
 - 6) Meg = Okay,
 - 7) Ann = hang onto it.
 - 8) Meg Okay.
 - 9) Ann ('Cause I'm just) I'll show you what to do with it,
 - 10) Meg Okay,
- (Author's data)

Extract 1 shows the beginning of an interaction from the back office of a food retailer (a North American co-operative) between two co-workers: Ann, the bookkeeper, and Meg, her new assistant, whom she is training. Goal orientation is evident from the beginning of the encounter in turn 1, where Meg explicitly states the purpose of the interaction: “I wanna ask you, ... about things I wasn't sure about sorting”; and this goal orientation guides and structures the question-answer format in which the turn-taking unfolds. What might be considered an “allowable contribution” is narrowly circumscribed by the workplace activity being carried out – instructing the new assistant in sorting various documentation. Also, various “inferential frameworks”, that is, knowledge and assumptions about the processes and documentation involved in orders and deliveries, underpin the participants' understanding of what they are talking about. In fact, one of the purposes of the training Meg is receiving is to develop her knowledge of these inferential frameworks. The interaction is asymmetrical, with Ann possessing not only more institutional power but also greater expert knowledge than Meg, who is her subordinate as well as a novice in this

work. Finally, the workplace context is also reflected in lexical choice with reference to specific types of delivery documentation (bills of lading, packing list) – note that Meg is not familiar with all of these – and names of products (Restore the Earth). Nonetheless, while exemplifying all the distinctive characteristics of workplace discourse, this extract also displays many typical features of spoken dialogic discourse, such as reduced and non-standard forms (*wanna* for *want to* and *'cause* for *because*), filled (*uh:m*) and unfilled (. . .) pauses, listenership tokens (okay) and seamless turn-taking with latching (=) and no pauses between turns (Chafe 1982). These features reflect the interactive nature of spoken discourse and the mutual engagement of the speakers in jointly constructing the discourse. It is important to remember that these are also key characteristics of workplace talk, as they are of everyday conversation.

2.2 Where does workplace talk occur?

In trying to answer this question, two broad sites of workplace interaction can be identified, drawing on Goffman's (1959) distinction between “front regions” (or “front stage”) and “back regions” (or “back stage”). Front stage workplace encounters are ones where at least one of the participants is acting in a professional or institutional role, thus typically professional-client or service encounters. In back stage encounters, on the other hand, professionals or members of a team/organisation interact with one another in a more “off-record” and unguarded manner, for example in back-office conversations between co-workers. The dramaturgical metaphor is deliberate, as Goffman states that in front stage encounters “a particular performance is [. . .] in progress”, whereas back stage the action “is related to the performance but inconsistent with the appearance fostered by the performance” (Goffman 1959: 134). Many employees or professionals interact in both these sites; for example, health professionals will engage in “front stage” consultations with patients as well as in “back stage” discussions with other health professionals about patient treatment and operational or administrative issues. This distinction is important for studying language in workplace contexts.

As Goffman's remark suggests, the different contexts are likely to have an impact on the language used, with more formal and guarded linguistic forms expected in front regions and more relaxed and informal language in back regions. There may also be quite a complex relationship between front stage and back stage encounters within a workplace, for example in terms of how objectives are accomplished and decisions made. For instance, are front stage activities what they seem to be, or is their actual purpose obscured and only apparent to those working in the back stage? (Sarangi and Roberts 1999: 20). A typical example might be internal (back stage) meetings in an organisation which precede and follow an external meeting (front stage) with a client company, and where final decisions might actually be taken outside the formal front stage meeting (Boden 1994; Handford 2010).

2.3 Contexts and activities in spoken workplace discourse research

The great variety of workplace contexts in which spoken workplace discourse can occur is reflected in the range of workplaces and professions that have been the object of research. Spoken interaction in “white collar” office contexts has received much attention, including some notable large-scale studies (Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Handford 2010), as has the more narrowly defined area of business discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2007; Bargiela-Chiappini 2009). Specific professional contexts in which communication has been extensively studied include classroom interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Seedhouse 2004; Walsh 2006, 2011), health communication (Candlin and Sarangi 2011; Hamilton and Chou 2014) and legal discourse, starting with early studies in conversation analysis (e.g., Greatbatch and Dingwall 1998) through to the more recently developed area of “forensic linguistics” (Coulthard and Johnson 2010), which includes written as well as spoken discourse. Within the category of “front stage” encounters, as defined above, service encounters have been studied in a range of contexts, including emergency calls (Zimmerman 1992), book shops (Aston 1988; Varcasia 2009) and the travel industry (Ventola 1987; YlännemcEwen 2004; Coupland and YlännemcEwen 2000), with a growing body of research on the relatively new workplace context of call centres (Forey and Lockwood 2010). Compared to white collar contexts, workplace discourse in “blue collar” settings is less well-researched. However, the Language in the Workplace Project also includes spoken data collected in factories (Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Vine 2004), and there have been a few studies of interactions on construction sites (Handford and Matous 2011, 2015; Baxter and Wallace 2009).

The workplace activities or genres investigated have been equally diverse. Meetings in organisations, both internal meetings and external “business” meetings have been a site of much research (Boden 1994; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997; Poncini 2004; Handford 2010), and studies in business discourse have devoted much attention to negotiations (Firth 1995; Charles and Charles 1999; Vuorela 2005). Both these sites of research are covered in detail in separate chapters of this volume, so will not be dealt with further here. As already mentioned, service encounters, both face-to-face and on the telephone, are a much-researched “front stage” workplace activity (see Koester 2010: 29–33). More specific types of spoken workplace activities investigated include job interviews (Roberts and Campbell 2005, 2006; Choi 2014), appraisal (Asmuß 2008; Clifton 2012) and training (Lave and Wenger 1991; Lee and Roth 2006; Filliettaz 2014).

2.4 Key topics

A wide range of topics has also been investigated, and some key topics that have received particular attention will briefly be reviewed here. Besides, or in addition to, describing the characteristics of different workplace settings and/or activities,

many studies have focussed on ways in which interpersonal relationships at work are managed and negotiated through language. Frequently drawing on and extending politeness theory (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987), numerous studies, notably from the Wellington Language in the Workplace project, have investigated linguistic strategies used in exercising power and building rapport amongst co-workers (Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Vine 2004). Others have turned their attention to relationally-oriented talk at work, such as small talk (Holmes 2000a; Ragan 2000; Koester 2004) or humour (Holmes and Marra 2002; Holmes 2000b), emphasising the important role played by such talk in building and maintaining workplace relationships.

Closely linked to the topic of workplace relationships is that of workplace identity, which also emerges as a key topic, particularly in studies using a social constructionist framework (see Section 3). Two types of identity at work frequently focussed on are leadership and gender. As many workplace interactions are marked by asymmetry, it is not surprising that leadership, and the related topic of power, should emerge as key topics of interest in investigating spoken workplace discourse (Vine 2004; Vine et al. 2008; Schnurr 2013). Fine-grained analysis of such discourse “allows researchers to identify linguistic strategies which are used to enact power and which thus position speakers in powerful positions” (Schnurr 2013: 173). With women continuing to be under-represented in many workplaces, and the persistent pay gap between men and women, the topic of gender identity is also a particularly timely and relevant aspect of workplace discourse to explore (Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007, 2010). For example, Mullany (2010) critically explored the problems of the so-called “double bind” and “glass ceiling” for women managers by examining the gender identities revealed in their speech. Baxter (2010) combined the investigation of both types of identity (leadership and gender) in her book *The Language of Female Leadership*, demonstrating that powerful women in organisations have to work harder than their male counterparts “to sustain a credible identity as a leader” (Baxter 2010: 113).

Another key topic to emerge in studies of spoken workplace discourse, and which reflects the international nature of business and workplace communication, can be subsumed under the general heading of “communicating across cultures” (see Koester 2010: 122–144). This label includes “classic” cross-cultural or intercultural studies, which have a very long tradition (e.g., Garcez 1993; Spencer-Oatey 2000), as well as more recent work on (Business) English used as a *lingua franca* (Firth 1996; Poncini 2004; Rogerson-Revell 2008; Choi 2014) and multilingual workplaces (Dùchene 2009; Meyer and Apfelbaum 2010). While cross-cultural or intercultural studies have frequently focused on communication problems resulting from differing interpretations of linguistic behaviours, for example in the way negotiations are handled (Garcez 1993; Marriott 1997), studies of lingua franca interactions, where speakers use English as a common second language, have shown instead how successful communication is usually achieved despite varying levels of linguistic ability (Firth 1996).

Recently, international corporations' increasing transfer offshore of key work, primarily call centres, but also other back-office functions, has been investigated by sociolinguists (Forey 2014; Forey and Lockwood 2010). Such business process outsourcing has gone mainly to English-speaking former colonies, such as Hong Kong, India and the Philippines, due to the high level of English proficiency in these countries. Forey and Lockwood (2010: 4) outline some key critical questions their research aims to address, including:

- Is outsourcing call centre communication “yielding the kind of quality expected by multinationals”?
- “What exactly are the communication problems . . .?”
- “[H]ow does this industry contribute to our understanding of World Englishes in an international business context?”

Call centres are also working environments which frequently require multilingual skills of their employees, and therefore are an interesting site for research in multilingualism. Dûchene (2009) critically investigates multilingual tourism call centres in Switzerland, and concludes that the multilingual skills of the agents are an asset for the company, but do not result in added value for the employees, for example in terms of remuneration or promotion.

3 Theoretical and methodological approaches: Institutional order versus interaction order

Workplace interaction has been studied from a great variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives within a range of disciplines, including sociology, organisational studies, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Sarangi and Roberts' (1999: 1–10) suggest that most studies of workplace discourse can be situated on a continuum from those that focus more on the institutional order to those that are more interested in the interaction order. Workplace interactions are embedded in the institutional order, which is defined by Berger and Luckman (1967: 83) as the “body of transmitted recipe knowledge, that is, knowledge that supplied the institutionally appropriate rules of conduct”. Goffman (1974), on the other hand, called for study of the interaction order, which is “the *structuring* of participation in a given social situation” (Sarangi and Roberts 1999: 2, original italics), in its own right. This involves studying in detail the actual words and interactions of the participants in a given situation.

As the present volume focuses on linguistic approaches to business communication, only those approaches to spoken workplace discourse that have been carried out within a sociolinguistic or applied linguistic framework will be considered here.

But even this more limited set of linguistic approaches to analysing workplace interaction represents quite a range of perspectives which can also usefully be plotted on the institutional order to interaction order “cline” or continuum (see Figure 26.1):

←-----→
 CDA, Social Constructionism, IS, Genre Analysis, Corpus Analysis, CA

Figure 26.1: Institutional order vs. interaction order (Legend: CDA = Critical Discourse Analysis, IS = Interactional Sociolinguistics, CA = Conversation Analysis)

Studies of spoken workplace interaction that go furthest towards incorporating the institutional or social order into their framework are those that take a socio-critical approach, notably critical discourse analysis, which draws on the works of Foucault (Cameron 2000; Mullany 2007) or Bourdieu (Duchêne 2009). Such studies explore, and attempt to deconstruct the ways in which power and ideology are enacted through workplace discourse. The detail or depth of linguistic analysis varies greatly in studies adopting a critical approach. While in more ethnographic studies, analysis of conversational or interview data may be limited to selected examples which illustrate certain practices or ideologies within the organisation (e.g., Duchêne 2009), more linguistically-focused studies on critical discourse analysis frequently draw on systemic functional linguistics to carry out a detailed lexico-grammatical or clausal analysis. One good example of the latter is Eggins and Slade’s ([1997] 2005: 116–166) critical examination of how dominant ideologies are constructed in the informal conversation of male co-workers.

Social constructionist approaches to workplace discourse can be situated somewhere in the middle of the institutional order – interaction order cline, as social categories and discourse are seen as mutually reflexive. As mentioned in Section 2.4, various aspects of workplace identity have been examined using a social constructionist approach, for example gender, leadership and ethnicity (Holmes, Stubbe, and Vine 1999; Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007; Baxter 2010). What these studies have in common is that social and institutional identities are seen as dynamic and subject to negotiation through interaction (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 8–12).

Interactional sociolinguistics, as the name implies, is interested in the detail of interaction in relation to the participants’ social and cultural interpretation of “contextualisation cues” in talk. These are any linguistic features of talk that index particular social practices (be they prosodic features, formulaic expressions or particular lexical choices) and thus may be subject to different cultural interpretations. Interactional sociolinguistics has a long tradition in the study of workplace talk and was developed by Gumperz (1982) in studying cross-cultural (mis)communication in multi-ethnic contexts. This approach has frequently been adopted in workplace contexts with a high proportion of ethnic minorities in order to study the processes through which workers or job applicants are systematically disadvantaged (Roberts, Davies, and Jupp [1992] 2014). For example, Roberts and Campbell (2005,

2006) found that ethnic minority candidates were frequently unsuccessful in job interviews, not as a result of low linguistic proficiency, but because they failed to adopt certain “discourses” that were expected of them.

Where genre analysis is positioned on the institutional order – interaction order cline depends on which genre-analytical approach is adopted. The “new rhetoric” school of genre analysis, which emerged from a socio-constructionist tradition, is more interested in the ways in which professional discourse communities use genres and less in the formal properties of individual genres (Freedman and Medway 1994). In contrast, genre analysis developed within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993), as well as within a Hallidayan tradition (Martin and Rose 2008), has tended to focus on the language and structure of different genres, frequently identifying a typical “move structure” for a particular genre, such as sales promotion letters (Bhatia 1993). Written workplace genres (e.g., email, letters, reports) have been analysed far more than spoken genres, but there are nevertheless some descriptions of frequently occurring spoken workplace genres, such as meetings (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997; Handford 2010), decision-making (Koester 2006) or service encounters (Hasan 1985; Ventola 1987; McCarthy 2000). Some of these studies will be discussed in more detail below.

Although corpus-based approaches have a long tradition within English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes, the use of corpus analysis in analysing spoken workplace discourse is relatively recent. As spoken data must first be transcribed before it can be entered into a computer-based corpus, spoken corpora tend to be much smaller than written ones. Spoken workplace corpora are, therefore, frequently quite small and specialised, for example Adolphs et al.’s (2004) corpus of calls to a health advisory service (comprising approx. 60,000 words) or Koester’s (2006) corpus of American and British office talk (only 34,000 words). The two largest English language spoken corpora of workplace talk are the 1 million-word Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus (CANBEC), consisting mainly of business meetings (Handford 2010), and the 262,000-word business sub-corpus of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE-bus), covering a wider range of workplace contexts and activities, including job interviews, telephone conversations and front desk hotel service encounters (Warren 2004). As corpus analysis involves the identification of frequently-occurring lexical items, collocations and phrases, the focus of corpus-based workplace studies is primarily on the interaction order. However, as Handford (2010: 31) argues, “the corpus as an objective, quantifiable record” of linguistic professional practices also links the text back to its social and institutional context.

Conversation analysis, which, as mentioned above, has a well-established tradition of analysing workplace talk, explicitly sets out to explore the interaction order through micro-analysis of speaker turns and sequences. Moreover, “C[onversation] A[nalysis] argues that institutional talk is centrally and actively involved in the accomplishment of the ‘institutional’ nature of institutions themselves” (Hutchby

and Woofitt 1998: 145), which is in line with the conversation-analytic view that talk creates its own context. Interestingly, in a recent volume on conversation analysis and Languages for Specific Purposes, Seedhouse and Richards (2009: 21–25) propose a tri-dimensional model of context (with “institutional context” and “micro-context” as separate categories) and contend that such a model is not in conflict with a conversation-analytic view of context as talk-intrinsic. Conversation-analytic studies of institutional discourse cover a very wide range of institutional contexts (including health care, legal professions, news media) and interaction types, such as telephone calls (e.g., emergency calls, in Zimmerman 1992, and telephone service encounters, in Bowles 2006 and Varcasia 2009), radio talk shows (Hutchby 1996) and performance appraisal (Aßmus 2008; Clifton 2012). These studies have shown how specific turn-taking and sequential patterns, which are distinct from those of “ordinary conversation”, operate within different institutional forms of interaction (Drew and Heritage 1992: 26).

Three of these approaches to analysing spoken workplace discourse, namely genre analysis, corpus analysis and conversation analysis, will be examined in more detail in the next section. They have been selected in line with the overall focus on “linguistic approaches” in this book because they are situated at the interaction order-end of the cline (see Figure 1), and therefore involve a linguistic and micro-discursive analysis of spoken workplace communication. Nevertheless, as we shall see, findings from such studies link back to the institutional order, thus also providing insights into the social and professional issues in the workplaces investigated.

4 Linguistic approaches: Genre analysis, corpus analysis and conversation analysis

This section aims to demonstrate how each of the approaches discussed has been used to investigate and provide insights into spoken workplace discourse. After a brief discussion of the theories and methodologies underpinning each approach, some key findings and various illustrative case studies will be presented. The main focus is on research carried out in English. Yet, wherever possible, case studies are also presented from non-English-speaking countries and from international and multilingual workplace contexts, with the aim of broadening the scope of the research discussed while reflecting the increasingly international and intercultural nature of spoken workplace communication.

4.1 Genre analysis

As genre analysis examines “typified communicative action invoked in response to a recurrent situation” (Yates and Orkilowski’s 1992: 301), it provides a powerful tool for

analyzing and characterizing different “types” of workplace texts and interactions which are generally marked by a high degree of standardisation and regularity. Nevertheless, “genre” is not a straightforward category to operationalise, not least because the different approaches to genre analysis (mentioned in Section 3) define genre in different ways. Genre analysis in the English for Specific/Academic Purposes tradition has viewed common communicative purpose as the defining criterion for identifying texts or interactions as belonging to the same genre (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993), whereas in the Hallidayan tradition, or “Sydney School”, common structural features have been key (Hasan 1985; Martin and Rose 2008). Admittedly, as communicative purpose “shapes the schematic structure of the discourse” (Swales 1990: 58), the description of individual genres in both schools can be quite similar, despite the different definitions, as both genre schools generally elaborate a “move structure” (English for Specific Purposes School) or “schematic structure” (Sydney School). However, as Bhatia (1993) has shown, communicative purpose and structure may not always coincide; for example, he argues that both sales promotional letters and letters of application belong to the category of promotion genres, despite having different textual structures.

Turning specifically to spoken workplace genres, this problem of definition applies particularly to the genre of workplace meetings. If one takes a goal-based definition of genre, meetings cannot be defined as a genre, as meetings can have a variety of purposes, for example planning, problem-solving, reporting (Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Koester 2010). Nevertheless, business meetings have been extensively analysed using genre analysis, from Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris’ (1997) work comparing British and Italian corporate meetings to Handford’s (2010) proposal for a generic structure for such interactions based on a corpus of 64 meetings. Starting with a definition of genre as “staged practice”, Handford describes the genre of meetings in terms of structural features in combination with particular practices and strategies. Clearly, despite their varying purposes, workplace meetings, particularly more formal ones, have a recognizable structure with at least three stages: an opening stage, a discussion stage, and a closing stage (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997; Holmes and Stubbe 2003). Moreover, they are recognized as a special “type” of workplace interaction by the discourse communities that use them.

Another issue in defining genres is the level of specificity of the description. Yates and Orlikowski (1992) suggest that more general genres can be viewed as having sub-genres at various levels of specificity; for example, the genre of business meetings could comprise more specific sub-genres, as shown in Figure 26.2.

This means that it is possible to take either a more broad-brush approach, where genre is viewed at a more general level of abstraction, or a more narrow focus on specialised genres which may be specific to particular professions or even to particular workplaces (Koester 2010: 23). In attempting to compare genres across a range of workplace contexts, the former approach is necessary. For example, Koester (2006)

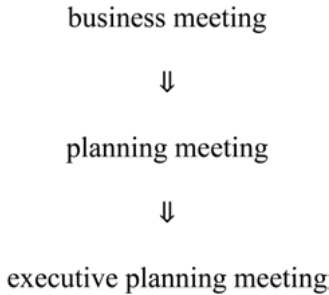


Figure 26.2: Genres and sub-genres (from Koester and Handford 2012: 255)

and Müller (2006a, 2006b) have both identified frequently occurring spoken genres across different workplaces:

Müller (2006b: 279):

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1) private conversations | 5) evaluation (appraisal) conversations |
| 2) contact conversations | 6) planning conversations |
| 3) presentation talks | 7) crisis conversations |
| 4) training talks | 8) analysis talks |

Koester (2006: 32–34):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) procedural and directive discourse | 6) decision-making |
| 2) briefing | 7) arrangements |
| 3) service encounters | 8) discussing and evaluating |
| 4) reporting | 9) small talk |
| 5) requesting | 10) office gossip |

As the two lists above show, the genre labels are fairly general, in fact, many of them, such as decision making or evaluation, also occur in contexts outside the workplace. What is also noticeable is that, while the lists are not identical, there is a substantial overlap in the genres identified, for example:

- “private conversations” (Müller) and “small talk” (Koester);
- “evaluation (appraisal) conversations” (Müller) and “discussing and evaluating” (Koester);
- “planning conversations” (Müller) and “decision-making” (Koester).

This is all the more striking as the data were collected in different countries (Koester’s from the UK and US, and Müller’s from Germany, France and Spain), and in quite different workplace environments (Koester’s from offices, and Müller’s from factories), which seems to indicate that many of these genres are very widespread indeed in spoken workplace communication (see also Koester 2010: 23–25). A genre that has

emerged as key in workplace discourse is decision-making. It makes up 25% of the corpus of American and British Office Talk (ABOT) (Koester 2006) and constitutes one of the main discursive practices in meetings represented in the Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus (CANBEC), particularly those between peers (Handford 2010).

While a number of more specialised written professional genres have been analysed, for example business reports (Yeung 2007), tax computation letters (Flowerdew and Wan 2006) and business negotiation letters (dos Santos 2002), there are far fewer descriptions of specialised spoken workplace genres. This is perhaps the result of the more emergent nature of much spoken workplace communication, which means it is often not amenable to a description in terms of schematic structures. One notable exception is the highly specialised business genre of corporate earnings calls (Crawford Camiciottoli 2006, 2010; Cho and Yoon 2013), which are teleconferences in which a company reports its financial results to prospective investors or potential business partners. This is an interesting example of a relatively new spoken business genre that has emerged as a result of developments in information technology and the globalisation of business (Choo and Yoon 2013).

Another spoken genre that is less specialized, being common across all professions, but specific to the workplace and also highly complex, is that of job interviews. These have been widely studied, albeit largely within the framework of interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Roberts and Campbell 2005, 2006). A recent genre analytical study of job interviews was carried out by Choi (2014) using a Swalesian move-and-step structure. This study is of particular interest, as the job interviews were conducted in the global maritime industry where all the participants (both interviewers and interviewees) were using English as a *lingua franca* and had a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Choi identified four “macro-moves” in the genre of job interviews, each of which consist of a number of more delicate “micro-moves” which can be realized through a range of “steps”. For example, the central macro-move of the genre is the “probing stage”, and one of the micro-moves occurring during this stage is talking about “work experience”, which may, in turn, include the step of discussing “remarkable achievements”.

Choi compared the moves used by a group of 20 successful and 20 unsuccessful job applicants and identified some remarkable differences. Not only did the successful applicants use more moves overall, but they also used certain moves and steps more frequently, and with higher volumes of talk, than the unsuccessful candidates. Moves and steps in which candidates were able to “promote” themselves, such as demonstrating relevant skills and knowledge, or showing self-motivation and a positive attitude, seemed to be key for a successful interview. Successful candidates were also able to build a relationship with the interviewers through small talk, an optional move in the initial “welcoming” macro-move. Another interesting finding of the study was that successful candidates were not necessarily the most proficient in English.

As the studies discussed show, genre analysis is a methodology that lends itself to the identification of common genres across different workplaces, as well as providing tools for a structural analysis of highly specialised genres within specific professions or workplaces. Moreover, as genre analysis tends to adopt a multi-layered approach, from lexical-grammatical and move structure analysis to a study of the institutional context (Bhatia 1993: 22–36 and 2004: 18–22), it is a method that links the institutional to the interaction order.

4.2 Corpus analysis

As spoken workplace corpora are usually small and specialised (see Section 3), corpus analysis tends to be used in combination with qualitative methods, such as genre analysis or discourse analysis. Even with relatively small corpora, the quantification carried out by corpus tools, such as frequency lists, keyword lists and concordancing, can provide unique insights into the data that supplement, or may even provide a starting point for qualitative analysis, as will be illustrated in this section. As corpus linguistic approaches are dealt with in a separate chapter in this volume, corpus methods will not be reviewed in detail here; instead some key studies of spoken workplace corpora will be reviewed with examples of how corpus methods have been applied and what insights into the data have been gained (see also Koester 2010 for a more detailed discussion of corpus methods for workplace discourse).

Handford's (2010) study of the 1-million-word Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus (CANBEC) has provided some key insights into the nature of spoken workplace and business discourse. Comparisons of the most frequent and key words in CANBEC with a corpus of general spoken English revealed not only that typical "business" nouns, such as *customer(s)*, *sales* or *order* are more frequent in business contexts, but also, more surprisingly, that certain grammatical words are too. Thus *we* is the top keyword, which means it is unusually frequent in business compared to its general frequency in the language. This reflects the emphasis in business and workplace contexts on the group, i.e. the company or organization, rather than the individual. The discourse markers *if* and *so* are also among the top 50 keywords, indexing, as Handford argues, key discursive practices such as hypothesising and summarising. Other keywords, including *need*, *issue* and *problem*, can be linked to the prevalence of the genre of problem-solving/decision-making, as already discussed in Section 4.1 above.

Of course, studying frequency or keyword lists only provides a very limited view of the discourse. Handford (2010) also identified the most frequent phrasal strings or "clusters" (also called "lexical bundles" or "chunks") occurring in the corpus. This revealed that many of the high frequency words and keywords occurred mainly in such clusters of two or more words, which partly accounted for their frequent

occurrence. Handford categorised these clusters of two to six words into two broad functional categories: discourse marking and interactional functions. Discourse marking categories include such functions as focusing, linking and summarizing; interactional categories include a wide variety of functions, such as checking understanding, hedging, hypothesizing and evaluating. Examples of clusters in some of these functional categories are:

- Summarising/Reformulating: *so I think, so I mean, in other words*;
- Signalling obligation: *we need to, we should, I think you should*;
- Hypothesizing/speculating: *if you, so if, if I*.

Handford (2010: 29–33) interprets the functions performed by such frequently occurring clusters as “discursive practices”, that is, conventionalised ways of achieving particular goals within a social or professional context. Thereby, Handford argues, the textual, interaction-order level at which corpus analysis operates can be linked back to broader institutional-order concerns relating to the social and institutional context.

While CANBEC is a corpus consisting mainly of UK-based business meetings involving English native speakers, the business sub-corpus of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE-bus) covers a wider range of workplace contexts and activities, and involves communication in international and intercultural environments. A number of linguistic and pragmatic features have been examined in HKCSE-bus, including a range of speech acts, such as agreeing/disagreeing, expressing opinions (Cheng and Warren 2005, 2006), vague language (Cheng 2007) and language used to check understanding (Cheng and Warren 2007).

One site in which data was collected for the corpus was the reception area of hotels – a key site for cross-cultural interactions in an international city like Hong Kong. Cheng (2004) studied interactions between hotel staff working at the front desk and guests who were checking out. Her study is a good example of how linguistically minimal corpus findings, such as a frequency or keyword list, can provide a “systematic point of entry” (Adolphs et al. 2004: 12) into the data, which then opens up a path for further investigation. A frequency list generated with corpus software showed that the lexical item *minibar* was unexpectedly frequent and occurred in all the checking out interactions. The next step was to create concordances for the most frequent items. Cheng (2004: 145) notes that, with spoken corpora, concordances are useful not only for revealing common collocations, but also to show whether any of the items are used predominantly by one particular speaker. In service encounters such as hotel front desk interactions, there is a clear role distinction between the participants: certain words will be used more, or even exclusively, by hotel staff, for example *sir/madam*. Interestingly, the word *minibar* was used exclusively by hotel staff and never by a guest. This led to a qualitative examination of the discourse context of *minibar*, ranging from a study of politeness

features used with this lexical item, through the intonation patterns in which the word occurred, to the positioning of the lexical item within the structural organisation of the discourse. The findings from this analysis were that the hotel's corporate message of "customer care" was frequently at odds with what actually happened in checking out discourses, in particular the way receptionists formulated questions about use of the minibar.

Cheng's (2004) investigation of the word *minibar* is a good example of a study that uses a corpus-driven approach combining quantitative with qualitative methods to analyse the characteristics of workplace discourse. In such an approach, the initial quantitative findings obtained using corpus methods (such as keywords and concordancing) reveal features of the data which are then further explored using qualitative methods. Furthermore, Cheng identifies the need to train staff in certain aspects of the checking out discourse, so the study has clear applications for professional training within the industry investigated.

While HKCSE-bus includes discourse from both L1 and L2 speakers, Handford and Matous (2011, 2015) compiled a small corpus of exclusively L2 interactions from the international construction industry. The construction project used for the study was a Japanese-Hong Kong joint venture, where spoken interactions involved Japanese engineers leading the project interacting with foremen on the site itself and in the site office. The lingua franca and multi-cultural nature of the discourse makes it particularly interesting to study. The interactions in the corpus are mainly between two Japanese engineers and two Hong Kong foremen. As the corpus was very small (consisting of only 12,000 words), the data were systematically compared with CANBEC, and similar features (keywords and clusters) were examined. Despite the fact that both the professional context and the L1 of the speakers in these two corpora are quite different, both keyword lists and frequent clusters were surprisingly similar; for example, signalling obligation (e.g., *we need to*, *we have to*) and hedging (e.g., *I think*, *I don't know*) were highly frequent in the construction corpus, as well as in CANBEC (as already discussed above). From their findings, Handford and Matous (2011: 92) conclude that five interpersonal language categories previously identified by Handford (2010) as indexing specific social dimensions and discursive practices in business meetings also indexed these categories and practices in the construction site corpus:

- Pronouns: signalling the social relationship;
- Backchannels: signalling listener solidarity;
- Vague language: signalling solidarity over knowledge;
- Hedges: negotiating power over knowledge;
- Deontic modality: negotiating power over actions.

Extract 2 from the corpus illustrates the use of a number of these interpersonal features by a Hong Kong foreman, TT, talking to a Japanese engineer, Arai:

Extract 2

TT: I think + er we don't have to consider about the safety + in here

Arai: Hmm

(Handford 2014: 373)

Here TT combines hedges (*I think, er*) with deontic modality (*we don't have to*); interestingly not using the far more face-threatening alternative *you must* (also rarely used in CANBEC) (Handford 2014: 373). Thus similar interpersonal concerns seem to be addressed with the same discursive practices across different institutional and professional settings, suggesting that such interpersonal language may be typically “institutional”. One area in which the two corpora diverged, however, was in the much higher frequency of place deictics in the construction corpus, with the demonstratives *this* and *here* identified as keywords. This reflects the importance of visual and non-verbal communication, for example through drawings and gestures, in the engineering profession.

The studies of workplace corpora discussed in this section have shown that corpus methods do not only provide powerful tools for identifying the linguistic features that characterise workplace discourse in general. They are also extremely useful in establishing the “generic fingerprint” (Farr 2007) of specific workplace genres and activities, and in generating insights into professional practices and thus broader institutional and socio-cultural concerns.

4.3 Conversation analysis

It may be surprising to find conversation analysis, which originated within sociology, included in a discussion of “linguistic approaches” to workplace communication. The reason for doing so is that the micro-analytical approach and fine-grained turn-by-turn method advocated by conversation analysis results in a detailed and linguistically rich description of spoken interactions. As already mentioned, studies of spoken workplace interactions using conversation analysis have a long tradition, and this approach continues to be applied very widely to the analysis of spoken workplace discourse.

While conversation analysis originally set out to explain the “machinery” of everyday conversation, conversation analysts very soon turned to an investigation of “institutional” encounters. Many of these early studies were published in Drew and Heritage's 1992 volume *Talk at Work* including analysis of talk in health-care delivery, legal proceedings and news, and job interviews. Using ordinary, naturally-occurring conversation as a benchmark, conversation-analytic studies seek to establish which interactional characteristics distinguish institutional encounters. Some general distinguishing features of institutional talk were identified (Drew and Heritage 1992; Heritage 1997), as discussed in Section 2.1, the key one being goal orientation. Numerous studies of specific institutional and workplace encounters have also sought

to identify the ways in which interlocutors orient to the specific goals and activities within these different institutions and what interactional features distinguish these encounters both from ordinary conversation and from one another (see also Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008; Pallotti 2009). A detailed discussion of these numerous studies would be beyond the scope of this chapter, but a number of examples from a range of workplace setting will be presented here to illustrate the method and present some of the findings. First, though, the basic methodology and principles of conversation analysis will be briefly explained (see Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008 for a more detailed description of these phenomena).

Conversation-analytic methodology starts from the basic principle of trying to make sense of spoken interactions from the participants' viewpoint, that is, it takes an "emic" perspective and avoids *a priori* analytical frameworks and categories. The analyst begins by carefully studying a single recording/transcript or "case", and tries to identify any recurring patterns in the interaction. Similar interactions are then investigated for these patterns, and a "collection" is built up. Despite this principle of avoiding *a priori* categories, the foundational studies in conversation analysis identified a number of recurring interactional patterns in conversation that make up the "machinery" of talk and serve as a baseline against which to analyse other encounters, including institutional ones.

These basic patterns include a set of "rules" for "turn-taking" (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974), "adjacency pairs", "sequences" (Sacks 1992), "preference" (Pomerantz 1984) and "repair" (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977). Adjacency pairs, consisting of a first and a second pair part, are the most basic unit of interaction; typical pair types are question – answer, greeting – greeting, request – compliance. Of course, conversation does not always proceed with such simple, two-turn units, and longer sequences may occur. But once a first pair part is uttered, it sets up the "conditional relevance" for a corresponding second pair part to be produced. This may not happen until several turns later, perhaps after a "side sequence" which might answer preliminary questions relevant for the expected second-part response. On the other hand, if no response at all is forthcoming, this will be noticed. The notion of preference addresses the phenomenon that certain first pair parts (e.g., request, offer) may be followed by either a positive or negative response. "Preferred" responses (e.g., compliance, acceptance) are more frequent, simpler and "unmarked", whereas "dispreferred" ones (e.g., refusal, rejection) are rarer, more complex and therefore "marked". Finally, repair involves mechanisms for "fixing" problems in the discourse, such as disfluencies or mishearings.

In workplace conversations, these mechanisms are also in operation, but there may be systematic deviations or specific patterns which are adapted to the specific interactional goals and activities within the organisation. In an example from media discourse, Hutchby (1996) found that telephone calls to a radio phone-in broadcast, which simulate everyday social phone calls, actually display the speakers' orientation to the institutional context in a number of ways. First of all, the opening

sequence of the phone call deviates from the standard format followed in private phone calls (Schegloff 1968) in that the identities of the callers (“host” and “caller”) and the topic of conversation are fixed in advance. Hutchby also observed that the host was able to exploit a sequential feature of the phone calls, namely the fact that callers always take the first turn in the conversation, in which they are expected to state their opinion. This allows the host to comment on or challenge the caller’s contribution in the second turn, thus exerting his/her power through the sequential resource of “second position”. This power difference reflects the asymmetry of roles typical of institutional contexts, in contrast to much ordinary conversation; however, it involves a manifestation of power that is locally and discursively constructed, rather than being “given”. A criticism sometimes levelled at conversation analysis is that it involves an overly mechanistic and uncritical description of the discourse, but this example demonstrates that conversation-analytic methods can indeed be used to explore issues of power in workplace interactions.

In another type of telephone interaction involving service encounters in small to medium businesses, Varcasia (2009) used conversation-analytic methods to examine the response formats used by the service providers to respond to calls from customers. An interesting facet of this study is that the data were collected from three different countries (Britain, Germany and Italy) with interactions conducted in the respective national languages, thus allowing for cross-linguistic comparison. Data were gathered from a variety of small- to medium-sized shops and service providers (e.g., bookshops, florists, clothes shops and hairdressers) with approximately 50 phone calls from each country. The analysis focused on the structure of response formats when the customer’s request could not be satisfied. Three types of response format were identified across the data set:

- Response + extension;
- Insertion sequence + response;
- Simple negative response.

The first type, response + extension, was the most frequent. It involved providing a negative response (that the product or service requested could not be provided) followed by a further action or set of actions. These were themselves classified into four types: 1) providing an apology; 2) offering an alternative solution; 3) providing a reason for non-provision of item/service; and 4) a combination of “extension” types. A simple negative response was by far the least frequent type, accounting for only about 10% of all responses. Here we can observe the interactional phenomenon of preference in operation in a workplace context. The negative responses to service requests display the typical features of a dispreferred response in that simple, direct responses are rare, whereas the majority of responses are more elaborate, following either the response + extension or insertion sequence + response format. These formats include typical features of dispreferred responses, such as delays, apologies and explanations (Levinson 1983: 332–345). Extract 3 shows a response + extension

involving type 4 (combination) from an English bookstore including an explanation, apology and an extension (in this case an alternative solution):

(3) Extract 3

- 003 C: yeah. I'm just making an enquiry do you have hm (.) i don't know if it's
 004 a biography or autobiography for victoria beckham? .hh do you have it in
 005 st[ock?
 006 R: [no no we don't stock ehm general biographies unfortunately.
 007 C: right-
 008 R: we could order to you one. e:m do you want it today?
 009 C: .hh no it's i- i- i- it's not necessary, no. . . .
 (from Varcasia 2009: 229)

After the caller's (C's) enquiry in 003-005, the call receiver (R) produces a negative response, explanation and apology in 006, and then offers an alternative solution in 008. A cross-cultural comparison of the response formats found remarkable similarities across the three data sets, showing dispreference for a simple negative response in all three languages and cultures. Some differences could nevertheless be observed; for example, simple responses were most frequent in the Italian phone conversations, whereas they were rarer in the German ones and did not occur at all in the English phone calls. Varcasia (2009: 237) warns against simply attributing these differences in response formats to cultural differences, but speculates that differences in the professionalization of the services may play a role too. Thus call receivers in UK businesses often had scripts for dealing with customers, whereas the German and Italian ones did not.

The two case studies discussed in this section illustrate how conversation-analytic methodology is well-suited to revealing the specific discourse patterns which characterise different types of workplace interactions. While conversation analysis has a micro-discursive focus, the method does enable insights into "institution-order" issues, such as power, culture and professional practice.

5 Conclusion

The chapter began by defining workplace discourse and by providing a rationale for examining spoken workplace discourse as separate from written communication in the workplace. Following Drew and Heritage (1992), Section 2 identified a number of key characteristics of workplace talk that distinguish it from everyday conversation, the most important being goal orientation. Furthermore, two broad sites of interaction in which spoken workplace interactions can occur were identified: front regions, where participants enact professional or institutional roles; and back regions, where co-workers interact with one another in a more 'off-record' manner (Goffman's 1959).

A brief literature review then highlighted key workplace contexts, activities and topics that have been researched, the latter including relationship management, power, identity (notably gender and leadership) and communication across cultures. In Section 3, theoretical and methodological approaches for studying spoken workplace discourse were plotted on a cline from institutional order to interaction order, and Section 4 then provided a more in-depth discussion of three ‘linguistic’ approaches to analysing workplace talk – genre analysis, corpus analysis and conversation analysis – including a review of some illustrative case studies.

In discussing research conducted into spoken workplace discourse using these three linguistic approaches, the aim was to show how each of them provides appropriate tools for analysing the linguistic and discursive characteristics of different types of workplace interactions. At the same time, these approaches also enable researchers to gain insights into a range of professional practices, some shared across workplace contexts and some distinctive to a particular genre or institutional context. In choosing the case studies presented, the aim was to illustrate variety of workplace contexts, including “non-business” ones, such as interactions at a hotel reception (Cheng 2004) or on a construction site (Handford 2014; Handford and Matous 2011). Furthermore, the increasingly international and multilingual/multicultural nature of workplace communication was reflected in the case studies presented, for example the use of English as a lingua franca in job interviews in the global maritime industry (Choi 2014) or on a construction site involving a Japanese-Hong Kong joint venture.

Further exploration of such international and intercultural workplace contexts is certainly a promising direction for further research, not only because of the increasingly global nature of many workplaces (such as call centres). As shown, for example, by Handford and Matous’ (2011) study, such research also provides a fascinating opportunity to investigate both the stability and variability of workplace genres and discursive practices within international and intercultural encounters.

Finally, the majority of studies reviewed in this chapter were conducted with the ultimate aim of generating research findings with practical relevance for training and teaching, and many provide suggestions for how the research findings can be applied. As research-informed training and teaching material for spoken workplace communication still lags behind that for written communication (Koester 2010: 145–160), providing a link between research and practice should continue to be the aim of research in spoken workplace discourse.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions

Extract 1

- , slightly rising intonation
- ? high rising intonation
- . falling intonation
- () round brackets around utterances spoken in a low voice
- ... noticeable pause or break within a turn of less than 1 second;
- [] items in square brackets show non-linguistic information, e.g., pauses of 1 second or longer (number of seconds indicated), speakers' gestures or actions
- italics* emphatic stress;
- : colon following vowel indicates elongated vowel sound;
- ↑ A step up in pitch;
- /?/ inaudible utterances: one ? for each syllable;
- └┐ utterances in these brackets are interjected by a speakers within another speaker's turn;
- = latching: no perceptible inter-turn pause;

Extract 2

- + pause of up to one second

Extract 3

- . falling intonation
- ? rising intonation
- (.) short untimed pause
- .hh speaker in-breath
- [overlap onset
- abrupt cut-off
- : lengthening of preceding sound (e.g., *e:m*)

Judy Delin

27 Corporate language and design

1. Introduction
2. What is a brand?
3. Brand expression
4. Researching corporate communications
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Cornelissen (2008: 5) defines corporate communication as “a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent”. Corporate language and corporate design are central elements of corporate communication. They are also concerned centrally with the value of brands. As Aaker (1991) argues, brand identity is carried by the way the brand expresses itself visually and verbally – and is a key contributor to brand equity or value. This means that brand owners look carefully at what their communications say, and what they look like, to make sure that the organization and its brand(s) are being represented consistently and in the manner desired.

This chapter looks at how companies – brands – use language and design to create the impressions they wish to, and some of the tools they use to control their communications. Rather than conducting a systematic academic study, the paper is written from my perspective as a commercial language practitioner with a background in linguistics. As a language strategist, I am often responsible for creating language “personalities” for brands, and as part of a writing and design company I am often in receipt of sets of guidelines written by others that regulate the language and design solutions we can suggest. Copywriters and designers are therefore partly responsible for creating communications on behalf of companies in line with the brand identity, and are often instrumental in helping the brand create, revise, and maintain its identity as the face it shows to the outside world.

This chapter first attempts to shed some light on what might be meant by “corporate language” and “corporate design”, proposing definitions and giving some examples. It then moves on to the process of producing corporate communications, giving some insight into the processes of negotiation and agreement that go on in developing corporate communications. This process includes the development and use of language and design guidelines. I then ask the question: Even if guidelines are being followed perfectly, how do we know how their audiences are reacting to them? There is a dearth of research in this area, except for commercial research

DOI 10.1515/9781614514862-027

that tests individual communications one by one. This chapter suggests two methods that might be adopted for testing sample communications, or excerpts of language, in order to see whether audiences react to them positively or otherwise. These methods must be more incisive than reports of attitude, as experience suggests that most people do not have reliable intuitions about differently worded versions of the same basic content – or, at least, not intuitions that they are able to articulate.

Accordingly, the chapter looks at methods designed to expose underlying attitudes more clearly: Wilson's (2011) application of evaluation analysis to market research attitudes, and Nagamachi's (1995, 1999) technique for assessing emotional reaction to concrete objects, the Kansei method. It also suggests that more research is needed to assess two aspects in particular:

- (1) The extent to which corporate language guidelines help in enshrining and communicating a corporate “tone of voice” (in the same way as design guidelines are able to exhaustively describe what designers need to do); and
- (2) The extent to which consumers notice, or are affected by, corporate tone of voice, and what they feel about it.

Before looking at those issues in detail, however, it is important to understand the context in which corporate language and design operate: the world of branded communications.

2 What is a brand?

Although brands and branding have a literature all their own (see, *inter alia*, Clifton 2009; Design Council 2013; Gieske, undated), it will be helpful to start with a basic definition: A brand is a set of assumptions and expectations associated with a (brand) name. Thus consumers will make assumptions about what will be provided (a product or a set of products or services) and what the product or service will be like (taste, consistency, quality, efficacy of a product, quality, nature, extent, accessibility of services, etc.). Equally, they can expect that consumers can expect a particular set of behaviours from the people behind the brand (customer service, research into product quality, care for reputation and so on). There are also expectations about how the brand will look (its “visual identity”) and, increasingly, of how it communicates – for example, the language that it would and would not use in all the “consumer touch points” it controls, which could encompass everything from poster advertising to text messages sent to customers. The visual and verbal identity is often described in a “brand book”, which contains all the rules about language and design, and often a statement of the brand's values.

The impression that a brand makes with its communications combines with factors beyond its control, such as the consumer's personal experience, word of mouth, and social and news media, to create a level of esteem for the brand among existing and potential audiences. This quality of esteem is what brands and their

owners are seeking, and where the brand's economic value lies. As Kotler and Keller (2005: 276) suggest, this brand equity constitutes “an important intangible asset that has psychological and financial value to the firm”.

For example, Unilever, while a well-known name in business, is more famous among consumers for the brands it controls, which include Dove, Hellman's, and Persil. It is entirely possible that other products are as good as the leading brands, but, in the UK where this author is based, none is held in as high esteem by as many. That is because a brand carries specific connotations such as quality, performance, and reliability (but not, for example, extravagant luxury or “green” credentials, which other brands may be pursuing). It stands to reason, then, that new or unknown brands will be “empty vessels” as far as esteem goes, and it is the job of the brand owners to provide a product or service, together with a specific style of communication, that will result in positive associations being developed among consumers (see, for example, De Chernatony 2010 on brand building).

Brands, of course, are of many different kinds, from “friendly” consumer brands (IKEA, Heinz, Starbucks, Amazon) to serious industrial and technology heavyweights (General Electric, HP), elite, from luxury brands (Prada, Tiffany and co, Burberry) to niche brands for aficionados (Harley-Davidson, Jack Daniels).¹ The kinds of brand position that brand owners will want to adopt depends on the market they wish to appeal to, the nature of their business, the price of their product or service, and the values they can expect the consuming public to plausibly associate with their brand. Each brand's personality (also termed *brand essence*, *DNA*, *values*, *identity*) will reflect how its owners want it to be perceived. So, for example, Heinz' intended values are quality, integrity, consumer first, ownership/meritocracy, and innovation (heinz.com), while Burberry's are the much more abstract “protect, explore, and inspire” (burberry.co.uk). Each brand will have a strategy to create the market share it is aiming at, and will seek to plan how it acts, and how it communicates, in line with its brand values.

3 Brand expression

Language and design are two powerful ways of expressing what a brand stands for. In this section, we will look at how language and design are regulated by brand owners. Because of the need to create a consistent impression for a brand, to “harmonize” its communications as Van Riel (1995: 26) puts it, Cornelissen (2008: 5–6) points out that communications management is likely to be a complex process. It will require an integrated approach that “transcends the specialties of individual communication practitioners (e.g., branding, media relations, investor relations, public

¹ The brands mentioned here are taken from Interbrand's list of 100 top world brands in terms of value for 2013: <http://www.interbrand.com/en/best-global-brands/2013/top-100-list-view.aspx>.

affairs, internal communication, etc.) and crosses these specialist boundaries to harness the strategic interests of the organization at large”. This makes the important point that creating brand communications is not the job of a sole author, but of many interacting stakeholders, with collaborations that continue over months.

3.1 Corporate language

3.1.1 What is corporate language?

Corporate language is the language companies use to communicate with their audiences, internal (such as staff) and external (customers, clients, other companies, professional regulators, media, shareholders, government). Most companies who seek to control their brand identity in the outside world will have put some thought into this, and may seek to train their copywriters regarding the “tone” and/or “style” that are thought to best communicate what the brand stands for. These copywriters may be in-house or, perhaps more frequently, belong to branding or writing agencies that the company uses. By corporate language, then, I mean a language style that has been influenced by, or that seeks to communicate a brand – so I use the term interchangeably with *brand Tone of Voice* and *branded (or brand) language*. Typically, brand or corporate language has at least several of the characteristics mentioned below.

- It may be controlled centrally by a department of the company concerned, such as branding or marketing.
- It often has guidelines and/or house style standards applied to it.
- It rarely controls spoken language, although there may be other standards and guidelines that do, such as descriptions of the voice types preferred for advertising, or scripts and pointers for call centre staff to follow.
- The resulting communications may have more or less rigorous control applied to them, for example, the necessity to have communications approved by the brand team before they are released, or checklists and formulae of a more formal nature for evaluation.

In a multilingual context, companies may additionally be concerned with expressing the “same” messages across communications in different languages, and in controlling terminology to ensure comprehension as well as in improving the accuracy of translations. This helps companies not only to ensure understanding cross-linguistically, but also to control the communication of their brand identity and, crucially, ensure legal compliance, for example, by ensuring that product descriptions are accurate and instructions are correct.

3.1.2 The language guidelines that brands use

We noted above that a corporate language style is often captured in guidelines that will be used in the production of its communications, and also for audit and review. In practice, and in the typical case, these descriptions of language are not sufficiently rigorous to define what linguistics might recognise as a “style” or “variety”. The following are some verbatim examples taken from actual guidelines. It is unfortunately impossible to attribute these examples for reasons of confidentiality:

- Words should obviously express the personality of the brand: passionate, pioneering, inspiring, and warm.
- Use personal language: we, us and you.
- Use simple straightforward words that “come from the heart”.
- Use conversational language and write like you speak.
- Write and speak in a natural and unforced way.
- Always talk about the key things our products and services do – their features – in ways that communicate meaningful and relevant benefits to your audience.
- Use imperative verbs. This adds energy to your writing by cutting the cumbersome language normally used to set up a point.
- Use active sentences. These sound more confident because it’s clear who’s doing what.

Directives like these are typical. They range from quite vague admonitions, through guidance on selecting content, to recommendations on specific linguistic usages. In addition to guidance like this, individual companies often have certain house style rules, such as rules for formatting dates, capitalisation and spacing of product names, preferred spellings, how to address people, etc.

In addition to language rules or principles, language guidelines for brand-image formation typically also contain examples of the kinds of language being aimed at (texts such as letters, posters or brochures given as “before” and “after” versions). The following example, with the “before” version on the left and the “after” version on the right, is from an oil exploration company’s language guidelines.

Before

The Group’s geotechnical and related services help provide information on soil properties at the seabed as the basis for design and operational considerations. Geophysical and related services provide information on the seabed profile and contours to facilitate construction work. These services are executed through 4 specially designed geotechnical and geophysical vessels.

After

In our business, everything we do is based on a detailed understanding of the seabed. Advanced information on soil properties provides a safe basis for our design and operations. Using our four state-of-the-art geotechnical and geophysical vessels, we map the seabed’s profile and contours in detail.

In this example, the original is heavy on inanimate clause subjects: “the Group’s geotechnical and related services”, the repetitive “geophysical and related services” and “these services”. The result is that the company seems to have no personal agency in these operations. Changes that have been made to achieve the “after” version include creating clauses with subjects that include possessive pronouns to give the company agency, and removing abstract and technical language in favour of “humanised” nominalisations. For example, “seabed profile” becomes “understanding of the sea-bed”, which humanises by including a mental process, and “facilitate construction work” becomes “our design and operations” which does so with a possessive.

The following “before” and “after” versions are taken from a rewrite undertaken by a British High Street bank to bring communications into line with its brand guidelines. The communication concerned is a letter explaining a price change to business customers. Pricing was moving to a different basis, so some customers would be better off and some worse off. There were variants of the letters for each customer outcome, but the introduction and justification included in each letter was the same.

Before

At Anybank, we strongly believe that Business Banking should be straightforward, clear and easy to manage. With this view, we constantly strive to deliver a better offering to our Business Banking customers which includes re-evaluating the pricing of our products and services from time to time. In our endeavour to deliver on the above, we are making a few changes to the pricing of our International Payments and Transfers that our Business Banking customers are making with us.

After

We’ve recently carried out a review of our Foreign Exchange Pricing, with a view to making our pricing clearer and fairer for all our customers. We also think it’s important to recognise in our pricing the length of time customers have been doing business with us, and the volume of transactions they put through Anybank Business. From 00 Month 2015, we’ll be changing our pricing as a result.

Unlike the previous example, the company (“we”) has a good deal of agency in the clauses in the “before” version. The rewrite has moved the focus of the argument away from the bank’s activities, explaining the changes rather in terms of how they affect customers. The language of the “before” version includes the emphatically-modified “strongly believe” and “constantly strive” which seemed over-dramatic for this context and over-effusive about the bank’s role. Reference to the credo behind the bank’s actions has therefore been softened to an uncontroversial justification of “making our pricing clearer and fairer for customers”. In addition, the “before” version shows evidence of business register in “re-evaluating the pricing of our products and services”, “a better offering” and “endeavour to deliver on the above”.

In the change to the “after” version, the aim was to make the language more like the register of everyday conversation, and again to humanise the speaker. So changes included contractions (“we’ve”, “it’s”), and the mental process verb (“we also think”).

However, some vestiges of the business register survive: “a review of”; “the volume of transactions they put through Anybank Business” were the subject of discussion with the client, who preferred this formulation to our suggested “a look at” and “the way you bank with us” or “the number of transactions you put through your account”. In studying this and perhaps any genre of discourse, it is important to remember that the final result is not usually what any party thinks of as perfection – it is just the best that could be done at the time, given the need to satisfy the needs and preferences of different parties within available timescales.

Finally, my third example is from the guidelines of a Government Department, another project of which I have personal knowledge. The aim here was to achieve a kinder, more human tone, as well as to improve clarity. The first change is therefore to move from the more complex logical relationship (“x if not y”) to the simpler and positively-framed “if x, y”. The language moves from an imperative “You must. . .” to a request (“Please. . .”) with positive encouragement rather than a negative sanction to motivate compliance. As in the previous examples, there is personification of the organisation with “we”, rather than the passive “your claim will end” with no explicit human agent.

Before

What you must do now

Tell us by 27 March 2015 if your details:

- have changed (and what the changes are)
- haven't changed

Your claim will end, and you won't get any more benefit payments, if you don't do this.

My details have changed
Call us now on 0800 000 0000 to tell us what has changed.
This is easy to do and should only take a couple of minutes.

After

Please update us by 27 March

Please get in touch with us by calling 0800 000 0000 by 5pm on 27 March to confirm your details, even if they haven't changed.

We need you to do this so that we can keep your claim open and carry on paying your benefit.

This is easy to do and should only take a couple of minutes.

Although the original is very clear, we felt it was pedantic to use a bulleted display for “have changed” and “haven’t changed”. To be more helpful, the number to call and the deadline have been placed in the initial request, so that the letter is more direct. This content has also been included in the letter title, rather than the more generic “what you must do now”. This not only makes the letter clearer, it breaks down the unequal power relationship between writer and reader. In practice, this power relationship (between a government department and benefit claimants) is controversial and always in the news, but our guidelines focused on introducing more of the ordinary rules of polite discourse into the Tone of Voice – hence “please” and “we need you to do this so that” – giving reasons for requests.

Do language guidelines work? Certainly, the examples contained in language guidelines are often reported to be valuable to corporate writers. Yet there is no formal research on how effective they are, on whether what the guidelines contain is optimal, or on whether explicit language knowledge (as opposed to the examples provided, or a “feel” for the brand) is instrumental in bringing a writer’s style closer to the recommended brand language. One informal study, undertaken by one of our clients, did show that written communications were becoming closer to the recommended style two years after training on Tone of Voice. However, this training and general awareness raising also encompassed visual design, brand awareness and much more, and the assessment was far from scientific.

Also relevant for this chapter is the need to understand customers’ affective responses to communications, and to establish whether the kind of values or “personality” these evoke among readers are really those intended by brand strategists. I do not know of any research that focuses effectively on this question. We will look into some research approaches that might give some insight in Section 4.

3.2 Corporate design

Corporate design is a set of agreed design ingredients – including some or all of typefaces, sizes and weights, colour palette, photographic style, illustration style – laid out and positioned in agreed ways. For example, there may be a set of layouts for webpages, brochures, factsheets and headed paper, indeed for all kinds of communications that customers and others might encounter. As with branded language, the idea is to create a consistent identity for the brand, one that is recognisable and will evoke a set of assumptions and associations in its audiences each time they encounter it.

Design guidelines usually take the lion’s share of what is contained within an overall “brand book”, covering visual identity and often including specific guidelines for layout, design, typography, colours, and photography style. (The language guidelines will often be a chapter within the same book.) The brand book is a reference item for many within the business and outside it: for example, external agencies such as design companies who will have been assigned to create communications on behalf of the brand. The rules for visual identity and the rules for Tone of Voice together form the framework within which corporate communications must be created.

3.3 Creating corporate communications

By the time a piece of communication is finished and released, it has usually been through multiple rounds of review by many actors within the company including some or all of the following.

- The legal department, which is concerned to protect the company legally, might ask: Is what a document, website, or email says or implies true? Does it expose us to legal action?
- The compliance team, which assesses whether the document’s content complies with the regulations and guidelines governing the industry, and whether its wording is watertight, might ask: Does the document observe industry guidelines and regulations?
- The internal team responsible for the product or service in question (for example, the team who developed the yogurt drink or the savings bond, and have expertise about it) might ask: Does the document show our product in the best light? Does it bring out the qualities most likely to appeal to consumers? Does it give them the information they need?
- The brand team, who check whether the document is in line with current strategy on what to say, and how it should sound and look, might ask: Is it on brand? Does it follow our guidelines? Does it feel right?
- The marketing department, which judges whether the document is likely to be effective and may also co-ordinate its physical printing and distribution, might ask: Does it look right? Is it the kind of communication we believe to be effective? Can we get it produced in time? How can we produce it within budget? How will we get it to consumers? How will its appearance fit in with other communications we’re sending them, or other products we’re launching?

In addition, senior stakeholders may have expressed personal opinions about how the item looks and reads. Moreover, it may, additionally, have been through one or more rounds of research, of which more in the next section. The writers and designers (often in an external agency) must respond to all the comments and changes, and modify the communication in successive versions until everyone is satisfied.

It is not accurate, therefore, to say that any corporate communication² (from a shampoo bottle and its label to a letter from the bank) is the work of a single author or designer. All such communications are jointly produced, collaborative texts, and are always the result of many iterations of editing. It is worth bearing this in mind when analysing corporate discourse. Practically speaking, multiple authorship can create unevenness, which is quite important when considering how to select a representative sample of communications from a given brand. It also suggests interesting questions about authorial intention. Typically, the groups listed above would have a wide range of aims and concerns, so that to each one of them what counts as “success” may be different. As a result, a communication is often the result of a large number of compromises. It is not anybody’s ideal result but rather the result

² It is common practice in commercial communications consultancy and production to refer to an item of communication as “a communication”.

of what has been possible to do on time, within budget, and subject to a large number of constraints.

This “constraint satisfaction” model of document creation was set out by Waller (1987). Waller does not go into detail about the multiple agencies involved in creating a communication. Instead, he looks at the graphical and typographical resources used to achieve its aims. These visual (and verbal) resources are manipulated and iteratively modified as the item moves towards its final form. The process of making branded communications is therefore a multi-layered, complex one – a fact that should inform our analysis of what brands are “trying to do” in any given instance.

4 Researching corporate communications

How do we know whether the process outlined above will result in a positively received communication? Which design and language choices will be the best ones? These questions can be answered by drawing on professional expertise and previous experience, by live testing (which can be risky, as it releases a potentially faulty communication to real audiences) and through corporate research.

4.1 Is research always necessary?

How do we know if a communication is going to be fit for its purpose? Not all commercial communications are researched by the companies that produce them, who may not see this as a priority. Time may be short before the communication must be ready, or the budget may not stretch to research. Alternatively, the communication may be small-scale, or uncontroversial, or follow a template or pattern that is already well-established and trusted. Waller (2011: 11) provides a useful overview of the place of research in the design process, from a practitioner’s point of view.

Designers alternate between creative and evaluative phases. Even at the simplest level, we draw a line, then consider whether it is in the right place before moving on to the next one. At a higher level, evaluation is a distinct stage at which we show our work to colleagues, clients or users, or we come back to it ourselves after a period of reflection in which we can become distanced and therefore more objective about it. I believe this solution-evaluation cycle goes on all the time, silently as we work. In other words, during what appears outwardly to be the solution stage (when the designer is working individually by him- or herself), internalised solution-evaluation cycles are happening inside the designer’s head. Both the solutions and evaluations are informed by the designer’s knowledge, experience and empathy.

Waller goes on to suggest that this does not mean designers never require external validation through research, but that the solution-evaluation cycle may equally be external or internal. Figure 27.1 shows this principle at work.

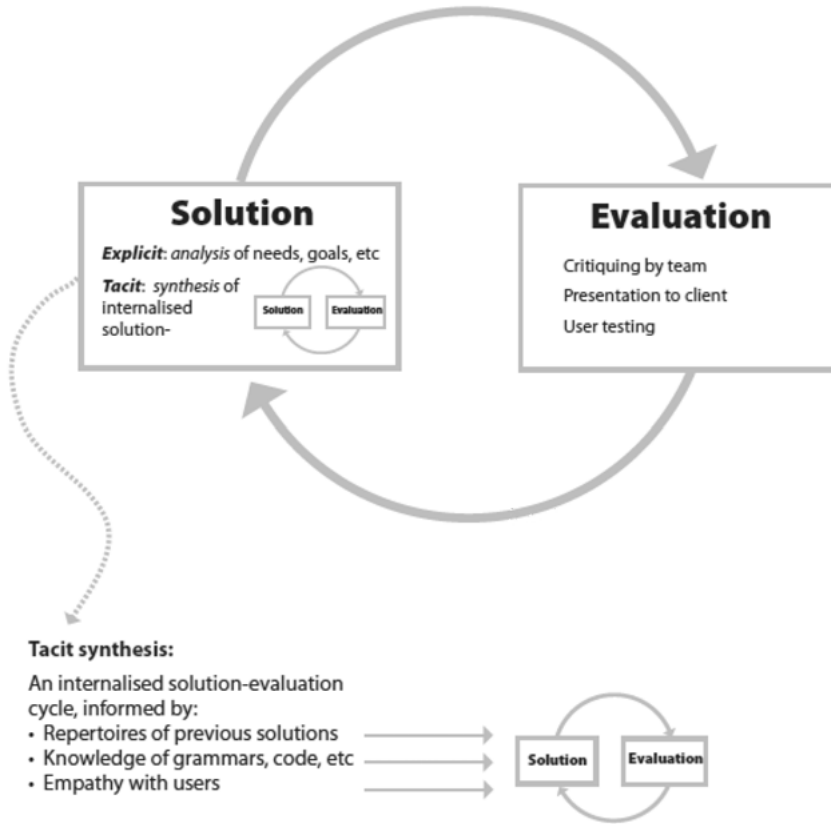


Figure 27.1: Waller's (2011: 11–12) solution-evaluation cycle

It is plausible to suggest that the cycle it depicts does not apply exclusively to design, but also to writing. Ideally, writing and design are carried out not separately but simultaneously, through the collaboration of different individuals and groups. The aim is to achieve the best way of communicating the message, verbally and visually.

As long as the designer/writer and the rest of the stakeholder group are satisfied that their goals for a communication have been met, the result is usually that it is approved for use. But unanswered questions may remain: Will it be effective? Is it any good? And what does “good” actually mean?

4.2 Which techniques yield the most insight?

What approaches could give corporate communicators useful insights into the quality of their communications? We might attempt to test one of several aspects of the communication:

- Understanding of language and content;
- Identifiability of the language style as belonging to a particular brand; or
- Trust, liking, respect, affinity for the brand arising from (different versions of a) communication.

There is a large literature on comprehension and how to test for it (see, for example, Pashler and Medin 2004; Israel and Duffy 2014). I would like to concentrate here on emotional or affective responses to communication, and on how we might tap into them.

Most market research on communications, whatever the method, takes place using complete, or nearly complete communications as stimuli. There might be alternative versions (for example, testing a brochure using different photography, or different layout) to test for preference. An insightful researcher will work with the stakeholder group to elicit its concerns and priorities for testing, and work those into the questioning by means of a “discussion guide” which the questioner follows. This has the aim not so much of acting as a script, but of ensuring that the structure and content of the sessions are reasonably uniform, and therefore comparable, and checking that all the topics are covered in each interview.

Testing whole communications commercially, however, means that we are not always sure of the role played by different visual and verbal factors. Photography, layout, typography, spacing, and even paper quality may influence a receiver’s perception of the message either positively or negatively. For example, if we write a letter at the same time as updating its layout, we cannot know whether participants like it because it is well spaced or colourful, or the type size is nice and large, rather than because they like the tone and style of the language. The only way to separate these factors out is to use multiple versions and randomize them across groups. Yet this can have implications for the number of respondents required, and starts to look like quantitative, rather than qualitative, research. Most corporate research on communications is a compromise between numbers, time and cost. So, for example, we may only talk to 16 people, rather than hundreds, but we would show them multiple versions of the communication (perhaps up to 5, but probably no more, to avoid fatigue) and ask them to sort them, making observations about everything from layout to language style.

One drawback in asking about language is that people find it hard to pinpoint how their feelings about a text are related to particular elements of the language. Some will comment on common bugbears (grammatical usages they do not like, for example), but most make remarks like the following:³

³ These examples are taken from actual research sessions, but have been edited to remove reference to product names.

- It sounds bossy/friendly/polite/stern.
- They seem to talk about themselves all the time rather than what it [the message/the brand] means to me.
- I like the way they explain why they're doing something.
- The language sounds like someone would normally talk to you.
- It sounds like a lawyer talking.
- It's full of jargon. It goes right over my head.
- It goes on and on. It goes into too much detail.
- I can't understand why they're telling me all this.
- It's confusing. The second bit seems to contradict the first bit.

These are valuable judgements, albeit not couched in linguistic terms. The participants comment on social distance, on the relevance of the explanation, on too much directiveness. They comment on the level of technicality and on whether they find it appropriate. They comment on the length and detail of the communication, and on the clarity of its rhetoric: in other words, on how the parts of the document, or argument, fit together, and how good a job the writers have done in establishing the relevance of the content to its readers.

As linguists, we can identify candidate grammatical and lexical choices that might be causing certain reactions, make changes and re-test. We can change the degree to which we explain and request, rather than issuing directives to the reader. We can create greater, or lesser, social distance by adjusting the language. We can signpost the document better, and make it obvious why the reader should care about the information. We can certainly – in most cases – change the level of technical lexis, remove unnecessary verbiage and make the text more concise.

In many instances, we can also ask people to narrow down their judgements on language style further by showing alternative ways of saying the same thing. Below is an example illustrating different variations of wording in a warning about overdraft charges.

- a) If you're smart and keep within the limits we agree, you've done yourself a favour and avoided a big pile of charges.
- b) If you're always within the overdraft limit we agree, you won't get fees and charges adding up.
- c) You can avoid charges by keeping your account within limits. You can also get text messages to let you know when. . .
- d) The charges for unauthorised overdrafts are set out in your Terms and Conditions. If you wish to extend your overdraft, please contact your nearest branch.
- e) Accounts that remain within agreed limits will not attract fees and charges.

These examples get more formal from (a) to (e), although they say largely the same thing. Questioning regarding both understanding of and liking for each style, however linguistically inexplicit, can give good guidance on the kinds of language

customers expect from your brand – be it a bank or an anti-ageing moisturiser. It is possible, though, to look more deeply into these reactions. The next two sections look more closely at how linguistic knowledge, in one case, and insights from product engineering in another, can add to our understanding of audience reactions to communications.

4.3 Wilson's application of Appraisal Theory to market research interviews

As implied above, many commercial research methods begin with a qualitative interview: individuals, pairs or groups speak to a facilitator who records (either electronically or in note form) what they say. While it is possible simply to accept statements of attitude elicited during the course of a qualitative interview, a trained linguist can gain more access to the depth and strength of people's feelings through understanding the unconscious choices in their language. Wilson (2011) has shown how the analytical framework offered by Systemic Functional Grammar (e.g., Martin 2003; Martin and White 2005) and Appraisal Theory (Hunston and Thompson 2003) can facilitate this. He developed a detailed framework for ranking the strength of feeling behind utterances in a focus-group setting by looking at evaluative language and its place in conversation. His subject matter was market-research groups conducted by a large food and household-product company, and, in particular, sessions in which participants were asked to discuss their preferences for various container shapes for men's anti-perspirant. While this may seem limited in scope, the framework itself is widely applicable to qualitative research groups in general, from product and communication evaluation to political attitude.

Wilson (2011: 96) suggests the following categorisations of attitude:

- Affect: how a speaker is emotionally disposed to the subject of the communication (e.g., I definitely like that one the best);
- Judgement: how the subject of the communication compares to accepted norms and values (e.g., It's something out of the ordinary, isn't it?);
- Appreciation: how the subject of the communication creates an impact on the speaker in terms of form, appearance and aesthetics (e.g., The narrower neck makes it more feminine).

However, an important point of Wilson's research is that not all utterances come complete with some kind of obvious (i.e., lexically marked) evaluation. In most, the evaluative content is much less overt. For example, the following example could be a case of appreciation ("impact in terms of form, appearance and aesthetics"), but it is not easy to see whether the force is positive or negative.

- It reminds me of those little perfume bottles that you get with the squeezey bit on it.

Here, it is necessary to look at the surrounding context, where the speaker says:

- So probably more appealing because it looks a bit more old-fashioned and that's what's fashionable at the moment.

The framework also allows for strengthening or weakening of the evaluation, indicating what Wilson terms degree of engagement. Here, we show a weakened evaluation followed by a strengthened one:

- I don't know, it just doesn't appeal to me really.
- That's definitely a very feminine shape.

As well as examining the gravity and status of evaluations of a wide variety of kinds, the framework goes further to expose how far an evaluation's context strengthens or weakens it as an indication of speaker attitude. This is because Wilson also takes account of an evaluation's role in conversational structures by using research on turn-taking and preferences for the forms that turns will take (e.g., Pomerantz 1984; Brown and Levinson's 1987 Politeness Theory, and the work of many researchers following them). His framework thus acknowledges that utterances are not made in a void: instead, they are heavily conditioned by the need to maintain agreement between speakers as far as possible, to follow predicted turn sequences, and to avoid threatening the other speaker's (or the interviewer's) "face". This leads Wilson (2011: 66) to suggest that "more importance can be placed on some evaluations than others, based on the difficulty or cost associated with making that evaluation [sic]". Thus, for example, the interview might contain a turn such as the following between speaker A and B (discussing bottle shape):

- Oh I really don't, no, I don't like that one at all, it's far too bulky.
- Yeah I see what you mean, but I was going to say that I quite like the style of the erm the grips on that.

Although speaker B is hedging their evaluation ("Yeah", "I was going to say", "I quite like"), in terms of Wilson's framework both speakers are making relatively strong evaluations. Speaker A is informing speaker B of their opinion, possibly in response to the interviewer's prompt, but the opinion is "out of the blue" in that it is not predictable from any previous utterance. Speaker B, according to Pomerantz (1984), is strongly obliged both to respond and to agree. However, while the hedging and the first part of the turn indicate that they clearly understand that obligation, they then offer liking for the "style of the grips" rather than the expected agreement, which is therefore not preferred behaviour. That means speaker B's evaluation, too, is a strong one and a reliable indicator of their feelings.

Because it allows for the difference between completely spontaneous evaluations and those prompted by previous context, the application of turn-taking and conversation structure analysis controls for two issues in focus group or interview situations. These are, first, the impact of the moderator's questions on subsequent

turns and participants' willingness to take the floor (Myers 2007: 81), and, second, the relationship between more and less dominant speakers in a group.

However, as Myers (2004) points out, an obvious drawback of applying a framework such as Wilson advocates is that in realistic market research there is often little understanding of the need to fully transcribe interview or focus group data or to analyse it in detail – even if there were time to do so. This means that a great deal of the detail upon which the framework relies is lost unless the budget and time-frame allows for close transcription. However, Wilson's research does indicate that, given sufficient care, focus groups and interviews can yield richer insights through linguistic analysis – which might perhaps support their reputation as a research approach.

4.4 Kansei engineering for assessing emotional responses to document design

A second approach to exposing people's feelings about stimuli has its origins in product engineering. Kansei Engineering (Nagamachi 1995) has been applied to products as diverse as footwear (Solves et al. 2006) and cars (Nagamachi 1999). The core of the method is a semantic differential experiment where participants are asked to rate candidate designs against a series of bipolar adjectives (e.g., attractive/not attractive, traditional/not traditional) chosen for the purpose. Figure 27.2 shows an example of such a set of adjectives.

Test item 10		
Tender	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Tender
Not Everyday	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Everyday
Not Fun	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Fun
Conventional	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Conventional
Not Luxurious	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Luxurious
Slender	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Slender
Not ...	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	...

Figure 27.2: Example score card for the Kansei method (from Delin et al. 2007: 16)

Statistical analysis then tells the researchers which design features correlate with positive reactions from the participants. Because corporate language and design, as we have seen, combine to create “designed artefacts” from websites to utility bills, this method of design evaluation could be applied to a wide range of communication types, or to samples of language alone.

Delin et al. (2007) discuss how to improve the Kansei method by making the choice of adjectives to be used in testing more principled and more useful. Here

it is important to note, first, that the “adjectives” could be adjectival phrases or even clauses, so that the concepts it is possible to test are not limited by what is lexicalised as a single word in the language. The choice of adjectives or phrases is constrained in other ways, however. It is important to avoid ambiguous adjectives, for example, as different participants may choose different meanings to react to, causing a split score for that adjective. Adjectives must be well spread across a spectrum of meanings to avoid giving too much weight to one “semantic cluster” of document attributes. And there are adjectives that can confuse participants in a particular context; for example, in one study, the adjective “oppressive”, translated into English from Japanese, was presented to participants asked to judge the design of a wristwatch.

Delin et al.’s revisiting of the Kansei method applied linguistic principles to the selection of adjectives for evaluating laundry-product packaging. They isolated the importance of testing three areas, all of which are relevant not just for packaging, but for the design of communications:

- Functional qualities of the item being examined (in the case of a communication, these might be usability, ease of understanding, completeness, relevance);
- Qualities of presentation (e.g., design, use of space, attractiveness, visual clarity, size, print quality);
- Qualities relating to the brand and its “personality” (e.g., genuine, friendly, kind, authoritative, moral).

Initially, examination of brand materials and discussion, including talks with brand owners about their ambitions for the communication in terms of brand qualities, yield a first set of words. These can then be used as “seed” words to generate other candidate words and phrases from a corpus. As Delin et al. describe, the selection of further words for testing is based on the hypothesis that words with similar meanings will be distributionally similar, that is, they will share a significant number of other words occurring in their context. Each seed word is input into the British National Corpus (or, if preferred, another relevant corpus) to identify other adjectives that have similar lexical behaviour in naturally occurring language. The method then produces a list of the most significant collocations for each sufficiently frequent word from the corpus chosen. The method can be used with any relevant corpus, such as a Web-derived representative corpus (Sharoff 2006). It can be also employed to conduct a study across different locales by using test adjectives in different languages that are generated from scratch, rather than by translating existing Kansei test materials, which may not be suitable for the purpose.

Each seed word results in 10–20 significantly related words, a list that can then be reduced by removing duplicates, and by editing down with the help of the brand owner. Stimuli can be tested against the final set of adjectives (for example, *clear/not clear*, *friendly/not friendly*, *bright/not bright*, *warm/not warm*, etc.) by asking participants

to rank each communication on the appropriate number of scales. This yields a statistically analysable set of results (assuming a sufficient number of participants), thus turning qualitative evaluation into quantitative data. Ranking the criteria for importance can further help the researcher to order the “winning” documents or samples.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to shed some light on what might be meant by “corporate language” and “corporate design”. It has proposed a definition, given some examples and, perhaps more importantly, given some insight into the processes of negotiation and agreement that go on in developing corporate communications. We have also looked at some ways of structuring a study of corporate language or design, at the role of research in the production of communications and at some ways of researching communications that might give us a better understanding of audiences’ emotional responses – information of great value to brand owners. Yet there are many unanswered questions. At the moment, corporate language and design are not rigorously tested, and we have little idea which editing changes are having a positive and which a negative effect on a brand’s customers.

When researching corporate language and design, the kinds of texts we might think of as corporate are wide-ranging. For an academic researcher planning to investigate corporate language or corporate communication, it is perhaps important to narrow down the focus of research to one or two specific kinds of texts, situations, or purposes.

Academic studies often use a loose notion of “genre” to isolate a text type for study (brochures, web sites, leaflets, catalogues, product labels, intranet sites, emails, newsletters, media releases, recorded announcements, conversations, bills, blogs, tweets and many more). A disadvantage of this approach is that it presupposes that there is a logic to what kind of content ends up in what kind of communication. In addition, there is no control for audience. A leaflet intended for an insurance broker may be very different from a leaflet intended for a private customer. Finally, across different locales (if you wish to compare locales), there may not be equivalence between genres in different markets.

It is also possible to narrow down the focus of study by the purpose or intention behind a communication, for example, “persuasive texts” (see, for example, Halmari and Virtanen 2005). The difficulty here is that it rests with the analyst to decide the intended purpose of documents. The purpose of advertising might be expected to be persuasive, but persuasion can take different forms: ads that persuade audiences to buy, for example, are different from ads that promote general good feeling, or give information about a brand. In addition, the intention behind a document may be neither singular, nor the intention of a single individual. Note, too, that “persuasive

text” is not a natural category for brands; owners may distinguish advertising from direct mail, for example, but it is a good idea to check with them, if possible, to arrive at a category that they will recognise.

If accessible, documents about the same subject but intended for different audiences (e.g., physician vs. customer communications about a medication, or retailer vs. consumer communications about a piece of domestic machinery) could represent a fruitful area for research. It is important to be aware that each audience will be on a different “journey” with respect to the subject matter: for example, a retailer will have seen trade communications, rather than consumer communications, relating to the goods they sell.

When undertaking research on their own communications, brand communicators usually take a “journey” approach. They seek to trace the communications – verbal, printed, digital, television, telephone, etc. – that make up a particular experience for one of their audiences of interest. For example, they may consider how people open a bank account, how they find out about a service, how they complain about a product. The review would encompass every kind of communication that might play a part in the audience’s real experience of the brand. It is then possible to identify the different stages of this journey as consisting of communications – in both directions – with different purposes.

As both an academic and practitioner in corporate language and design, my own experience has suggested to me that a much more enlightened understanding of the processes and products of corporate communication can be gained only through research carried out with the participation, not just of such communication’s audiences, but also of its producers. Aspects of the language, appearance, and content of communications which can be puzzling to the researcher – or which she or he is tempted to explain by supposition or theory – are often simply and clearly explicable with an understanding of how, and why, communications are produced. In turn, there is much that academic researcher can offer corporate communicators. A team approach to understanding how, and why, corporate communications work (or don’t work) can be an enlightening experience for everyone involved.

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Christian Stetter

28 The risks of using standardized text modules as communication vehicles

1. Introduction: The fundamental problem of mass communication
2. The text-module paradigm and its problems
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4. What does it mean for a text to be “comprehensible”?
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1 Introduction:¹ The fundamental problem of mass communication

In most companies and administrations nowadays, written mass communication is made possible by the use of so-called “text modules”. These are frequently used texts or text parts such as salutations, as well as thematic parts such as the introduction to an answer to complaints or information about reimbursement rates in private health insurance. Written, edited and saved electronically only once, they are then combined into whole texts “by hand”. Often, if they fit the communicative purpose, whole sets of text modules are retrieved, for example, in the case of answers to certain complaints.

Mass communication means that a text is intended to be read by many or all members of a group of addressees. Such is the case of general terms of insurance, which are transmitted to everyone who takes out an insurance contract. The text may be revised from time to time, for instance when the legal situation changes. However, it will never address specific aspects of a particular contract. This is impossible due to the very nature of the text, which has been conceived for all potential addressees. The opposite case is that of a text sent to a specific individual on a specific occasion, such as a letter written to a friend on his retirement. This text cannot be sent to another person, or twice to one and the same person.

¹ This chapter was not conceived as a scholarly article. It is the translation of the written version of a talk delivered by the author on 24 September 2010 at the headquarters of Compart AG (Böblingen).

The core of the problem treated in this chapter is how to strike a happy mean between these extremes, that is, how to draft a text for mass communication in such a way as to make it intelligible for individual addressees. This problem comes close to that of squaring the circle. It cannot be solved by single measures, such as revising some of the texts saved, since these texts are also subject to changes concerning the circle of addressees, the starting points and the relevant facts. Perhaps paradoxically, the solution must be sought in the organization of mass communication, not from a technical, but from a media-related point of view.

2 The text-module paradigm and its problems

The process of generating texts by means of text modules can be represented schematically as follows:

- (1) $\text{Text}_1 = \text{TM}_{B,1} + \text{TM}_{H,1} + \text{TM}_{H,3} + \dots + \text{TM}_{E,1}$
- (2) $\text{Text}_2 = \text{TM}_{B,2} + \text{TM}_{H,1} + \text{TM}_{H,4} + \dots + \text{TM}_{E,2}$
- (3) $\text{Text}_3 = \text{TM}_{B,3} + \text{TM}_{H,3} + \text{TM}_{H,5} + \dots + \text{TM}_{E,3}$
- ...
- (n) $\text{Text}_n = \text{TM}_{B,n} + \text{TM}_{H,i} + \text{TM}_{H,j} + \dots + \text{TM}_{E,n}$

As indicated, variants may exist for the beginning (B; e.g., salutation) and the end (E; e.g., complimentary close) of the text. The thematic modules making up the text's body, whose order will, of course, vary from text to text, have been numbered. Now, where are the problems of this approach, which has been practiced for decades? There are five of them, and only when these are understood in their interrelatedness does the problem of realizing intelligible texts by technical means become apparent in its full magnitude.

- PROBLEM 1: Each text module_i (TM_i) has either been conceived for one specific case_j (facts, processes, etc.), to fit this case_j exactly but all the other cases only approximately, or it has been formulated vaguely enough from the beginning so that it does not fit any case exactly. I call this problem the “reference problem”.
- PROBLEM 2: Each text module TM_i has been formulated independently from the other text modules TM_j of a certain set of text modules, which is why most of them do not fit together exactly when they are supposed to form one coherent text. I call this problem the “super-summativity problem” (an object is called super-summative if the whole is greater than the sum of its parts).
- PROBLEM 3: Normally, text modules form only part of a more comprehensive document which refers to some concrete process or situation and must accordingly be classified as referring to that process or situation. Single text modules, therefore, would have to be documented as parts of an indefinite number of processes or situations. This, however, is impossible, since in no company are

all processes and situations documented in one place and according to one and the same system. As a rule, therefore, one does not know exactly which text module occurs in which document. I call this problem the “documentation problem”.

- PROBLEM 4: Text modules are generally “hard-coded”, i.e. form and content are inseparable. Thus, the editing process always remains dependent upon technology. I call this problem the “technology-dependency problem”.

The result of these four problems is:

- PROBLEM 5: The longer a certain stock of text modules is used, the more a company becomes dependent upon it. This stock is bound to grow continuously, since those modules that fit best to new cases are constantly needed. As a consequence, the stock becomes less and less manageable as people lose track of it, which leads to a continuous addition of new text modules, giving rise to a vicious circle. I call this problem the “management problem”.

This last is the central problem to be solved by communication management. An all-embracing solution must be based on prior solutions to problems 1 to 4. However, up to now, no company or institution engaged in mass communication has had any idea, let alone a clear consciousness, of this state of affairs. Most people think that they have learned how to write at school: in reality, today, their ability to write depends not only on their writing competence in the strict sense but also, and equally, on the technological media at their disposal and on their skills in using these. Literacy in the pen-and-paper context is something quite different from literacy in a complex environment dominated by data processing, where advanced computer competence is indispensable. The best piano player will make a fool of himself playing the organ if he has not learned how to use the new instrument’s many stops or, worse, does not even know that they exist. This is what I call the “ignorance problem”. It can only be solved on the basis of information and discussion at the level of decision makers.

3 Linguistic communication: A catalogue of misconceptions

Just like laypeople, experts in technical communication harbour many widespread misconceptions about the nature of natural-language, about communication and about the relation between language, thought and action. If we want to solve the intelligibility problem, we must start with these issues, of which the following is a small catalogue.

MISCONCEPTION 1: Linguistic communication follows the scheme of technical communication, that is, sender > message M_i > encoding of M_i > transmission channel > recipient > decoding of M_i .

This model, which goes back to Shannon and Weaver (1948), includes the following “agents”:

- a technical apparatus A (sender + transmission channel + receiver);
- a message M, written in a particular language L;
- a code C, used for coding and decoding the message;
- humans capable with a command of language L enabling them to produce or understand message M (which may be a text, a piece of music or something else).

Shannon and Weaver’s original model only contained the first three agents and presupposed a message already produced by humans as well as humans capable of understanding the decoded message. The following two theorems hold in this model. First: If M_i has been coded correctly in A, sent and decoded as M_j , then $M_i = M_j$. Second: $C \neq L$, that is, the technical code used for coding and decoding M is not identical to the language in which the message is written. This second theorem, however, does not apply to linguistic communication, where $C = L$: The thought, or “message”, has no existence independent from the language in which it is formulated. Within certain limits, technical communication is transitive (in the logical sense of the word): if M_i is correctly transmitted by S_1 to S_2 and decoded as M_j , and then M_j is correctly transmitted by S_2 to S_3 and decoded as M_k , then $M_i = M_j = M_k$. This does not generally apply to natural-language communication: If speaker₁ says I_1 to speaker₂, who transmits what he has understood as I_2 to speaker₃, I_2 is generally not identical to I_1 . Just think of the game Chinese whispers. As a result, natural-language communication falls into a different category from technical communication. Misconception 1 is therefore not just a mistake but a categorisation error, which is why it has been dealt with first here.

MISCONCEPTION 2: Communication is information exchange.

This statement, correct in the technical sphere, does not hold for communication in natural language or writing (for simplicity’s sake, I will omit sign language here). In these media, communication always occurs between human beings, who carry out communicative acts (cf. Austin 1975). This is more obvious in spoken than in written communication. If we ask a friend “Would you be so kind as to bring me a sandwich from the cafeteria?”, she will hardly interpret this utterance as an information-seeking question, but as a request, and so will react accordingly. This is the crucial point since a reaction is always a reaction to an event. The same is true of written communication: On reading a text, readers react to the act of reading, to their interpretation of the text, not to the text itself. The same piece of information (e.g., “We hereby terminate contract XYZ”) will leave one reader cold, while another will break out in a cold sweat. The principle that linguistic communication is always a kind of action applies not only to speech acts such as greetings and requests, but also to written communication. A monthly statement received from our bank is more than just information. It is, in reality, an action whereby the bank fulfils a statutory

requirement to inform and summons us to respond: should we fail to respond, we accept that the information is correct. In other words we fully understand the message of this simple communicative act, not when we “decode” it, but only once we have understood how to deal with it and have reacted accordingly. Understanding natural language, therefore, focuses not on what has been said or written, but on the action it implies. And that is what determines how we react to what we have read.

MISCONCEPTION 3: The same thing can be said with different words.

“But that’s not what I wanted to say”, students often reply when you tell them that their answer to a certain exam question was wrong. Students of mathematics would never react this way. They have learned that what counts is only what is on the sheet of paper, the symbolic language of mathematics being unambiguous. But the same does not apply to oral or “normal” written communication. How should the examiner know what the student “wanted to say”? He must rely on what has been written on the paper, word for word. Let us come back to the example given above. The same person who displayed a friendly reaction to the request “Would you be so kind as to bring me a sandwich from the cafeteria?” could be annoyed if we said “Bring me a sandwich from the cafeteria”, and might reply “Ay ay Sir!”, or something similarly sarcastic. As this simple example shows, the sense of what is said or written is always determined by the syntax and the choice of words. We do not first build up a neutral conceptualization that is then translated into natural language. Rather, language is the medium in which we articulate our thoughts, and sometimes we have to write a thought down in order to fully get a grip of it. By explicitly putting what we think before our eyes we come to see which aspects of our thoughts remain unclear.

MISCONCEPTION 4: A medium is simply a means to an end and has no impact on messages transmitted using it.

A means must be sufficient for a certain end; otherwise it would not qualify as a means. Breaststroke is not an adequate means of getting from Hamburg to New York. Sometimes, however, one and the same end can be achieved by different means. This shows that a particular means need not be a necessary condition for achieving a certain end. Things are different as far as media are concerned. The medium of singers is their voice; without using their voice, they cannot sing. The medium is a necessary condition for realizing what is intended. However, not all those who use their voice produce a song. Equally, many of those who have learned to write at school are, nevertheless, unable to write in the sense that they can put a comprehensible thought down on paper. Competence and know-how are needed to use a medium, and since the medium is a necessary condition for expressing what is intended, it cannot be exchanged for another. On the other hand, it is not necessarily

enough to achieve the goal. The best voice does not automatically make a singer. In logical terms, means and medium are different notions.

The same conclusion can be reached by considering means and medium from a phenomenological point of view. From this perspective, means are not objects but actions. It is true that we generally use objects as means, for example, a hammer and a nail to fix a picture to the wall. But the hammer and the nail do not by themselves fix the picture to the wall; that is done by the subsequent action of hammering a nail into the wall and hanging the picture on it. Means, therefore, always precede ends in time. That does not apply to media. They are also not objects, but processes, which may also make use of objects. It is not the voice that produces the song, but the use of the voice; it is not the computer that produces the text that we write, but a smoothly running computer program used in a competent way. In this case, the process and the object of the process occur simultaneously, not one after the other. Hence, both from a logical and a phenomenological point of view, means and media are different categories, neither of them objects: means are actions, while media are processes. The consequence is that media, as necessary conditions, are not neutral with respect to what is expressed: the form of the process influences the product. The incomprehensibility of texts in mass communication, therefore, is not just the consequence of bad luck or insufficient wording capability. It results, first and foremost, from the fact that those responsible for the process in general do not understand the relationship between the four problems intrinsic in the process of generating texts by means of text modules, which all result from the “media-based” nature of that process.

4 What does it mean for a text to be “comprehensible”?

In the medium of natural language, understanding is not identical to the process of decoding information. Understanding is only complete if you understand what the words mean as an action. But what does that mean? Let us first look at an example. A professor writes to a student who has turned to him with a request as follows: “Unfortunately I cannot write a report for you on . . . But I am happy to help you . . . Please approach my colleague . . .”. How will the addressee understand this message? No doubt as a rejection of his request. He may not even take notice of the rest of the message, or interpret the advice to approach the colleague mentioned as a confirmation of rejection. But, one way or another, he will consider the letter as a whole, and if it contains contradictory elements, the chance is slim that he will accept it in its entirety. Let us look at the situation from the reader’s perspective. He can only understand the letter if he reads it in full and establishes the right connections. For him, the words in the letter constitute an action of which he is the object, and the

meaning of an action cannot be split. You cannot thank, or hurt, or advise just a little bit. In any case, the reaction of a letter's recipient will depend on his understanding of its message as a whole. His reaction corresponds to the action or actions carried out in the letter he has read.

Generally, when writing, we carry out not only one, but several actions. Their order in the text is always of paramount importance, determining as it does the ease or difficulty of understanding the essential message. The following example, taken from a letter sent by an insurance company to a customer, may serve to illustrate this point.

In view of your claims record we are unable to renew your policy as it stands. Nevertheless, we would be happy to assist you. We can renew the policy if you agree to the following amendments: . . . As a precautionary measure, we hereby terminate your contract . . . If you accept the amendments proposed above; please let us know by . . . In that case, the termination of your policy would be null and void.

The situation is a delicate one for the insurance company. It does not want to lose the customer, but nor does it wish to renew the contract on the same terms as before. The problem with the letter lies in the order of the actions it contains:

1. Announcement of non-renewal of the policy;
2. Offer of help;
3. Offer to renew the policy in amended form;
4. Termination of the policy;
5. Information that termination will not become effective if the addressee accepts the proposed amendments to the policy by the date indicated.

It is likely that the addressee will take the termination of the policy to be the central message and react accordingly. Will he even consider the option of amending the policy? Will he interpret the termination of the existing policy as a means of coercing him into signing a new one? The following order of speech acts could be an alternative way of proceeding:

1. Proposal to amend the current policy;
2. Justification of this proposal (number of claims)
3. Exposition of the proposed amendments;
4. Invitation to communicate (non-)acceptance of these;
5. Fixing of a time limit, and announcement of the policy's termination if the addressee does not accept the changes by that point.

In this version the proposal to amend the current policy would be the main action carried out by the letter. As a result, the rest of the text would be read on the premise that the insurance company intends to renew the contract, albeit on different conditions. The termination of the policy would take effect, in this case, as a consequence of a decision taken by the addressee, namely, to reject the proposed amendments.

From an informational point of view the two arguments are identical, but the messages transmitted would not be, and the addressee would be likely to react differently in the two cases.

In our context, it is important to understand the logic behind the problem as a necessary condition for dealing with it in a rational manner. This logic is simple, but it does not correspond to our habitual way of thinking. It is based on the following approach. The sense (of an utterance, letter, etc.) is always an indivisible whole. The sense of “Hey, you there!” is more than the sum of the meanings of *hey*, *you* and *there*. The addressee and the other people present will only understand this utterance as an attempt to make contact if they interpret the whole utterance in light of the specific context. The sense of an utterance, as we have seen, is indivisible. From a logical point of view, it is a “super-summative object”, something that is more than the sum of its parts. Such super-summative objects are well-known from everyday life: a football team, for example, composed of goal keeper, defenders, midfielders and strikers, will only function as a team if the different parts, individually and collectively, work as a single unit.

5 The hierarchy of levels of comprehensibility

A text that is sent to an addressee – like this present one – should always make sense as a whole. In many cases, however, texts disintegrate into single sections that fit together badly or even contradict each other. At the sentence level, grammar comes to our assistance: it obliges us to integrate words and phrases into one whole, which the addressee can understand, at least at the sentence-level, if he speaks the same language. Beyond this level, grammatical patterns cease to be helpful. What counts is the logical coherence of the sequence of sentences, and sometimes paragraphs, of which the text is composed. These various corollaries will now be briefly discussed in turn.

COROLLARY 1: The message has to be arranged in the medium in such a way that its structure becomes clear to the addressee: the logical structure of the text, of the linguistic actions it contains, should be reflected visually in its layout. In more complex cases, the text should contain section headings or similar devices that help the addressee to understand the structure.

COROLLARY 2: The writer of the text must be conscious of which action is the central one and make clear its relationship to other actions carried out in the text, if there are any. Many writers fail in the task of bringing about logical coherence and a clear logical structure, which constitute the main challenges of the writing process.

That is all that needs to be said about comprehensibility at the text level. At that of the sentence, as we have said, grammar comes to our aid. From a linguistic point of view, a thought is always a clause, albeit a simple main clause and its structure depends on the verb. Logically speaking, verbs are relations, with one (e.g., “John is sleeping”), two (e.g., “John is playing tennis”) or more arguments (e.g., “John accused Jim of bullying”). The verb, therefore, always determines the syntactic structure of the sentence. Apart from the main clause, however, there are often subordinate clauses: “What he heard made him angry” or “The house which he bought is very old”, etc. Simple examples like these pose no problem to the addressee, but it is not so simple in the following, real example:

According to the general terms of contract an inability to work has to be notified immediately to us, at the latest on the first day when benefits are paid, that is, immediately after the end of the maternity leave, in order to allow us to assess whether a claim to benefits exists.

Here no less than four facts are packed into a single sentence, in the following order (order A):

1. According to the general terms of contract . . . has to be notified immediately to us;
2. This has to be done at the latest on the first day when benefits are paid;
3. That means immediately after the end of the maternity leave;
4. Only then can we assess whether a claim to benefits exists.

What is the logic of the sentence? Apparently it amounts to the following (order B):

1. We have to assess whether a claim to benefits exists;
2. In order to be able to do so, the inability to work has to be notified immediately;
3. “Immediately” means: at the latest on the first day when benefits are paid, that is, immediately after the end of the maternity leave;
4. This is what the general terms of contract prescribe.

This last fact warrants the conclusion that the addressee has no right to benefits since she has contravened the general terms of contract.

The odd thing about complex sentences with many subordinate clauses is that the order of main clause and subordinate clauses is not fixed. Very often, one can even invert the grammatical function of main and subordinate clause. This changes the sense of the whole sentence or text, but many writers are unaware of this, believing that they alone know what the text is about. There can be no doubt that the logical order of the thoughts is easier to understand in order B than in order A. Order A reflects the analysis from the perspective of the insurance company, which focuses on what the general terms of contract prescribe. Order B, by contrast, looks at the same facts from the addressee’s perspective.

Reformulated in a positive way, the apparently simple advice “Avoid overly complex sentences” amounts to the following: as far as possible, stick to main clauses,

and pack only one thought into one main clause. However, such a rule requires a considerable degree of “detachment” with respect to the writing process, something hard to achieve for people who are under time pressure, have a poor command of the topic or insufficient practice as writers. In such cases, most of the task of logically analysing information is left to the reader, who will often have difficulty in coping with it. Reading also has to be learned. Hence:

COROLLARY 3: What you want to say to the addressee should be cast into a logical structure, so take these rules to heart: Write short sentences – long ones are a sign of messy thinking – and package all facts that belong together in a single paragraph.

What remains to be discussed is the level of the vocabulary. At least in common understanding, the logical correlate of a word is a concept. But what are concepts, and what are they good for? Logicians say they serve to distinguish different objects from one another. The simplest concepts, therefore, are nouns. Each noun can serve as a name for a certain set or class of objects: tea, income, argument, etc. Among such classes, we can make finer distinctions: Chinese tea vs. Japanese tea, high income vs. low income, forceful argument vs. weak argument. As these examples show, concepts can be represented not only by simple nouns but also by noun phrases, a grammatical distinction that is irrelevant from a logical perspective. The function of a concept is always to demarcate as sharply as possible one object or class of objects from the rest, and this demarcation is done with words. If we want to explain a concept to somebody else, we will only be successful if we use words whose meanings are clear to everybody. From this fact we can derive

COROLLARY 4: Say what you say with words comprehensible to your addressee. Use technical terms only when necessary to avoid misunderstandings, and always explain their meanings.

From the above, we obtain the following hierarchy of comprehensibility:

1. The overall structure of the text;
2. Paragraphs and sentences;
3. Vocabulary.

The positions in this hierarchy mirror the importance of the three levels for the comprehensibility of a text: it is easier to deduce something more specific from the general context than vice versa. Thereby we arrive at:

COROLLARY 5: First draft a plan and then start writing. Planning is a top-down process, writing is bottom-up. One must have a clear understanding of where one wishes to get to. Experienced writers know that this maxim does not cost, but actually saves time.

6 The goal of professional writing: convincing the addressee

What is the goal of a text that we address to somebody? A poem such as Goethe's "Ein Gleiches" [Another One]² has no specific addressee, no goal that the writer wanted to attain with this text. Its poetic function is to exemplify what constitutes its beauty or incomparability: calm, harmony, composure, a touch of resignation. . . It does not symbolize, nor represent anything. It simply is as it is, similar in its simplicity to a painting by Mondrian. In contrast, an offer or a reminder serves to pursue a concrete goal with respect to the addressee. In order to clarify this aspect let us go back to what we said about Misconception 2: Communication is never just an exchange of information; it is always an action, which can either succeed or fail. In fact, even the exchange of information is an action that may succeed or fail: If A inadvertently sends certain information to B instead of C, the effects on both B and C will be different from those that would have resulted had the information been sent to the intended recipient. Even saying "Good morning" is an action: If we forget to greet a person known to us, it may have consequences. This is the place to mention another popular misconception:

MISCONCEPTION 5: People act on the basis of information.

As already shown by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, people do not act on the basis of knowledge, but of convictions: that this is or is not the case, that this is or is not necessary, etc. Knowledge is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for action. Sometimes we have to act without the relevant knowledge, and sometimes what we take for knowledge turns out to be wrong. As a consequence, the goal of (professional) oral and written communication must always be to convince the addressee. Knowledge and information can be helpful in this endeavour, especially knowledge about the addressee's convictions: the probability of convincing somebody is undoubtedly higher if we can use their own convictions as premises of our argument. If, on the other hand, we use premises that run counter to those convictions, our chances will be decidedly lower.

7 Linguistic communication in complex social systems

7.1 Institutional style

It is almost a law of nature that all institutions, be they government authorities or big companies, end up developing a language that is more or less incomprehensible

² Here is a translation for non-German-speaking readers: Over all hilltops / Is peace, / In all treetops / You sense / Hardly a breath; / The little birds are silent in the wood. / Wait, soon / You shall rest too. <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/3670/2600> (accessed 8 Oct 2015).

to outsiders. The general insurance conditions of a private health-insurance policy are not very different in that respect from the bureaucratic language of a government authority. But why is this so? In order to answer this question we first have to add another item to our catalogue of misconceptions about linguistic communication:

MISCONCEPTION 6: We all speak the same language, be it German, English, or some other.

“Language”, in this context, refers to a set of words and grammatical patterns that are regularly used by a certain group of people, for example, the group of persons who have German as their native language. This conception is not wrong in itself, of course, but it simplifies the concept of language so much that this can lead to wrong conclusions.

Learning a language is much more than learning to use words and grammatical patterns. According to philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (cf. his *Philosophical investigations*; also Savigny 1989; Stetter 1997, Ch. 11) it means learning to get along in culturally different “ways of life” [*Lebensformen*], to communicate and act adequately in such environments. He called this unity of language and way of life a “language game” [*Sprachspiel*]. This concept can be explained as follows: A language is always learned in situations determined by very specific cultural conditions, in the family, at school, in the peer group, etc. The language games learned in institutions of socialization such as the family, school, university and company shape people’s thoughts and actions: Engineers look at the world differently, and act differently in it, from managers or humanities’ scholars; in the same way, teachers differ from politicians, and so on. The same is true for companies, both big and small. The longer you live in one, the more you adopt forms of thinking and ways of acting characteristic of its particular professional language game.

Companies are institutions like universities, administrations or churches. Their main function is to allow their members to survive. The anthropological paradigm case is the family. Sure, a family cannot always guarantee the survival of all its members, but even today the probability of survival is greater for persons living in a family than for those living in isolation. This anthropological law also holds true for companies, *mutatis mutandis*: They are geared towards making profit, but they will only attain this goal as long as they protect their own employees. At the same time, the employees will tend to avoid what could endanger their position in the company. And the larger the company, the more extended the hierarchies, the more incalculable the risks. As a consequence, companies tend to produce people with a preference for defensive behaviour and actions.

Outspoken language is always risky. What is unmistakably understood as an attack will provoke contradiction. In that way, a conflict is opened, which you can win or lose. Winning a conflict is fine, but losing it can be risky. The institutional solution to this problem is what is called “officialese” or “bureaucratese”: texts com-

posed of long sentences, tortuous arguments, etc., and correspondingly difficult to understand. This is because you cannot attack what you have not understood. Due to their defensive character it is almost inevitable that over time institutions develop a language incomprehensible to outsiders. This is also true for the communication between companies and customers, though in this domain it is particularly dysfunctional.

7.2 Writing process and technological output media

The emergence of an institution-specific language as described above is a so-called “invisible-hand process”, that is, the unintended result of the interaction of many decisions by many individuals. The communicative style prevailing in a particular company is not perceived as incomprehensible by its employees, since they are all familiar with their respective areas of specialization, and new employees are eager to adopt the company style. So such styles are not experienced as problematic and can survive for long periods of time. They can only be changed by means of systematic, targeted measures, above all by diffusing specimens of a more comprehensible style in appropriate media. This is a strategic management task which needs a clear plan and much patience.

However, the best plan will be to no avail if the reasons for the incomprehensibility are not found in traditional stylistic habits but in the technical process of text generation, for example, in the use of hard-coded text modules. This venerable technique is still standard practice. We have already seen above some institutional reasons as to why this is so. Over time, it becomes ever more difficult to abandon established practice and to introduce a new procedure. When decisions are taken concerning innovations, the more “productive” systems are always given precedence, for example, the systems for levying premiums or paying benefits in the case of a (private) health-insurance company. Communication systems, by contrast, share the fate of all media: just like glasses, you only notice them when they are dirty. As long as an output-management system “works”, it will not be changed.

Especially in bigger companies, a further factor to be taken into account is the institutionalization and specialization of decision-making processes. Decisions concerning the technological media to be employed are generally taken by specialists, that is, by the departments of information technology and administration, not by the communications department. There is some rationale to this way of doing things, but it must not be forgotten that these units are not specialists in the planning of writing processes, or text optimization. In decisions on innovation, technical output-management systems based on traditional administrative procedures are therefore more likely to be considered than systems which would imply, for example, the introduction of content-related writing processes, even though these would yield better results and be more economical in the long run.

This is also due to the “defensive” character of institutions. Risks are only taken when unavoidable. Yet any innovation entails risks, however secure the new procedures maybe. For decades, decisions concerning output-management systems have determined the media-based conditions for text production. And, as we have seen above, the medium necessarily shapes the writing process in a crucial way, not only technically but also content-wise. Decisions rational from a technological point of view, such as opting for a module-based system of text production, may turn out to be highly dysfunctional for a company.

Again, we have to make do with an “invisible-hand process”, in which individual decisions are taken on a rational basis but eventually prove counter-productive. Conceiving the nature of media incorrectly has material consequences for the language that is articulated with their help. The media issue, therefore, is an internal, not an external aspect of the comprehensibility problem (“internal” in the sense of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who considers a property of an object to be internal if its presence is indispensable for the concept). Decisions concerning technological text production media must, therefore, be taken from the perspective of organizing writing processes and their communicative requirements, while in practice things are normally the other way round. These decisions are also part of the conditions which determine the institutional style. As companies grow older and bigger, their written language becomes ever more incomprehensible, while, at the same time, it becomes ever more difficult to change this state of affairs.

8 Communication management: What for?

Against the background of what has been stated above, the answer to this question is obvious: because overcoming institutional resistance is a long-term process that can only be carried out, if at all, by the institution itself using the relevant means at its disposal. Communication management, therefore, has to be regarded as a strategic management task which also includes decisions concerning technological media. Focusing on the technological aspects of a medium distracts from its essential functions. By stringing together paragraphs you create a technological, not a logical structure. However, the function of the text is to convince, and, as shown above, this can only be achieved by schemas of argumentation. Last but not least, the use of text modules generally is not accompanied by the philological know-how that is necessary to adequately categorize large amounts of text according to content-related principles.

So what are the tasks of communication management? It has to integrate the (1) linguistic, (2) organizational/institutional and (3) technological requirements for successful communication, where (2) and (3) must be considered as functionally dependent on (1). This can only be done on the basis of a decision matrix that has been discussed, coordinated and decided within the company and is then con-

tinually updated. Furthermore, all these activities have to be taken into account in financial planning. Effective communication management is impossible without formalized procedures, at least in bigger companies. And if anyone doubts whether all this is worth the trouble, recall the simple thought that served as a starting point for our reflections: Without successful internal and external communication, there can be no business.

9 Can the automation-comprehensibility dilemma be solved technologically?

The typewriter and, before it, the stylus of a Sumerian scribe were up-to-date technological solutions in their time. The success of a solution using present-day technology depends on three necessary conditions.

CONDITION A: The text-module system must be replaced by a procedure able to generate whole texts and variants derived from such texts.

The problem of adapting texts to individual addressees is solved in such a procedure by adding variants to the relevant positions in well-structured documents. The following two examples may suffice to give an idea of how this “whole-text paradigm” works:

Text₁ = introduction + body + conclusion

Introduction = (acknowledgement of receipt) + topic_i

Body = case 1 + case 2 + ... + information or instruction or ...

Case 1 = exposition of the facts + problem + consequences

Case 2 = ...

Conclusion = conventional close + salutation

Text₂ = introduction + body + conclusion

Introduction = (acknowledgement of receipt) + topic_j

Body = case 1 + case 2 + ... + information or instruction or ...

Case 1 = exposition of the facts + problem + consequences

Case 2 = ...

Conclusion = conventional close + salutation

Each part of the text has been conceived as part of a whole. For similar topics and situations, text parts can be adapted as appropriate. This guarantees the text’s logical coherence, and thus solves the “reference problem” and the “super-summativity problem” intrinsic to text-module systems. Here is a real example, with two variants:

[Introduction₁:] Many thanks for your letter of . . . You state that in our response to your inquiry we agreed only to reimburse your costs up to a sum not exceeding 2.3 times the standard rate. Please accept our apologies for this mistake.

[Body₁:] The limit of 2.3 times the standard rate applies to reimbursement of treatment costs in the absence of special justification. In other words, this is the maximum payment we can guarantee you immediately. However, for particularly demanding interventions, reimbursement can rise to 3.5 times the standard rate provided that your dentist supplies us with a detailed justification. Only when we receive this can we guarantee you a reimbursement at more than 2.3 times the standard rate. Your dentist is aware of this and will therefore only charge you such a sum if it is justified.

[Conclusion₁:] We hope that this information has eased any concerns you may have had.

Yours sincerely

[Introduction₂:] Many thanks for your letter of . . . You state that in our response to your inquiry we did not agree to reimburse the full costs of your treatment. Unfortunately, this is not possible in advance, for the following reason.

[Body₂:] In the absence of special justification, we can only guarantee in advance to reimburse your costs at up to 2.3 times the standard rate. Higher reimbursements for particularly demanding interventions at up to 3.5 times the standard rate cannot be guaranteed until your dentist has provided a detailed justification. Only costs that exceed this level cannot be reimbursed.

[Conclusion₂:] If you have further questions, we will be glad to answer them. You can reach us on the following phone number: . . .

Yours sincerely

CONDITION B: Media neutrality must be achieved by using a markup language like XML. This solves the problem of “hard-coding”.

More than a decade after the introduction of XML, media neutrality in the organization of technical communication should be standard procedure. Yet in many places this is still not the case. Provided the writing process is carried out in XML, a set of variants like the ones in the example above can be continually adapted to new circumstances without interfering in the technological processes, because in a markup language content and format are strictly separated.

CONDITION C: The process of text generation must be embedded in a systematic company library ordered according to areas of specialization.

This third requirement poses no problems either, since the technological prerequisites, again in the form of XML, are universally available. Embedding the process of text generation in a company library solves the “documentation problem”, and conditions B and C together solve the “technology-dependency problem” of the text-module paradigm.

To sum up, the “management problem” can be solved. But, as we know, all is well and good in theory. The all-important thing is practice.

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