

Introduction

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Contextualisation

This book comprises contributions by academics, researchers and professionals from different countries and disciplines interested in the general field of discourse and communication in the enterprise. In that sense, and despite differences in motivation, purpose and theoretical background, all the authors included here share the same interest in language in use and the framing of discursive and cultural practices in the enterprise.

Thought as a means for the foregrounding of research on organisational/business discourse, a new area of studies that has been emerging in the last decade, the book aims at making clear the potentialities of applied linguistics in relation to other fields, namely those that intend to shed some light on organisational culture, knowledge and practices. It is intended, then, to contribute to the rethinking of certain beliefs, values and/or practices within organisations and in the discourses they motivate. It is not particularly directed to academics but to a general readership, including people who exercise their profession in enterprises and other organisations.

These aims echo Bourdieu's (2002) concern on the role of the researcher and the questioning of whether people paid by the State to do research should keep their findings only to themselves and their colleagues. Claiming that it is absolutely necessary to submit one's research and findings to the criticism of colleagues, Bourdieu then adds that there is no reason why one should stop there and not go one step further and bring to public knowledge what was in fact collectively acquired and evaluated. It was on behalf of this commitment and with the purpose of narrowing distances between the academy and the entrepreneurial world that we decided to publish the present book.

The key factors that frame most of the research in this book are: i) the recognition that the world is undergoing an historical process which is redrawing its economic, political and cultural geographies into a complex

and contradictory system of interplay between global forces and local agents; ii) the awareness that conventional borders play an increasingly irrelevant role within the actual patterns of much economic, political and cultural activity, with the mobility of goods and services in the economic sphere leading to the interrelated mobility of professionals. Companies, no matter their classification under international, transnational or national, face problems resulting from the interplay between globalising and local forces that sometimes overlap but often confront each other. In spite of the increasing powerless roles these borders play, the idea of globalisation does not, however, mean homogeneity. The “‘glocalised’ uptake and use of transnational flows of discourse, images, and texts”, to quote Luke (2002: 108), as a means for reacting against and incorporating globalised practices and systems is in fact a reality nowadays, and calls for an expanded research agenda on the part of researchers in the different social sciences.

Companies and enterprises live in and reflect this changing world, where economy has been shifting its emphasis from production to consumption and where adjustments in established practices of work are ingredients that theoreticians and technicians on organisations insist on. These adjustments are seen as new ways of operating and as a crucial requirement for future prosperity or even the company’s survival. In these restructuring practices language is a basic tool, as some professionals are already becoming aware of; for instance, in a 1991 interview for the *Harvard Business Review*, when asked about some tangible signs of change in an organisation, Raymond Smith, Bell Atlantic’s Chief Executive Officer, answered: “The language is changing”. This same point of view has also been stated by both academics and researchers in the social sciences who theorise and analyse the transformations of late modernity. In fact, research done in different areas has been stressing that the transformations we are experiencing are to a certain extent transformations in language and discourse. This is made clear by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 4), when they state that changes in late modernity exist not only as processes but also as discourses:

It is an important characteristic of the economic, social and cultural changes of late modernity that they exist as *discourse* as well as processes that are taking place outside discourse, and that the processes that are taking place outside discourse are substantially shaped by these discourses. For example, ‘flexible accumulation’ as a new economic form has been ‘talked into being’ in the substantial literature on the new capitalism – including the works

of management ‘gurus’ which fill the shelves of airport and railway bookshops internationally – as well as being into practice through practical changes in organisations.

New possibilities of research were opened up with the politics of globalisation and the restructuring of social practices and processes, with social researchers being called up to intervene in the analysis of institutional and social changes. Different professional groups have required this intervention when considering professional training and development.

As a result of these changes, a new paradigm of thought calling for different practices has emerged, that is, new ways of thinking, behaving and communicating. It is within the scope of linguistics to put forward some questions on representations of the world, to doubt fixed or taken for granted beliefs or values, to bring into the foreground some fixed practices that construct the way we perceive the world around us. But linguistics is not the only discipline that has worked on language and discourse. Sarangi and Coulthard (2000: xix) stress precisely this when they say that there were other disciplines contributing to our understanding of how communication works.

To see the importance of discourse and the discursive turns within and across different disciplines, it is worth looking at how it has been approached by many distinct perspectives. It was with this purpose in mind that the idea of bringing together academics, researchers and professionals working on the areas of applied linguistics and related fields seemed to us a possible approach, among others, to get to know what is being done and what can be done in linguistics and in the field of discourse in general. The comprehensive coverage of topics, approaches, methodologies and also dilemmas of linguistic research within the field of the entrepreneurial world that can be found in this book will certainly provide readers with a fairly good understanding of how linguistics helps to explore the complex connections between the individual, the institutional (company) and the social, at both a glocalised and a globalised level.

Applied Linguistics and the study of language related topics

The boundaries between disciplines working with language, discourse and communication do not correspond to objective boundaries; they rather represent a manageable heuristic device to focus on the work of the researcher. Linguistics, the scientific study of language, has been moving outward from phonological and syntactic theory and a concentration on idealised forms of

language to a broader concern on the study of language in use in its social settings, such as education or the workplace. In linguistics, discourse is a loosely defined term, sometimes seen, particularly in mainstream linguistics, "as a method (in the sense of looking beyond the sentence in order to find coherence in message structure, patterns of turn-taking, etc.)" (Sarangi and Coulthard, 2000: xxi), and sometimes seen as a process, a system of the possibility of knowledge (Foucault, 1971), whereby subjects are producers of discourse and products of their own discourses. Work along the lines of the latter definition, mainly done in the tradition of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis, focuses not on sentences but on texts (oral and/or written) that are socially and contextually framed.

Communication, on the other hand, is a process involving multiple sensory modalities. However, there is variability in which communicative channels are prominent over others. In other words, when people talk, for example in spoken interaction, there are different communicative channels that contribute to the act of communication, such as language, body language (gestures, facial expressions, the way people manage the body in space and in relation to others, etc), clothes as a semiotic sign, etc. Nevertheless, the prominent channel that is usually taken into consideration is the acoustic sound of the language.

In applied linguistics the primary concern is the application of linguistic theories, methods and findings to the clarification of language problems which emerge in other areas of knowledge or experience. It is a relatively recent field, whose history can be drawn back to the 1950s, with a great amount of work being done in the field of teaching and learning of foreign languages during the last fifty years. In fact, research in the teaching and learning of foreign languages has been the privileged field of applied linguistics ever since it appeared¹.

Looking at the historical development of linguistics we find that the answer for the clear-cut distinction between linguistics and other areas of knowledge is the formalist nature of mainstream linguistics from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. Language was seen as an autonomous construct, an idealised system that stands for analysis and research independently of speakers and their use of it. Linguistics was then concerned, to use Ferdinand de Saussure's words, the founder of modern linguistics, with the study of *langue* (that is, the system) rather than *parole* (that is, the use of the system by contextually situated speakers).

In the 70s, however, there was an expansion into new directions concerning theoretical and applied levels of analysis (vd. Gumperz and Hymes, 1972). Linguistics *per se* could not explain certain questions without looking at social factors that affect language. New trends in linguistics thus emerged, giving place to new fields within the discipline, as stressed by Fairclough (1989, ch.1) and Titscher *et al.* (2000). Sociolinguistics, the study of language in society, of social variation in language use and psycholinguistics, the study of psychological aspects of language, are just two among the many that could be mentioned.

From the 80s onwards several other fields of application have been incorporated into applied linguistics. Publications in this area reveal the amount of work that has been done in medicine, law, social sciences, among others, as attested by works such as, for instance, Silverman (1987), Fowler (1991), Drew and Heritage, eds. (1992), or Gunnarson, Linell and Nordberg, eds. (1997).

Today we perceive applied linguistics as a multidisciplinary field where disciplines such as management, economics, science, law, medicine, just to name a few, are studied from different perspectives and different approaches from a linguistic point of view. There is a very clear interface between linguistics and the social sciences or between linguistics and the professions. To those who persist in keeping the disciplines within well-defined boundaries, the fact that nowadays we can hardly find the cutting hedge among them may be quite disturbing. But that is probably because we are

¹ The importance of research on foreign language teaching and learning in applied linguistics can easily be seen at any applied linguistics conference, where the vast majority of papers deal with such issues. For instance, at the VI Brazilian Congress of Applied Linguistics (*VI Congresso Brasileiro de Linguística Aplicada*) promoted by the Brazilian Association of Applied Linguistics (*Associação Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada*), held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, from 7 to 11 October 2001, 80 % of the papers presented focussed on teaching and learning of L1 and L2 languages; 3,3 % focussed on Media Discourse; 2,3% focussed on Business and Entrepreneurial Discourse; 1,7% on Marketing Discourse; 1,7% on Translation; 1,3% on Academic

Discourse; 0,8 % on Legal Discourse; 0,8% on Gender Discourse; and 8,1% on the remaining areas. This same tendency, at least regarding the amount of papers focussing on L1 and L2 teaching and learning, was observed at the 35th British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) Annual Meeting.

witnessing the end of disciplines in favour of thematic approaches that cut across different configurations of scientific knowledge (Gouveia, 2003), or epistemic cultures if one is to follow Cetina (1999).

The pervasive influence of thematic approaches on modern science is clearer and clearer in disciplines whose contents vary enormously and that systematically draw on work done in other areas. Taking economics as an example, it is possible to say that this discipline has engaged (some would say promiscuously) with literary theory and linguistics to give place to new ways of thinking².

The growing interest in the interface between linguistics and disciplines related to the professions has given rise to a certain amount of publications. In the 90s, for example, the School of Continuing Studies and the School of English at the University of Birmingham, UK, ran a conference on *The New Rhetoric and Discourse Analysis: The Case of Economics*, where academics from the areas of linguistics and economics were brought together. Selected papers from the conference were collected in Henderson, Dudley-Evans and Backhouse, eds. (1993), but Gunnarsson *et al.* (1997), Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997), or Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (1999) are also other good examples of the growing interest in the study of language in use in professional settings, on the one hand, and of the interest of publishers and the market, on the other.

Evidence of the increasing interest of both universities and institutions in giving financial support to research in this field can be seen in the international projects of applied research in the field of entrepreneurial discourse. A project such as *Discourse and Socio-Cultural Practice in Portuguese and Brazilian Companies* involving researchers from the University of Lisbon, Portugal, and from the Catholic Universities of Rio de Janeiro and of São Paulo, Brazil, is an example of how different universities, different institutional organisations (CAPES, from Brazil, and FCT, from Portugal) are involved in bringing together research done in the area of entrepreneurial discourse in these two countries. Another example is the work developed by Gunnarsson (1997; 1999) on images and image construction in three banks

² For the discipline of economics see Brown (1994), who used Bakhtin's theory to support her argument that there is a stylistic difference between Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and his *Wealth of Nations*. According to Brown, Smith uses a monologic style in the latter book in order to create its scientificity.

(*Handelsbanken*, in Sweden, *Deutsche Bank*, in Germany, and *Barclays Bank*, in Britain), as part of a larger research project headed by the author and developed at Uppsala University, Sweden, entitled *Texts in European Writing Communities*, financed by the Bank of Sweden Tercentary Foundation,

Forensic linguistics, broadly defined as the linguistic investigation of the law and dealing with the interface between language and the legal practice, is another area that has produced a great amount of work (see Shuy, 1982 and 1996; Bhatia, Candlin and Gotti, eds., 2003). The European Academy of Bolzano, Italy, established in 1992, is one example of an institute of higher education that carries out scientific research in forensic linguistics.

Findings of the research in these areas of knowledge and practice can be taught in a variety of different settings. Scenarios include, for instance, managers, executives or other professionals who would like to increase their knowledge in this area. Management, administration or business students, specialised translators, or postgraduate students who have to study managerial/business/corporate/professional communication/discourse, are only some, among many others, of the potentially interested agents in the application possibilities of this field within applied linguistics.

Discourse, communication and the enterprise

The work developed in recent years within this new area of application has been labelled in quite different ways. Ehlich and Wagner (1995), for instance, say that what they study is the discourse of business; Silvestre (1996; 1998), calls it management discourse, while Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) label it corporate discourse. Again, Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (1999) use the term business discourse; Gunnarsson *et al.* (1997) and Gunnarsson (1998 and 1999) name it professional discourse; whereas Agar (1985) and Drew and Sorjonen (1997) term it as institutional discourse. Finally Pan, Scollon and Scollon (2002) refer to it, in a more general way, using the expression professional communication.

Gunnarsson *et al.* (1997), for instance, use the term professional discourse as a hyper-category for such professional domains as the legal, the medical, the social welfare and the educational, as well as for scientific discourse within organisations or companies. The authors mention that the construction of professional discourse can be located and studied both in a long-term and a short-term perspective. The continuity of professional practices extends over long periods. At the same time, they are made manifest only under

historically situated, concrete circumstances (Gunnarsson *et al.*, 1997: 3).

Silvestre (1996) follows this same perspective while focussing on the discourse of management. She explores how the discipline established its own historical canon in the formation of the discipline's view of its own emergence as a discursive unity. Exploring management as a process, she analyses the way power is exercised through regulatory texts in two models of management. She uses two texts produced in two different American companies with a time span of one century between them, one produced in 1890 and the other in 1994. The work done by Silvestre could also be labelled professional discourse, institutional discourse or business discourse. However, in this case there was a particular concern with how the socio-professional group of managers, a *community of practice* in Scollon's words (1998), exercise power, that is, how the processes, objectives, modes of working, and mediated interaction are shared by this group and inscribed in companies.

Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (1999: 2) faced the same labelling problem when they made a distinction between professional and business discourse, claiming that the status of the interactants should be seen as a decisive element in the distinction. Accordingly they settle for the latter term, because business is the domain of the work activity they investigated.

No matter the different ways the authors choose to label their studies, all the works just referred to seem to intersect at one particular point. They all explore the use of language, either in a spoken or written manner, as a process socially situated in roughly the same professional settings: organisations/companies/institutions. Of course, the labels used by different authors are not simply different terms to refer to the same object of study, as they imply, in some cases, theoretical differences and, in others, a focus on different aspects of the social activity under research; they do nevertheless constitute broad hyper-categories for studies concerned with professions and activities situated in companies/organisations.

About this book

The way the book is structured mirrors somehow what we have said about the area under concern, particularly when referred to as "Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise". Some of the aspects already dealt with in this introduction get more explicit in Part I of the book, entitled "The Shaping of a Research Field". In fact, in this section we included two chapters that will help the reader in his/her approach to the field, answering some of

the questions that arise when addressing it from a methodological, theoretical and historical stand point. In that sense, both chapters work together as a general frame/introduction for all of the remaining chapters in the book.

In the following section, the reader's attention is directed to research that has been done on particular aspects of interaction in different institutional settings. Entitled "Negotiating Interaction", this section of the book, Part II, includes, among others, chapters dealing with the construction of requests, with communication between providers of services and their customers or with the use of specialized lexis at multicultural business meetings. This same concern with interaction is present in the chapters constituting Part III, although in this case the main concern of the research is the rhetorical mode, the symbolic organization of the interaction. Entitled "Discursive and Argumentative Strategies", this part of the book includes papers dealing with the way texts are structured to achieve a particular goal, that is, with the way companies, either institutionally or through their members, use some rhetorical devices to fulfil particular communicative purposes and needs.

Although some papers in other sections are devoted to cross-cultural communication, it is in Part IV of the book, entitled precisely "Cross-cultural Communication", that one may find the majority of chapters dealing with this aspect of communication. All the papers in this part have in common the fact that they all deal with the comparison of or contrast between two different types of discourse. The interactions under scrutiny are all diverse from each other, but they all include the use of two different languages, that is, the use of two different cultural and lexicogrammatical patterns of textual and social organisation in the interaction.

Part V, "Issues of Identity, Gender and Power", focus on intensive ongoing changes, concerning mainly female identity and power in society; papers included here examine discourse strategies used by females in various contexts, whether chairs in managerial business meetings or plaintiffs in police stations. The reader will come across interesting findings such as those relating to the political and social principle of equal opportunities and the economic uneven distribution of sexes in entrepreneurial contexts. The results presented question the assumption that females in positions of authority perform speech norms typically associated with masculinity, for in some cases they adopt speech styles associated with femininity, and thus challenge the view that masculine speech norms typify workplace discourse.

Part VI is entitled "Mediated Discourse"; here, all papers take mediation strategies as their main theme, whether they focus on construction and

negotiation of social relationships between a banking institution and its prospective clients through the mediation of advertising, written discourse in legal letters of claim to insurance companies, confrontation sessions among consumers and enterprise representatives, or media debates and the discourse of the host in a TV talk show, in order to create a high polemical relationship between the debaters.

Finally, the papers in the last part of the book, Part VII, are the result of a project named "Domus Litteris", which aims at evidencing the thematic relevance of studies involving official texts. Under the supervision of Helena Frota, this project was developed at the Fluminense Federal University, Brazil, as an MA course where the individual projects of the students, their final thesis, were all related with processes of rhetorical deconstruction of official and authoritative texts, ranging from the Brazilian Federal Constitution, for instance, to texts by some opinion makers in newspapers.

One final comment is needed on the participants in the book and the quality of the research here presented. Among the participants the reader may find names of leading scholars in the fields of applied linguistics and organisational discourse, alongside names of less well-known researchers. In that sense, the book is also a very good survey of the research that is being developed in different parts of the world by researchers who not only have different concerns, aims and expectations in terms of their academic career, but who also have different human and financial means and resources to undertake their work. All the aspects just referred to are important and may or may not have impact on the quality of the research, but they surely have impact on the visibility that the research can obtain in the academic community. In fact, considering that international publishers tend to perpetuate a discriminatory practice of publishing only work by scholars who already have an established name in the international community and who made their careers writing in English, the chance that work by younger academics, that is, of MA and PhD researchers, will be published in English is very slight, particularly when English is not their mother tongue.

The language of communication in the world, performing an important task in bringing together people from different cultures and social practices, English may also be seen as the language of exclusion, through the exercise of its hegemony. In fact, following Phillipson (1992: 285-286) on his statement about what English is not for children whose mother tongue is other than English, one may say that for most of the academics who are initiating their career in English, "English is *not* the language of their cultural

heritage, *not* the language of intense personal feelings and the community, *not* the language most appropriate for learning to solve problems in cognitively demanding decontextualized situations, etc." English is no longer the language of one people, one nation, and in that sense it should comply with the needs of international speakers with different cultural heritages. While selecting texts to be included in a book one may question what is more important: their expression in English or the principle of publishing in English authors who are used to writing in languages other than English. From our own perspective, by giving younger academics the opportunity to present their research in this book, we are eventually bringing forward the above quoted Bourdieu's (2002) concern on the necessity of bringing to public knowledge what was in fact collectively acquired and evaluated, even if originally developed in another language.

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