

TROSBORG, Anna / JØRGENSEN, Poul Erik Flyvholm (eds.), *Business Discourse. Texts and Contexts*, Peter Lang, Bern 2005, pp. 250, ISBN 3-03910-606-6, € 50.30.

Since the 1960s, systemic functional theory has broadened our perspective by suggesting field, mode and tenor as a type of checklist for communicational dynamism. Halliday's seminal work in the 1980s, combined with the insights of Swales only a short time later, have enriched the range of analytical tools we use and components we look for in modern business discourse analysis. However, more research was to be undertaken to avoid over-systematisation which, while rigorous and academic, was nonetheless unhelpful in bridging the gap between theory and practice. The nine essays comprised in this volume rise to that challenge, widening once more our perspectives and making us question once more just how little we have grasped in the mercurial, ever-shifting field of patterned communicative utterances.

Vijay K. Bhatia focuses on the multifaceted nature of business genres, which operate not simply within textual space but also in social space at large. In addition, business genres are characterised by contrasting features; on the one hand, they are used in hybrid and embedded forms in order to achieve pragmatic goals; on the other hand, they seem to retain their own generic integrity. This is the reason why they may be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on scholars' specific interests, whether they focus on lexico-grammatical, socio-pragmatic, socio-cognitive or socio-cultural features. Bhatia's suggestion is that scholars investigating business genres should be equipped with a set of multi-perspective procedures for analysis which may account for textual as well as socio-cognitive features. Such an approach would help to identify aspects of the integrity of systems of genres which constitute the discursive practices of specific disciplinary cultures.

Poul Erik Flyvholm Jørgensen's excellent essay cautions against an excessively straightforward approach to the interpretation of business texts, given that cultural, situational and cognitive constraints impact on message production, often in unexpectedly complex ways.

Karin Sode addresses the mechanisms of decision making. The process has been well described in previous studies, and we are familiar with its various stages: problem definition, identification and prioritising of criteria, suggestion of alternatives, and finally the decision itself. Sode pays special attention to extra-cameral determiners, that is decisive elements occurring beyond or before the boardroom, which inform the eventual decision. She also discusses how speakers link their contributions to those of previous speakers as a means for highlighting importance and asserting coherence.

Britt-Louise Gunnarsson studies the use, role, and creation of texts in organizations, striving to link text creation to the outside determining factors of the

society in which the organisation (a *communicative community*, as she helpfully terms it) operates. Gunnarsson uses well-known sociolinguistic tools to investigate her subject. The article is accompanied by a number of diagrams and its three conclusions – that discourse is of great significance in an enterprise, that discourse is supposed to create the enterprise as a unique and attractive entity and that the relationship between discourse and enterprise is complex – contribute to the concept that the better a company deals with cultural pressures the more it can adapt to discourse patterns.

Maria Isaksson reaches into newly opened ground in her discussion of mission statements. This is a very timely topic indeed, as branding of products extends to branding of company philosophy, a process which sees marketing and branding integrating each other. A fascinating issue yet to be investigated is how mission statements, often so bland and generic, as unrevealing as election slogans, can arouse emotions or incite virtues in those gathered under their banner. This is approached by a discussion of ethos and pathos as understood by the Greeks, as modified by the moderns and employed by boards of directors; but this kind of knowledge perhaps pushes our boundaries and makes us question to what extent we are linguistic interpreters and to what extent we can or should act as psychologists.

Celina Frade makes an interesting contribution with her study of how the performance of Brazilian professionals is affected by their use of English with their American partners. The professionals in question have a good command of standard English, but the cultural and legal norms and assumptions which accompany language use act as inhibiting factors. This subject is of vital importance in a globalised world, where business contracts are commonly subject to more than one jurisdiction and may have an impact on different cultural norms.

Akiko Okamura's contribution is of great interest. Adapting recent groundbreaking studies on T and V forms of address, Okamura investigates the role of power in the choice of address forms when English is the working language, and the effect this has on the esteem of employees. In the case of non-native speakers, local norms appear to be adopted much less reluctantly by more powerful speakers.

Anna Trosborg and Philip Shaw discuss language learners' pragmatic versus grammatical errors in business contexts (especially in the field of complaints and apologies), pointing out that what is taught is often what ought to be said in one context – usually US native speakers – and not what is likely to happen in intercultural interactions involving partners with different norms and assumptions. When pragmatic linguistic responses were taught by a 'consciousness-raising approach' complaints were handled with increased dexterity over a short time, improving customer care and issuing a salutary warning to business leaders training staff to work in English in an international context.

The last chapter of the book, a collaboration of six researchers, also addresses the problem of teaching strategies, especially concentrating on whether US patterns of linguistic behaviour are (and indeed whether they should be) the model.

Findings show that complaint-handling styles tend to vary across cultures, which in turn may belong to a diffuse (Japan, Italy) or a specific culture (Britain, Denmark, Sweden and Flanders).

The wealth of insights and approaches to business discourse presented in this volume, combined with its attention to the intercultural, pragmatic and pedagogic applications which are so often overlooked in more quantitative studies, make it particularly suitable to those interested in the role of communication in for-profit organisations: applied linguists, interpreters and other practitioners will benefit alike from its clear argumentation and careful illustration of recent developments in the field.

[Ulisse Belotti]

CONNOR, Ulla / UPTON, Thomas A. (eds.), *Discourse in the Professions. Perspectives from Corpus Linguistics*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2004 [Studies in Corpus Linguistics 16], pp. 334, ISBN 90 272 2287 8, € 99.00.

Since their official birth in the sixties, computerised corpora have been gaining more and more ground, apparently to the detriment of “elicited language samples provided by native speaker intuition” (p. 1); similarly, the discourse of the professions has also been studied more deeply, particularly over the last few decades. It is no coincidence, then, but rather a logical consequence, that the analysis of computerised corpora applied to professional and academic discourse has also received a boost, as testified to by this book, providing an overview of the state of the art in this field.

The volume is divided into four sections. The contribution by Lynne Flowerdew, constituting Section I, aptly frames the whole book. The Author highlights the typicality of specialised corpora as opposed to general corpora and points out that the former are often analysed by their own compilers, who select texts in such a way as not to overlook the role played by the context of situation and culture in shaping professional and academic discourse. Usually limited in size, specialised corpora are also more manageable for qualitative studies, more easily tagged, with fewer risks of error, and safer for contextually-informed analyses. Finally, she provides a set of guidelines for building a specialised corpus and puts forward a number of considerations pertaining to the genre to be investigated and the type of reference corpus suitable to contrast with its specialised counterpart.

Section II comprises three contributions, all on academic genres. Rita Simpson analyses expressions of three, four, or five words, frequently occurring in academic