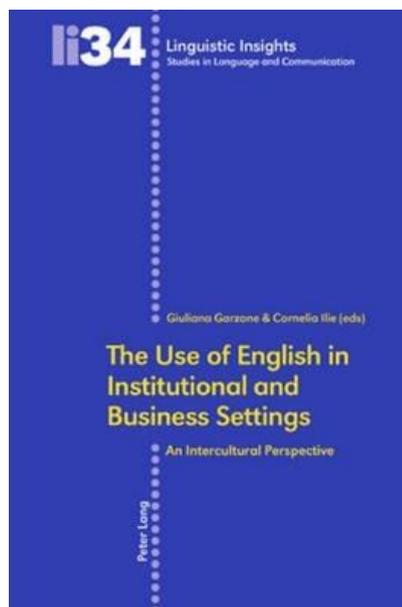




The Use of English in Institutional and Business Settings. An Intercultural Perspective

Edited by Giuliana Garzone and Cornelia Ilie

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Review by Sebastian Malinowski*

The volume presented here is a collection of essays that focus on various issues of English as it is used in institutional and business environments. Several essays originated from presentations given at a seminar hosted by Giuliana Garzone and Cornelia Ilie at the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE 7) conference in Zaragoza in 2004. The rest were invited essays to complement this volume.

The role of English as a communication tool has gained importance in both professional environments and workplace contexts. The present volume contains fourteen essays grouped into four categories, all discussing different features of international communication in English, as well as addressing clashes that result from intersecting cultures in professional environments.

The first section of the volume discusses linguistic and cultural implications of various types of advertisements for Italian products in English. In her contribution, Paola Catenaccio investigates different features of image and identity conveyed by English press texts from Italian fashion designers. Observations include the prominence of continuity and novelty that are used to enhance the role of identity of the product not that of the producer. Cultural references are either adopted closely from the Italian original or adapted towards the target audience. The author concludes that these press texts were arguably not properly translated but rewritten.

Delia Chiaro discusses communicative strategies of online advertisements of food producers. These web-based ads are aimed at a global audience; thus the goal is for these ads to be universally understandable. The author concludes that while producers still rely on stereotypes to promote their products, they move towards a

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more contemporary means of doing so. Instead of choosing either a traditional or a modern approach, producers utilize both, acknowledging technology while emphasizing traditional values.

The final text of the first section by Marrinel Gerritsen, Catherine Nickerson, Corine van den Brandt, Rogier Crijns, Nuriá Dominguez, Frank van Meurs and Ulrike Nederstigt discusses advertising in English and its reception in the Netherlands, Spain and Germany. They conclude that English has become more widely accepted by locals than in previous years and that it seems to have no negative ramifications for the image of the products.

The second section of the volume discusses cross cultural discourse and problems that arise with it. Cornelia Ilie compares and semantically analyses British and Swedish parliamentary debates with regards to the concept of consensus and concludes that there is a difference in how consensus is perceived in the respective countries, and that political traditions play a crucial role in how debates are held.

Daniela Wawra provides the second contribution of this section in which she focuses on annual company reports between American and Japanese firms. The findings indicate that American reports are less formal in language, syntactically simpler and have a strong focus on individuality, while Japanese reports are more formal, more complex and focus on the collective. The author concludes that the reports of companies can be linked to the companies' cultural origins even in cases where the reports were written in lingua franca English. Kumiko Murata investigates newspaper articles on the topic of whaling in British and Japanese newspapers. Her findings indicate that media coverage focuses on the respective cultural stance towards the topic and supports it. This illustrates the impact that media can have on readers with different cultural values.

Maria Cristina Paganoni analyses different texts of four notable women activists. The author concludes that the women activists re-contextualize and appropriate English in a postcolonial setting by using the language to convey their message. Additionally, they borrow from local languages to highlight the importance of Indian culture in the general discourse of their cause and to create an oppositional ideology.

The third section of the volume deals with issues in cross-cultural business settings where discrepancies in speech acts can lead to misunderstandings and obstruct understanding. Ora-Ong Chakorn analyses English correspondence between Thais and native English speakers. The aim of the study is to gain understanding of the cross-cultural rhetoric that is used in the writings. The results indicate that native English speakers base their viewpoint on the individual person and have a more formal style of writing, while Thais base their viewpoint on people being a collective and emphasize interpersonal connections.

Grahame T. Bilbow analyses business meetings between Chinese and Western participants. The study focusses on the respective contributions of the groups involved in these meetings. The author concludes that Western speakers have double the contributions than the Chinese speakers both in terms of time and number of words. Additionally, Chinese speakers seem to emphasize silence over unnecessary talk.

The next contribution by Stephanie Zilles Pohle is a comparative study on the speech act *offer* in German and Irish negotiations. It appears to be that Irish speakers are more indirect than the Germans, and the Irish exhibit a seemingly closer connection to the company they represent by using the inclusive *we* form more often than the Germans.

The fourth section of the volume is dedicated to studies on verbal face-to-face interactions in a cross-cultural setting. Gina Poncini analyses spoken interaction at a winery convention that features producers and journalists. Besides observing evaluative language and collaborative strategies among the interlocutors, the author was able to connect specific parts of a conversation to nationality and cultural background of the speakers as well as their professional roles and values.

In their study, Carmen Valero-Garcés and Bruce Downing analyse medical encounters between native English speakers (doctors and nurses) and native Spanish speakers (patients) in which interpreters were used to facilitate communication between the parties involved. A comparison was made between spontaneous encounters where a non-professional interpreter (bilingual nurse) was recruited on the spot and situations where a professional interpreter was present. The authors conclude that a professional interpreter facilitates patient-doctor interaction more effectively and is thus preferred compared to the non-professional interpreter. Cynthia Jane Kellett's contribution focuses on simultaneous interpretation from English to Italian sign language in a conference setting. Cultural specific adjustments were made by the interpreter to conform to the norms of Italian sign language. This illustrates the interpreters' awareness of the importance to accommodate to culturally significant terms in the target language, in this case Italian sign language.



Catherine Nickerson provides the final essay of the volume by discussing English as a communication tool in a business context. She postulates three areas of interest that could serve as anchor points for future research. These areas are firstly, the effects of English as a lingua franca in a business context, secondly, the effects of specific linguistic strategies in intercultural contexts to mitigate the gap between cultures and thirdly, power relations in international business communication and ways of dealing with them.

To conclude, the present volume provides a diverse range of studies that deal with issues and aspects of cross-cultural communication in business environments. Topics with a direct relation to Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) include aspects of cultural differences and the use of rhetoric in written communication, lexico-grammatical features and aspects of speech acts in oral communication, and a theory-based contribution on future research in BELF. Aside from that, this volume offers a vast array of different methodologies and research foci in different forms of interaction, which makes it a useful tool to the existing body of research on the use of English in institutional and business settings.