
Language, business networks and the quest for the world's resources

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Overview of lecture

- ❑ Guiding quotation
- ❑ Business and international business communication
- ❑ Intercultural dialogue and aspects foreign-language capability
- ❑ Concepts for language competence and intercultural communication
- ❑ Closing quotation

Guiding quotation

- 'It is remarkable that human communication works at all, for so much seems to be against it; yet it does.'

Colin Cherry, *On human communication*, 1980

Business and international business communication



Business in simple essence

- ❑ Exchange processes: products and services, money, personalities, information, knowledge
- ❑ The resulting relationships pattern themselves into networks
- ❑ The identification and sustaining of common interests and the search for trust
- ❑ Constant experimentation with people, structures, products and markets
- ❑ The multicultural team is the workhorse of the modern knowledge-based global economy
- ❑ The corporation is the driver of all these activities and behaviours

International business communication

(1)

- ❑ More cultures (national and corporate) and languages are in articulate communication today than ever before in human experience
- ❑ The overwhelming purpose of this contact is to link organisations together as suppliers, customers and stakeholders in productive relationships and networks
- ❑ The (very tenuous to very robust) key point of contact and common boundary is the (linguistically intensive) interface

International business communication

(2)

- ❑ The creation, transfer and exploitation of knowledge – a fusion of management know-how, values and experience – is at the heart of these processes in inter- and intra-company networks
- ❑ The juxtaposition of intensity and anonymity in electronically mediated communication
- ❑ The unassailable predominance of the English language

Other aspects of communication in the business world

- ❑ Connectivity is more important than what is communicated
- ❑ Communication processes are subject to *constant* disruption
- ❑ Communication in a business relationship is to a high degree in a permanent state of resumption

Networks and networking

- ❑ Negotiated pathways to resources, competences and capabilities needed by an organisation to sustain its viability and to manage the resulting information channels
- ❑ Networking via interfaces is the activity of creating and nurturing networks

Intercultural dialogue and aspects foreign-language capability



Intercultural dialogue

- ❑ It is a sense-making activity
- ❑ It is a networking process for achieving 'cross-cultural collaborative learning'
- ❑ It influences, and is influenced by, the interplay of languages, cultures and interests in given circumstances
- ❑ It is work, consuming organisational resources
- ❑ It facilitates interactions and leaves the way open for further contact

Aspects of business language

- Fusion of 'general everyday language' with (a) specialist terminologies (scientific, technical, legal, commercial, etc) and (b) hyperbole (pretentiousness)
- High usage of the future and conditional tenses
- Modern communication technologies are blurring the traditional distinction between speech and writing in business exchanges

Culturally contrasting approaches to business language use

- ❑ Japanese and Chinese: sensors of relationships
- ❑ German: communication of job knowledge ('Führung durch Fachwissen')
- ❑ French: grammatical precision for persuasive and disputatious effect
- ❑ US English: drive for neologisms
- ❑ Russian: still under construction for the market economy

Foreign-language knowledge in business

- ❑ Supports networking for and on behalf of organisations
- ❑ Is very important for residence i.e. for managing a local office and employing local staff: not just for practical reasons, but for image of professional competence
- ❑ Has variable cross-cultural importance for selling and formal negotiating
- ❑ Is of incalculable importance for decoding the business context (especially concerning the relationships of your nominal business partners and *their* network partners)
- ❑ Creates and maintains a positive atmosphere

Concepts for foreign- language competence and intercultural communication



Atmosphere ...

- A pervasive feeling, which is derived from experience and serves as a determinant of expectations concerning future cooperation, about a business relationship or group activity such as collaborative learning or knowledge-sharing

... is influenced by language behaviours

Participative competence

- An adeptness in cross-cultural communication for engaging in discussions productively in, say, a group project even using a second language; to contribute equitably to the common task under discussion and to be able to share knowledge, communicate experience, and stimulate group learning.

Interactive translation

- A form of cross-cultural work, in which participants engage in (multicultural) groups in order to negotiate common meanings and common understandings ...
 - ... for some participants *translation* from a foreign language for factual content
 - ... for all participants *interpretation* (sense-making) concerning their future role(s)

The great caveat

- Some linguists 'can understand everything in a foreign conversation except the real crux'

(Anthony Sampson, *The new Europeans*, 1968)

Thank you for your attention!