

LSP RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: “YES WE CAN” OR “CHANGE WE NEED”?

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Background

- Applied linguist
- Business communication studies (Arts faculty)
 - (LSBP: French, German, Spanish, Chinese, English)
- English for BC; research workshops
- (B)ELF, intercultural communication, business discourse in general

LSP research: domains (Bowles, 2012)

- Lexical and register analysis (corpus-based):
 - more quantitative approaches and multi-dimensional analyses due to IT developments, increased processing capacity and influence of corpus linguistics
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- Genre analysis:
 - beyond textual analysis to incorporate contextualized descriptions; consideration of text-external factors that shape academic and professional discourses (culture, communicative setting, etc.)
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- CA:
 - studies of talk-in-interaction / spoken genres: expansion of LSP research to NS-NNS interactions and other languages than English
- Discourse analysis (Ethnography & Multi-method approaches): allow for contextualized, thick descriptions of discursive practices, strategic communication (“to get the work done”)

LSP research into practice: lexical/register analysis

- Analysis of specialized corpora → specialist grammars of English
 - e.g. *Longman's Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al., 1999)
- Lexicography & terminological analysis to denominate concepts → optimization of scientific or professional communication
 - e.g. Engberg (2006)
- Analysis of concordance lines → used to promote lexical awareness in the (LSP) classroom
 - e.g. Flowerdew (2009); Gavioli (2005)
- Multidimensional analysis of corpora → shows systemic patterns of register variation, also in languages other than English
 - e.g. Spanish (Biber et al., 2006); Somali (Biber, 1995)

LSP research into practice: genre analysis

- Descriptions of genres in terms of moves structure → applied in the LSP classroom as a guideline or as a basis for discussion
 - e.g. research articles (Swales, 1990); legal texts (Bhatia, 1993; 2010); health communication (Askehave, 2002)
- Comparative genre studies → used to promote intercultural awareness in the classroom – shows how the same genre can vary across disciplines, or cultural (or communicative) settings
 - e.g. moves in English & Slavic conference abstracts (Yakhontova, 2006); moves in English & Chinese sales letters (Zhu, 2000)
 - e.g. meta-tekst in English & Slovene research articles (Peterlin, 2005); persuasive discourse markers in English & Spanish opinion articles (Dafouz-Milne, 2008); discourse strategies in sales letters (Vergaro, 2004, 2005)

LSP research into practice: CA studies

- CA studies of spoken discourse → increasingly of interest for LSP teaching because scope now includes NS-NNS interaction and languages other than English
 - e.g. German (Egbert, 2005); Japanese (Hosada, 2006)
- Increase in CA studies of institutional NS-NNS talk → applied in the classroom to promote interactional awareness and “specific interactional competence” (Bowles & Seedhouse, 2007)
 - e.g. Opening sequences in service encounters in Italian (Bowles & Pallotti, 2004)
- CA applied to the study of lingua franca (LF) talk
 - e.g. ELF in the workplace (Firth, 2009); clarification in Finnish as LF (Mazeland & Zaman-Zadeh, 2004)

Situated discourse

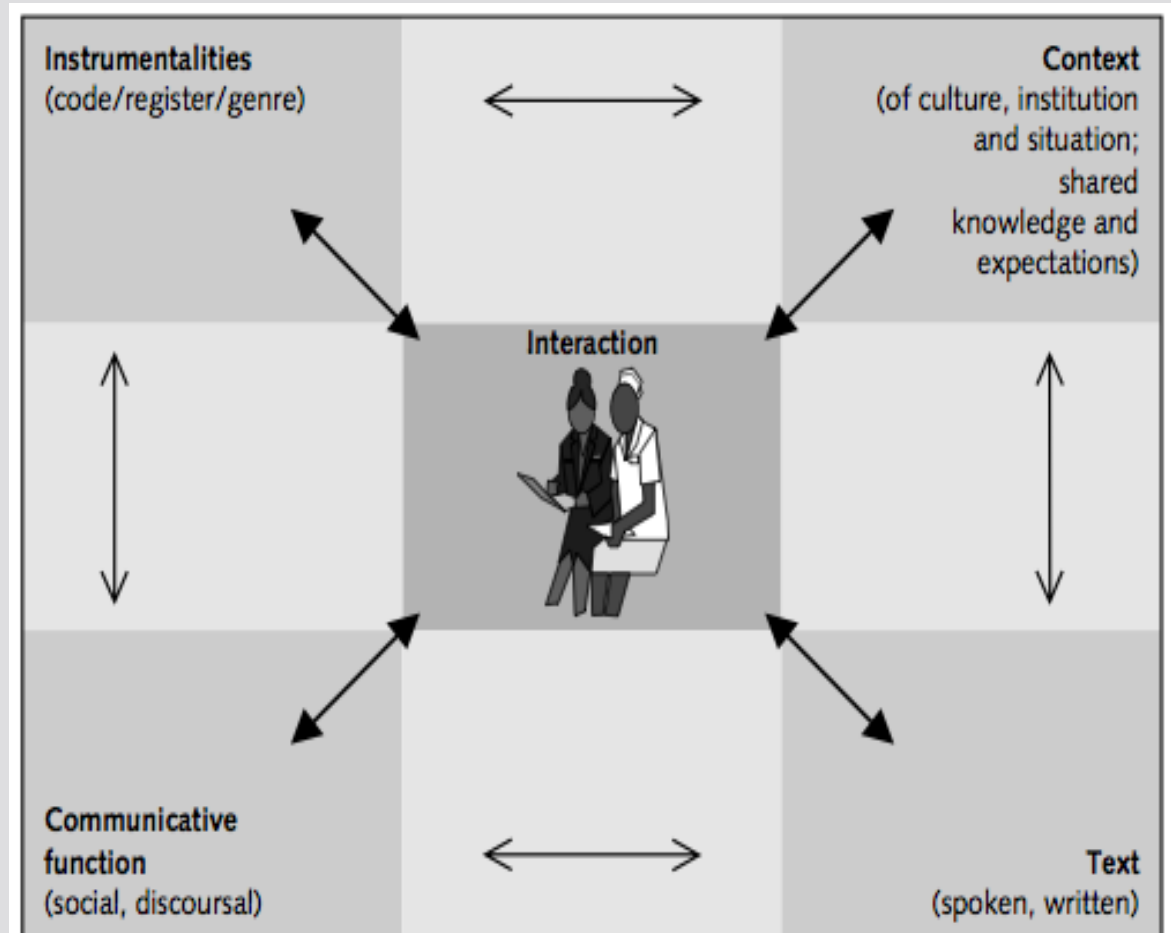
Discourse as *social activity*

Discourse as *interaction*

Discourse as a *process*

Discourse as *joint action in the making*
(Clark, 1996)

Communication as discursive practice
(Candlin & Crichton, 2011)



Ethnographic & multi-method approaches

- Call for multiperspectival studies (Candlin & Sarangi, 2011) that can throw light on discursive practices
- Ethnographic approaches acknowledge different perspectives: of the discourse analyst (who sees discourse as product) and the practitioner (who sees discourse as an ongoing process)
- Research into 'discourse as situated practice' → increasingly uses triangulated methods among analysts, data and participants/practitioners:
 - e.g. corpus, register, genre and CA-based methods in combination with ethnographic case studies

LSBP / English for business communication

- Business discourse: situated, strategic
- Teaching informed by LSP research (e.g. corpus-based analysis), ESP/ESBP genre-based studies, rhetorical and 'critical' genre studies, communication needs analyses, (B)ELF research, contextualized, ethnographic studies of workplace practices, experimental effect studies among target groups
- Multi-disciplinary, expanding area
- Multi-method approaches

English for BC: current influences

- Shift in genre theory, beyond the scope of surface-level analyses to incorporate in-depth analyses of context, including professional practice
- The convergence of research(ers) from complementary disciplines: ESP, EBP and Business Communication Studies
- The need to bridge the gap between the academic world and the rapidly changing world of work (Bhatia & Bremner, forthcoming)

Research into practice: BE materials

- (Nelson, 2006)
- Corpus-based study of Business English (BE):
 - BEC (ca. 1,630,000 tokens: compilation of authentic BE data)
 - PMC (ca. 590,000 tokens from 33 BE course and resource books)
 - BNC (reference corpus)
- 1. Is the lexis of BE different from everyday general English?
(comparison of BEC and BNC)
- 2. Is the lexis found in Business English published materials different from that found in real life business?
(comparison of PMC and BEC)

BEC (vs. BNC) lexis (Nelson, 2006)

- Limited number of semantic categories; e.g. business people & events, companies, money, time, communication, technology
- Key lexis of BE positive in nature; very few negative words
- Most adjectives emphasized action rather than emotion
- Collocates in the BEC were more fixed; fewer combinations of words occurred together in the BEC than in the BNC
- Some collocates were the same in both corpora, e.g. *send & documents*, *big & companies/institutions*, but varied in frequency
- Some collocates characteristic of the BEC, e.g. *package* occurred more in the BEC than in the BNC with financially related lexis (e.g. *financial package*), while the BEC collocates *competitive package*, *excellent package*, and *effective package* did not occur in the BNC at all

Does PMC lexis reflect BEC lexis?

- Problem solving approach in the PMC, and emphasis on a set of lexis that was different than in the real-life texts in the BEC corpus
- The PMC, for instance, focused on meetings, presentations, travel, entertaining and food
- PMC included positive and negative lexis in equal proportions
- Unlike the BEC, PMC reflected emphasis on personal and interpersonal lexis, and on politeness
- Project's [website](#) provides examples of how Nelson has referred to the BEC findings to develop BE teaching materials that represent real-life business language

Research-based published materials LSBP/BC

- Scan of ESBP, LSBP and BC materials (2004 and 2012)
- Keyword search Amazon.co.uk (2004; 2012)
- Book reviews in *ESBPj*, *J4BC*, *BCQ* (2002-2004; 2010-2012)
- Very few research-based resources/materials in 2004
- Huge increase in availability of materials between 2004-2012
- Some further research-based publications, but still fairly stable number
 - (Nickerson, 2005; Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007; forthcoming)

First-year business language projects

- (Planken, van Hooft & Korzilius, 2004):
- Approach to LSBP in IBC → communicative teaching, situated learning (simulated environments)
- Premise: communication pervades all business disciplines/functions: course content integrated with content from marketing, management, intercultural communication, linguistics courses
- 14-week projects on e.g. international marketing, international joint venture, starting up a company
- Student teams work on project and central tasks (e.g. consumer survey; product pitch; joint venture proposal; business plan)
- Awareness-raising (through analysis and discussion of research) of genres conventions, cultural values, intercultural communication problems, cross-cultural differences in business culture

Second-year research course

- Nickerson, Gerritsen & van Meurs (2005): ELF in promotional genres
- Staf-student research project (third-year, Dutch IBC students, English as a business language)
- Aim: to raise students' awareness of ELF in the world around them
- (and train research skills)
- Focus: use of ESBP in print advertising in several EU countries
- Corpora of advertising from glossy mags aimed at young women
- Cross-cultural corpus analysis of occurrence of English
- Experiment investigating target group's attitudes to English in advertising (in Spain, Germany and the Netherlands)
- Output: individual research article (in English)

What is specific about LSP teaching?

- We need to ask first: is LSP teaching specific?
- Premise: LSP teaching can be *made* specific, by using (LSP) research to inform teaching

Yes, we can

- LSP research can -and does- form the input for LSP teaching, because it identifies and describes the 'specifics' of professional discourse, discourse practices and discourse communities, throws light on the factors that shape the discourse, and on how professionals 'achieve' discourse
- teaching focus (e.g. problematic areas for learners: meeting target group's specific communication needs)
- teaching approach (languages for business communication; BELF, e.g. The Helsinki approach to IBC, the Nijmegen projects)
- basis for authentic teaching materials

Change we need

- LSP research needs:
 - to continue to expand focus on other languages than English
 - more work on spoken discourse/genres
 - work CMC and new media (multimodality & multicomcommunication)
 - to bridge the gap between academia and practitioners (Bhatia, 2010)
- Anything else?
- And how else -than staying relevant- can we promote transfer from LSP research to teaching? Awareness raising among LSP teachers in training? Integrating ESP research skills into teacher training programmes?

Final thought: legitimizing 'our' teaching

- Premise: “The best (communication) programme design is the direct result of (communication) research” (Candlin & Crichton, 2011)
- Research-based teaching reflecting the specifics of LSP and aimed at specific learner needs is what distinguishes LSP teaching from teaching e.g. ‘general’ English, German, Chinese, etc.
- Potentially strong argument to use for outsiders who don’t see the difference (university financial department, faculty coordinators, programme directors...)
- Also a means to ‘account’ for LSP / BC/ ESBP, etc. teaching programmes, and to increase academic validity of ‘business language courses’ to external publics (accreditation committees, etc.)

- Thank you for your attention

Koester at al. on workplace discourse

- Koester, A. (2006). *Investigating workplace discourse*. Routledge.
 - Koester, A. (2010). *Workplace discourse*. Continuum.
 - Koester, Pitt, Handford & Lisboa (2012). *Business Advantage: Theory, Practice, Skills*. CUP.
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- data-driven approach to research
 - varied analytical methods to study of (business) discourse
 - specific aspects of how people communicate at work (e.g. humour)
 - impact of English as an international language
 - how to teach workplace discourse
 - how research may be used to generate appropriate teaching materials by referencing established corpora (e.g. CANBEC)

Research-based BC teaching

- Gerritsen & Verckens, 2006: project to raise intercultural awareness
- 7-week email project
- Dutch and Belgian first-year students of IBC
- Purpose: allow students to “experience cultural differences, talk about cultural differences, and learn to cooperate and communicate with someone from a different culture” (2006: 50)
- Students complete questionnaire on ‘symbols, rituals and values’ (e.g. Halle, 1966; Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars, 2012)
- Discuss individual outcomes through email
- Shared code (Dutch)
- Output: collaborative co-authored report on cultural similarities & differences

In sum

- Expansion of LSP research domains & methods has yielded research that is potentially relevant for LSP teaching in general, and ESBP and BC teaching in particular
- Incidental evidence (e.g. referenced accounts) of LSP research applied in LSP teaching, to inform LSP teaching materials and to establish an approach to LSP teaching
- But how widespread is the transfer from research into practice?
- Primarily where teacher/researcher roles intersect? In tertiary education? E.g. the examples we've seen at this symposium?
- How can transfer be promoted further?