The death of the native speaker? English as a lingua franca in business communication: a research agenda

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A Short History of Business English

Replication, business letters, memos, grammar, vocabulary, linguistic competence, ethnocentric textbooks

1993 = Bhatia = Genre

Contrastive, contextual, comparative, effective communication, professional competence, genre, discourse, co-construction

2005 = Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta = BELF

BELF & Business Discourse

Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) is "a 'neutral' and shared communication code" (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005: 404).

"Business discourse is all about how people communicate using talk or writing in commercial organizations in order to get their work done" (Bargliela-Chiappini et al. 2013: 3).

A Research Agenda: English as a Lingua Franca in Business Communication

The use of English in business (BELF & IBE)

The influence of context and culture

Proficiency & professional competence

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BELF & IBE

BELF = L2 Speakers/NNS + NNS

IBE = L1/L2 Speakers/NS + NNS

Rogerson-Revell (2008; 2010)
Strategies used by NS versus NNS
Successful accommodation strategies

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Research Task 1

Build a corpus of business meetings and other spoken business genres, e.g. interviews, negotiations etc., in BELF and IBE to identify the similarities and differences between the strategies used by native speakers and by non-native speakers.

Research Task 2

Investigate multinational employees to establish the roles played by native and non-native speakers of English in terms of power. Try to unpack the relationship between language proficiency in English and success in an institutional role.

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The influence of culture and context

What is BELF?

1. Linguistic & discursive nature of BELF

2. Influence of the speaker's background

Context & Culture

Professional experience

Corporate culture

(National) business context

(Own) language culture

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Research Task 3

Refer to an existing general corpus (like VOICE), extract the interactions that are pertinent to business contexts, and then use this data to investigate the nature of BELF.

Research Task 4

Compile a new corpus of BELF interactions involving spoken and written business genres from different contexts and different national cultures, in collaboration with different researchers located in parts of the world with similar national cultures and languages.

Towards a BELF corpus

Keywords, discourse realisations, genres

Discourse strategies = cultural background

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Research Task 5

Select a macro-theory related to intercultural communication and compile a corpus of written and spoken interactions between business people from two opposing cultures according to that theory, e.g. a collectivist culture in interaction with an individualist culture.

Research Task 6

Compile a corpus of spoken and written business genres that represent different national business cultures, and investigate how the characteristics of these cultures are perceived.

Beyond Proficiency: The reincarnation of the non-native speaker

English, iPad, Excel….

NS, ESL, EFL …

Professional communicative competence

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Research Task 7

Build a corpus of authentic business transactions involving experienced professionals. Use this to identify what professional business people do that non-experienced people do not, to facilitate successful communication and achieve their goals whether they speak English as an L1 or not.

Developing Professional Communicative Competence

Re-evaluation of NS & NNS

More focus on multi-cultural business interactions

Change of emphasis in textbooks

More understanding of strategy and success

Take the local into account

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Research Task 8

Survey of number of BELF users in a given location and establish levels of proficiency, exposure to English, interactions and genres required. Use this local knowledge to identify their needs and design a set of teaching materials appropriate for that location.

Changing landscapes…

Select Publications

Bargiela-Chiappini, F., C. Nickerson & B. Planken (2013). *Business discourse.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nickerson, C. (2012). Unity in diversity: The view from the (UAE) classroom. *Language Teaching* DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000237.

Nickerson, C. (2015/forthcoming). The death of the native speaker? English as a lingua franca in business communication: A research agenda. *Language Teaching*.

Nickerson, C. & B. Planken (2015/forthcoming). *Introducing Business English. Introductions to English for Specific Purposes.* London & New York: Routledge.

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