

Almut Köster (WU Vienna)

## **The interface between research and practice in teaching business communication: the example of negotiation skills**

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Naturally-occurring business interactions, such as meetings and negotiations have been researched extensively using discourse analysis, conversation analysis, genre analysis and corpus research. However, the results of such studies rarely make their way into teaching materials and courses where such spoken business communication skills are taught. Using the example of business negotiations, this talk will explore the interface between research and teaching practice and explore ways in which applied linguistic research can inform the teaching of business communication skills.

Negotiating is among the most commonly taught communication skills in Business English. Negotiations have also been studied extensively in business discourse and communication research. Studies of both 'real' (or naturally-occurring) and simulated negotiations have shown that expert negotiators use a variety of linguistic or discursive strategies, such as 'accounts' (Firth, 1995) or 'tactical summaries' (Charles & Charles, 1999). Experienced negotiators also seem to make use of relational strategies, such as 'safe talk' and politeness strategies (Planken 2005).

I will present a small-scale case study of simulated negotiations from a class of Master's level business students at an Austrian university. The students' language and performance in the negotiations were evaluated in light of research findings on the strategies used by expert negotiators. The study attempted to address the following questions: To what extent do the students deploy strategies used by experts? Where do they fall short, and how can these deficits be addressed in teaching negotiating?

By evaluating the results of this study, the larger question of how research can inform teaching practice in English Business Communication will be addressed.

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