SUGGESTED READING

Business English

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Introduction: Where We Are Now

> Without research Business English foreign and second language learners will be hampered. With the growth of conferences and the increasing numbers of students studying Business English within MA courses, there will undoubtedly be much more research carried out and published (St John 1996: 15).

In the same year that Maggie Jo St John published the article from which this opening quotation is taken, Dudley-Evans and St John (1996) also compiled a report on Business English (BE) which again noted the limited research on the subject and the fact that such research had tended to concentrate on written communication while teaching focussed mostly on the spoken language. Moreover, they also identified two components of Business English, which they labeled "English for general business purposes" and "English for specific business purposes," respectively, the contents of which depend on the linguistic competence of the learners and their business experience. They also noted how the "underlying business culture is that of Western Europe and the United States of America" (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: v) which they considered inappropriate. This is arguably one of the consequences of the international acceptance of "management," an ideology that took shape in the United States and the United Kingdom, and which is effectively propagated through the capillary network of management schools, and training managerial elites worldwide according to standardized MBA programs (Mintzberg 2004).

In this chapter, we hope to show how the notion of "Business English" has been adopted in local contexts to reflect often very different local circumstances, and we will take the cases of Japan and China to illustrate this point. Yet, while distinctive, these local histories also show how the Business English "brand" continues to be strongly influenced by Western preferences, especially in terms of which (native) English is deemed to be acceptable, and what theories and methods of international business and crosscultural management are taught alongside or as components of business communication programs.

Eleven years after St John's article, and from a very different context of practice, Zhang Zuocheng (Zhang 2005, 2007) proposed a discourse approach to Business English, which locates the practice and the teaching of the language within the discursivity of the business activities and contexts that generate them. Consequently, a pedagogic approach to Business English involves "the teaching of the system of strategic communication in international business in which participants adopt or adapt business conventions and procedures and make selective use of lexico-grammatical resources of English as well as visual and audio semiotic resources to achieve their communicative goals" (Zhang 2012).

This chapter offers an overview of Business English as seen from the perspective of business discourse, itself a composite of traditions and approaches (Bargiela-Chiappini 2009). It is hoped that this vantage point will provide complementary insights on Business English to those of other related chapters in this *Handbook*.

Following the historical note in the section below, which reveals the crucial role played by Western scholarship in the development of the field, the following section focusses on two distinct and significant local histories of Business English from outside the Western tradition, namely China and Japan. Lessons to be learned from these two contexts of practice will be discussed. In response to the call for a more research-based pedagogy of Business English (St John 1996; Dudley-Evans and St John 1998), the final section of this chapter sketches a possible new map for the field, which highlights its natural home within the social sciences and the advantages of new or renewed connections with a range of sympathetic disciplines and methodological approaches.

A Historical Overview: How We Got There

Business English is a recognized area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998; Hutchinson and Waters 1987; St John 1996). A number of Business English education programs are offered in quite different linguistic and social milieus across the world, notably the international Business English undergraduate program at Anglia Ruskin University in the United Kingdom, the Master's program of international business communication at Aalto University in Finland, and the Brazilian national ESP project (Celani 2008).

The position of this chapter within the handbook means that Business English looks up, figuratively-speaking, to English in the workplace (Marra, this volume), as well as down, to intercultural rhetoric (Connor and Rozycki, this volume) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Nickerson, this volume). Almost inevitably the trajectories of these chapters will cross at some point, perhaps more often than the individual authors had intended or planned. It seems to us that this is a sign of both a widening of horizons within each specific outlook as well as an increasing convergence towards research-based pedagogies. These developments have extended the purchase of "Business English" (BE) as a field of inquiry beyond the original focus on the needs of an idealized "Western" classroom setting, even though the "white Anglophone" teacher is still the preferred and, sometimes, only choice in certain parts of the world (we are grateful to Catherine Nickerson for this insight).

In this section, we will sketch a profile of the recent history of Business English since the 1990s and briefly recall salient developments as represented in relevant Anglophone literatures (for a historical perspective on ESP since the 1960s, the reader is referred to Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: Chapter 2).

In their 1998 landmark work *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 19) note that "ESP is an essentially materials-driven and teaching-led movement." The literature on business communication considerably enlarged the original, narrow view of Business English as the teaching of the language for vocational purposes through linking linguistic performance with actual business activities. The work of Catherine Nickerson (this volume) and Leena Louhiala-Salminen in Finland exemplifies the professional trajectory of many applied linguists who started as Business English teachers, migrated into being business communication teachers and are now teaching business discourse, especially to more senior students. It was when linguists and communication scholars began to look at what was happening in the field that finally a window was opened into a less neatly classifiable and ordered set of practices and ways of doing work. Suddenly, the gap between the English taught in the classroom and the English used in the workplace became apparent (de Beaugrande 2000; Louhiala-Salminen 1996; Nelson 2000, 2006).

Early linguistic analyses of business negotiations (Lampi 1986) and business meetings (Williams 1988) remained relatively isolated examples of empirical research in the use of English in business. It was not until the 1990s that discourse analysis, contrastive pragmatics, conversation analysis, occasionally combined with insights from ethnography, laid the foundations of a multimethod approach to "business discourse." In Europe, it was a group of Scandinavian scholars who established themselves as proponents of a discourse-based approach to business practices, especially intercultural negotiations: Mirija-Lisa Charles, Karl Ehlich, Ingrid Neumann, Anna Trosborg, Jan Ulijn, Johannes Wagner, and British-born Alan Firth, then working from Denmark. In the United States, the work of Laura Miller on Japan-US workplace interactions complemented Yamada Haru's work on Japanese-American meetings. In Australia, Michael Clyne, Helen Marriott, and Joan Mulholland were involved in the analysis of intercultural interaction in the workplace and business negotiations while in New Zealand, Janet Holmes and her collaborators set up a large collection of recordings from institutional and organizational settings (see Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken 2007 for a fuller discussion; also Marra, this volume).

In the United Kingdom, Deidre Boden (1994) first documented the possibility of a multidisciplinary approach to the study of business meetings as organizational phenomena. Management and organization studies also influenced our own work (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997), even though the primary focus remained the pragmalinguistic analysis of meeting discourse. While a very fruitful decade for business discourse, the 1990s will probably be remembered for the fact that the vast majority of empirical research on situated language focussed on English as a lingua franca (see Nickerson, this volume) and, to a lesser extent, on "native" varieties of English (British, American, and Australian). Apart from scholars like Yamada Haru working on Japanese business discourse and Vijay Bhatia, who from Hong Kong became internationally-known for his work on the genres of institutional discourse, in the 1990s Asian scholarship was noticeable for its absence. Shanta Nair-Venuopal's (2000) analysis of the use of English alongside other languages in the Malaysian workplace inaugurated a decade when an increasing number of Asian authors first joined the growing movement of Western researchers taking a close interest in work practices and increasingly becoming more successful at obtaining access to corporate environments.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, English is the language that links most of the research conducted under the convenience label of "Asian business discourse(s)" (Bargiela-Chiappini and Gotti 2005; *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 15(2) 2005 and 16(1) 2006). This observation would seem to reflect the continuing dominance of English as *the* language of business worldwide. Yet, one of the most respected voices speaking on English matters, David Graddol (2006), warns that Mandarin and Spanish are slowly eroding the once unassailable supremacy of English. The Chinese government is promoting Mandarin as a second language through a widespread network of Confucius Institutes: the parallel will not be missed with another, equally powerful network, that of the British Council offices and their capillary action in promoting "the business of English." In 2005, Spanish became an alternative to English in Brazil's secondary schools, a move that is assisting the consolidation of Brazil as one of the largest and fastest growing economies outside India and China. Graddol predicted that the decline of the "old paradigm" – English as a foreign language – would endure for some time yet and that one of the signs of the "new paradigm" taking hold would be "the declining reverence of 'native speakers' as the gold standard of English" (2006: 66). The latter phenomenon is still far from noticeable at the time of writing (Nickerson personal communication) and will remain an academic projection while the "standard English" ideology continues to inspire EFL teachers (Wolff 2010).

Business English in Practice: Focus on Asia

In business discourse research at least, and especially, though not exclusively, in the "West," in the last two decades we have moved a long way from idealistic notions of English and language needs in business settings that were currency until the 1980s. In the same period, the growth of English "as an Asian language" has consolidated into a phenomenon with potentially vast and long-term repercussions on the socioeconomic life of hundreds of millions of people, especially in East Asia. In his commentary on the spread and use of English in Asia, Tom McArthur (2003: 2) wrote:

> English is the lingua franca that Asians now share with one another and the rest of the world. One should also add however that it is now manifestly an Asian language in its own right. It has been thoroughly indigenized.

Perhaps it is appropriate in a section devoted to Business English in Asia, first to attempt a definition of "Asia" for the purposes of our discussion. As McArthur notes, for some "Asia" refers to East Asia but of course Asia begins in the West, in the region that Europe refers to as the Near East and Middle East. This ethnocentric understanding of "Asia" has also been interrogated in relation to the rather amorphous, yet politically laden, label of "Asian business discourse" (Bargiela-Chiappini 2011). We agree with McArthur that we should avoid lumping together the various "regions" that compose "Asia" when studying the spread and use of English. Business English, in particular, has a very different history in, for example, the Indian sub-continent and in East Asia. In this section, we will be looking at two "case-studies," namely Japan and China, as illustrative of two different histories of Business English within East Asia, one closely related to the development of American business communication (Japan) and the other to a more recent attempt to define a localized field of pedagogy that has grown in response to the huge demand for Business English by the fastest growing economy in the world (China).

In her review of Business English research across the three circles of world English (Kachru 1986), Catherine Nickerson notes how the study of American English lags behind that of other inner circle Englishes, with the exception of course of contrastive studies, some of which were mentioned in the previous section. The fact that, unlike their US business communication colleagues, European researchers in Business English would often be trained as applied linguists and/or ESP teachers has arguably played a major role in the expansion of Business English research outside the inner circle (Nickerson 2010). It is worth noting that the English taught in Europe largely follows the UK model.

At the same time, inner circle Englishes have traditionally exported textbooks on business communication to outer circle, and increasingly, to expanding circle learners eager to share in the benefits of International Business English (IBE). However, a survey of Business English textbooks from the United Kingdom and the United States (Nelson 2000, 2006; cited in Nickerson 2010) found that their contents bore little relevance to authentic workplace written and spoken English. The discrepancy between teaching resources and actual work practices is nothing new in inner circle contexts (see e.g. Williams 1988) but it is quite disconcerting that shortcomings pointed out in the literature as early as the 1980s should continue to be propagated by influential publications exported all over the world. A visit to the website of Pearson, one of the top education publishers in the United

States, is indeed instructive with respect to the type of textbooks, many running into several editions, sold under business communication and managerial communication (see http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/course/Business-Communication/91064983.page). If the contents of individual titles are anything to go by, one can only be dismayed at the lack of awareness of empirical research in workplace language, organizational discourse and business discourse of the last three decades in these publications.

A systematic critique of Business English textbooks on the market is beyond the scope of this chapter (but see the three-level coursebook *Business Advantage*, richly informed by empirical research in authentic workplace communication (Handford et al. 2011). Instead, we propose that we look at how Business English has developed in East Asia, in particular in two communities of users who have come to define two distinct understandings and trajectories of development of Business English practice and research. The choice of China and Japan was partly suggested by their contrasting traditions in Business English but also as examples of how different sociohistorical and economic developments have influenced the evolution of an academic field. In both countries, the origins of Business English can be traced to the teaching of English for business correspondence, mainly EFL for written communication, with a focus on lexicon and grammar. While Japan slowly moved away from the original narrow scope of Business English and eventually stopped using the label altogether in response to the changing economic policies of the country (Norisada 2003), China "stretched" the same label and expanded its scope to include complementary business and social scientific subjects (see Business English – China below). In this respect, China has probably followed a unique path in East Asia, culminating in the establishment of Bachelor of Arts degree programs in Business English at a number of the country's top universities. Whilst Japan has, over the last 70 years, developed its own brand of "business communication" in close collaboration with the United States, and has left to ESP the exclusive concerns for teaching materials design and testing, in China, Business English has become an umbrella concept that incorporates a range of subjects deemed to be necessary for the development of well-rounded specialists trained to satisfy the needs of the fastest growing economic power in the world.

The next two sections illustrate some of the work carried out in Japan and China under the banners of "business communication" and "business discourse" (Japan) and Business English (China). The first section, Business English-Japan, is based on an interview with Kameda Naoki by the first author on September 1, 2010. Before taking up his current professorial post, Kameda Naoki (Doshisha University, Kyoto) was owner and CEO of a manufacturing company and in this role he visited nearly 40 countries and did business with individuals from over 60 countries, mostly, though not exclusively, in English.

Business English-Japan

Attempts at tracing a chronology of Business English in Japan always seem to lead to "business communication," as if the two terms were considered synonymous.

According to Kameda (personal communication 2010), the term "business communication" was first used in Japan in the early part of the 1970s. The 1974 issue of the *Journal of Business English* (formerly *The Japan Business English Association Annual Studies*) carried papers by the pioneers of Japanese BE, namely Haneda Saburo, Ozaki Shigeru, and Nakamura Mikito. Not only did these individuals serve as executive directors of the Japan Business English Association but, through their work, they left an indelible mark on the field. Ozaki also published a monthly magazine with the telling title of *Business English* to which Kameda himself contributed as a young scholar. It was Ozaki who, in the early days of the field, first proposed a "human-oriented" perspective for the study of Business English that moved beyond linguistic analysis. He argued that:

> Business English is a tool with which [man] communicates with others, and it is always a human being that makes use of it. It follows, therefore, that the whole question of how best or most effectively [he] can communicate [his] ideas to others in Business English must be considered with [man], *i.e.* the one who uses Business English, at its center. The work that has hitherto been done in this area has tended to concentrate upon its linguistic aspects in total disregard of the existence of [men] (Ozaki 1975: 27).

In practical terms, Ozaki (1975: 30) suggested that individuals should adopt a "you-consideration" in their business interactions with a view to bridging the gap that separated them from their counterparts from other countries. His was an approach that acknowledged nearly four decades ago that mastering the linguistic subtleties of "Business English" was insufficient. Kameda followed in Ozaki's footsteps when he suggested, perhaps counter-intuitively for many, that *empathy* is "the secret to successful international business" (Kameda 1977; Kameda 2005: xiii). Empathic identification with business partners consists of suspending criticism, subjective judgement and unhelpful inferences. It is a mental attitude that is expressed in a "you-consideration" approach to intercultural communication, not to be confused with a "you-attitude," which Kameda dismisses as concerning "styles of expression . . . a technique for manipulating people with carefully chosen words and expressions" (Kameda 2005: 107).

The development of a humanistic perspective of business communication, which as far as we know is peculiar to the early Japanese tradition of Business English research, was embodied in business practice by Kameda himself as a CEO in his own company. In his interview, he took time to elaborate on how empathy and a "you-consideration" were his constant guiding principles in over two decades during which he accrued a portfolio of 1500 business negotiations, a large proportion of which he held in English with international business partners and clients.

Kameda's sensitivity to language use and his discussion of linguistic issues in the context of what he calls "international business," conveniently brought together and revisited in a monograph (Kameda 2005), exemplify the business communication approach to Business English that he shares with predecessors (e.g. Ozaki) and contemporaries (e.g. Norisada 2007, 2008), but also with the more recent and new discursive approach to business interaction adopted by scholars such as Tanaka (2006 2008, 2009, 2011), Fujio (2004) and Sunaoshi (2005). It is worth noting that through Ozaki's mentorship, Kameda was exposed to the work of other "fathers of the International Business Communication Association – Japan" (Kameda 2005: vi), namely Nakamura Mikito and Haneda Saburo who published in the 1970s and 1980s (Haneda 1976, 1986, 1989; Haneda and Shima 1982) and who influenced Kameda's own work. Of these authors, we have listed only the publications in English but there are many others in Japanese; some are cited in Kameda (2005).

Since its inception in the 1930s, the Japanese school of business communication, represented by the Japan Business Communication Association (JBCA) (formerly the Japan Business English Association), of which Business English is a substantive concern, has developed and maintained close ties with the American Association for Business Communication (ABC). This is reflected in a shared focus on application, be it to teaching or training. However, this has not hampered the development of an approach to communication in business that appears to be distinctive of Japanese scholarship. Kameda's work published in English, which we have been able to access more fully than the work of his contemporaries, describes the approach thus: "business is essentially about communication, and communication is essentially the formation of a relationship" (Kameda 2005: 1). This focus on the relationality of communication echoes Ozaki's concern for the human-centerdness of Business English research (Ozaki 1983: 53, cited in Kameda 2005: 18).

The values underlying this understanding of communication are subsumed under the "3Hs": "humanity: warm consideration for others; harmony: efforts not to hurt the feelings of others; and humility, or modesty" (Kameda 2005: 46). Space constraints do not allow us to examine the possible culture-specific roots of this value system; what is notable, however, is that the "other-consideration" driving this understanding of communication also includes the imperative of *self-understanding*. It is incumbent on international business negotiators to be fully aware of their own values system, ways of thinking and behavioral patterns. This includes an appreciation of discursive and pragmatic strategies that may be the cause of misunderstanding. For example, Japanese parsimonious, and at times elusive, use of verbal communication, the significance of silent communication, the preference for non-argumentativeness, all of which are "transferred" into ELF settings, may be easily misread in intercultural encounters (Kameda 2005). The possibility, indeed, the necessity, of empathetic communication is predicated on the premise that "no human beings are completely foreign to each other" (Kameda 2005: 109). A lesson from Japanese business communication is that Business English brings disparate individuals and groups to cooperate within a shared pragmalinguistic space in which the rules of engagement demand heightened self- and other-knowledge and a deep appreciation of the interplay between native linguistic and value systems and the "alien" cultural heritage of Business English which owes greatly to the United Kingdom and the United States.

There is also a new and growing interest in Japanese business discourse, more recent than the business communication tradition discussed thus far, but complementary to it, which finds its origins in the comparative analyses of US and Japanese negotiators conducted by Yamada Haru (1992) and Laura Miller (1994). Based on discourse analytic and pragmatic approaches to real-life business interactions conducted in English, this work lay the foundations of research-based business communication, both intra and intercultural, which focusses on interactional detail and seeks to interpret discursive strategies in the light of cultural, organizational and managerial ideologies. In the work of Tanaka Hiromasa and Fujio Misa (Fujio and Tanaka 2011), ELF interactions are scrutinized, as well as Japanese intracultural meetings and negotiations. The insights gained from such a two-pronged approach are beginning to build a fine-grained picture of Japanese business discourse in English and in Japanese that fills some of the gaps already highlighted by Japanese business communication scholars. For example, the sensitive issue of the role of English as a corporate language, endured rather than embraced in foreign companies based in Japan (Tanaka 2006) and the cultural assumptions revealed by ELF usage in Japanese-French negotiations (Tanaka 2008) cannot be appreciated without an understanding of Japanese interactional preferences in business settings, often expressed as concerns with "face" and "polite behavior" (Tanaka 2009; Tanaka 2011; Tanaka and Sugiyama 2010). In a similar vein, Fujio Misa (2004) points to the interactional significance of silence in meetings and the consequences of different interpretations of nonverbalization by Japanese and US participants. Finally, Sunaoshi (2005) in her study of Japanese-American factory workers adds further insights to the business discourse perspective, with potentially far-reaching consequence also for Business English pedagogy: the importance of the historical contexts that the interactants bring to the intercultural encounter and the concept of *understanding* as a process rather than a discrete experience, and one that must be shared between native and non-native speakers.

Business English-China

The launch of the *Asian ESP Journal* (http://asian-esp-journal.com/index.php) in 2003, a free access periodical that responds to the needs of teachers and trainers in Asia, reflects a dominant interest in pedagogic issues and applications, especially, although not exclusively, in East Asian countries. China is exemplary in this respect. The first activities foreshadowing the development of the field of Business English in China can be traced back to the early 1950s when language skills courses became available under the general banner of "translation" and prepared students to deal with business correspondence. Elements of business knowledge were included in such courses even though they were not identifiable as specific disciplines such as management or international law. With the opening of China to international markets in the 1980s, more undergraduate courses began to offer business subjects such as management, economics, and international business law in association with language skills aimed to develop both written and spoken competences. Around the same period, university programs also first listed language for specific purposes as a specialist subject, which, in the Chinese education system, belonged to the arts, alongside foreign language and comparative literary studies.

Following a national change of emphasis of undergraduate programs towards broad-based education, at the end of the 1990s language for specific purposes (LSP) was dropped from university curricula. In the early 2000s, English language teachers in China were instrumental in bringing Business English back into the higher education curriculum after winning the argument at the national level on the social contribution of Business English to China, especially in response to the economy's pressing need for highly skilled graduates with combined language and business skills. The outcome of the policy change was the Ministry of Education's approval of the first Business English undergraduate courses. A significant aspect of this development was that top universities applied for and obtained ministerial approval to run such BA programs (Zhu, Wu, and Guo 2009). At the time of writing, thirty-two institutions nationwide have been granted approval, among them Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Heilongjiang University, Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade, Shanghai International Studies University, the University of International Business and Economics, Xi'an International Studies University, and Yangzhou University.. The demand for places is huge and competition is steep.

Taking as an illustration the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) in Beijing, one of the first three universities to run a BA in Business English, the first cohort of their four-year Business English undergraduate program graduated in 2011. Their Business English multidisciplinary curriculum is a composite of subjects organized in three core components of equal status: knowledge of business disciplines, business discourse, and professional practices where business discourse acts as a bridge between the other two components. While elements of "business knowledge" have been present since its inception in Business English teaching in China, the integrated curriculum of the current Business English program gives ample room to subjects such as economics, management, international business law, international trade, and so on, and relies on highly qualified academics in the individual disciplines to deliver courses of comparable level to those found in business degrees normally available in business schools.

The success of BA and MA degree programs in Business English now poses the issue of further development at the doctoral level, especially for students who are keen to specialize in the subject. Legitimization is a serious obstacle as Business English is not recognized as an academic discipline, not least because Chinese scholars have been arguing for some time that Business English lacks a dedicated theoretical and methodological apparatus. At the International Conference on Business English Studies held at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in 2008 this concern was voiced by both senior academics representing institutions offering Business English programs and by Business English teachers. The current curricula are by definition multidisciplinary with subjects from the humanities and the social sciences; there is a case for going back to the foundational disciplines to look for a theoretical tradition that can form the backbone for possible future developments at the doctoral level. Meantime, Business English graduates continue to fill well-paid jobs in the private sector.

Given the emphasis placed on shaping the pedagogic resources required of Business English to meet the demands of a fast changing business and professional world, research has lagged behind. There is no shortage in China of linguists who are involved in the analysis of written and spoken business texts but what they lack is access to contexts of practice where it is possible to capture language in use through ethnographic methods. Decontextualized analysis is of limited use but access to the field is often dependent on personal contacts. The MA programs in Business English have proved very useful in bypassing access issues; their part-time students often work in business and government and therefore can gain privileged access to situated language use and can collect data for their dissertations. This in turn means that their supervisors, too, benefit from access to real-life Business English "data." A similar pattern of collaboration has been in place for some time at the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE), which offers MA programs in, among others, international business communication.

When teaching and research can build on collaboration between academics and practitioners and professionals, as it is the case at the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE) of the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, the outcomes are distinctive and perhaps still quite unique in East Asia. The RCPCE's project portfolio is varied and underpinned by a combined linguistics and discursive approach to communicative professional practices. Examples of ongoing interdisciplinary RCPCE research includes both genre-specific projects such as "The discourse representations of financial analyst reports, . . . Discourse analysis and contrastive studies of court judgments . . . Surveying and construction engineering English" and region-wide investigations such as "A taxonomy of professional communicative competencies derived from the four key industries in Hong Kong" and "Learning and use of English for professional purposes in Hong Kong" (personal communication Winnie Cheng). While Hong Kong in general, and the RCPCE in particular, remains a beacon of professional English research, the first two ESP Asia conferences held in Chongqing in 2009 and in Ningbo in 2010 (under the auspices of the *Asian ESP Journal*) and the third one held in Xi'an in 2011 have attracted many scholars from mainland China who can now benefit from a dedicated forum to showcase their work and discuss their interests and concerns. The range of topics and approaches illustrated by the 2010 conference program (http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/conference/esp/Call%20for%20papers.htm) is testimony to the growing number of Chinese ESP and Business English voices joining the international arena.

The two cases described above illustrate two very different patterns of evolution of Business English as a field of research and teaching: in Japan the establishment of the "Japanese English Teachers" Society in 1934 gathered English-language instructors based in universities, colleges and commercial high schools. In 1950, the Association changed its name to the "Japan Business English Association" and the focus of its members' teaching continued to be on written English competencies. It was not until 2002 that the new identity, Japan's Business Communication

Association, was finally approved by the general meeting, a long-coming recognition of the progressive change of emphasis in many of the members' interests and teaching profiles. Business English then morphed into business communication in Japan and is often associated with the work of a handful of influential scholars who strategically published in English and therefore made their work available beyond Japan. The same pattern, of a few individuals influencing profound developments in the field, is now repeating with the Japanese discourse analysts who, whilst still thin on the ground, are publishing in both Japanese and English, and are having their work noticed at international conferences. In contrast, China exemplifies an institutionalized development of Business English, with the creation of new and very competitive degree programs tailored to the needs of business. Research is still limited and often inspired by pedagogic issues (see however the special issue of the *Asian ESP Journal* on Chinese Business English, 2011).

Re-contextualizing Business English as a Research-Led Field of Practice

The orientation expressed in the call for papers of the 2nd ESP Asia conference seems to capture the thrust of future ESP research in Asia and beyond:

> As ESP grows in Asia, it needs to evolve practices that engage the ecologies in which it operates. Such ecologies include, on the one hand, sociolinguistic realities such as multilingualism and variation in global English(es), and, on the other hand, variable professional and academic cultures and practices in Asia (http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/conference/esp/call%20for%20papers.htm).

The enduring gap between research and practice in Business English prompted Catherine Nickerson (2005) to observe that textbooks of Business English continue to ignore research pointing to the need to integrate traditional teaching materials with findings from business practice. Her three-pronged approach to research and practice in English as a lingua franca and in English for special business purposes (ESBP) is motivated by "the pressing need to refer to the findings of research in the development of teaching materials" (Nickerson 2005: 376).

Reflecting on the many roles associated with ESP practitioners (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998), Laurence Anthony (2008) questions whether the desirable multi-role profile of the Business English professional could work in practice. Who has the time to be a Business English teacher, collaborator, researcher, course designer, materials provider and evaluator, asks Anthony, and where is the support for this multi-skilled professional? In her review article, Maggie Jo St John (1996: 8) singled out linguistic and nonlinguistic features of Business English that could drive a research-led pedagogy and concluded that "we must develop Business English research through an interdisciplinary approach that draws on techniques from fields such as applied linguistics, corpus linguistics and the social sciences."

Since then, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, intercultural communication, Business English as a lingua franca (BELF) (see Nickerson, this volume), and intercultural rhetoric (see Connor and Rozycki, this volume), to name but a few, have populated the list of disciplines and approaches that have looked at intracultural and intercultural professional and business interaction. In this respect, we are now in a much better position than we were only fifteen years ago, with a consolidating body of empirical research in a number of languages, looking at both mediated and face-to-face communication, where English remains by far the most frequently analyzed language.

Alternative thinking in sociology suggests that a cosmopolitan outlook on international relations may be more fruitful than the current heavily partisan discourses of globalization and internationalism (Starke-Meyerring 2005). Cosmopolitanism's agenda includes concerns for justice and equality, as well as the economic and security concerns typical of international relations studies. In an attempt to open up the intellectual horizons of the field of Business English as an academic enterprise with tangible effects on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, be they students, teachers, trainers, researchers, practitioners, and consumers, we could perhaps try to locate Business English research and practice within wider social, policy, and political debates. Business English is more than teaching or learning a skill, however specialized and marketable it may be, especially in certain areas of the globe. It is opening up to a complex world of ideology and praxis with roots in systems of thought and values that are generally taken for granted by native speakers and often ignored by non-native learners and teachers, who may buy unquestioningly into the "Business English offer" as a package. Adaptation of ideas and models usually comes after adoption and following the realization that formulas and models emerging from a different world-view do not reflect local needs and are insensitive to local practices.

The cultural spread of Business English has generated renewed interest in updating pedagogy in line with business practices. "Business English-China," as it is known among Chinese authors, is a good example of such development, driven by the rising internal demand for graduates with specialist skills, and seeking to combine sensitivity to contextual peculiarities with lessons from extant international scholarship. As relevant literatures show, linguistics-applied has been at the forefront of innovative research in Business English that concentrates on aspects of real life business, professional, and organizational interaction, both within and across "cultural" contexts. In his introduction to the 2002 edition of the *Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, Robert Kaplan (2002: ix) concludes, "the applied linguist has to have a broad exposure to all the social sciences." Echoing Kaplan, William Grabe defines applied linguistics as "a practice-driven discipline that addresses language-based problems in real-world contexts" (2002: 10) and calls on it to become a "mediating discipline" (2002: 9) across research and practice and also across a whole raft of disciplines such as psychology, education, anthropology, political science, sociology measurement, computer programming, literature, and/or economics. A discursive approach to researching and teaching

Business English would provide the mediating space in which the relevant social sciences could meet and engage in the formulation of a new agenda based on shared insights that would also be the first step towards possibly proposing Business English as a distinctive multidisciplinary field.

In the 2000s, discursive studies of English as a language of work in multinational companies (e.g. Nickerson 2000; Poncini 2004) have benefitted from an understanding of discourse as "contextual and intertextual, self-reflexive and self-critical, [. . . and] founded on the twofold notion of discourse as *situated action* and of *language at work*" (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 2002: 277, original emphasis). Building on the concern for research relevance expressed by applied linguistics and the wealth of insight from sociolinguistics, a (business) discourse approach to Business English can bridge the divisive gap between theory and practice that affects applied linguistics and which manifests itself in, among other -*isms*, the micro–macro dualism. Linguistics and pragmatics will continue to function as crucial disciplines in Business English research. However, as a forum for dialogue between the social sciences (Bargiela-Chiappini 2009), business discourse is inevitably multidisciplinary; in this respect, it is well positioned to act as host to Business English and encourage more discourse-based studies.

Looking over to the broad field of "the language of the workplace" (Marra, this volume), it is clear that interpretative research is already well-established and often challenges pedagogic and training prescriptions; it also welcomes dialogue with management and organization studies as well as anthropology, philosophy, ethics, social theory, semiotics, and perhaps a few others. Writing on workplace discourse from the perspective of applied linguistics, McGroarty (2002: 273) offers a characterization of what could be the potential scope of Business English:

> [l]anguage used in the workplace is never only about work; it expresses and shapes the social realities experienced by workers and spills over into the understandings of work, life, and people that carry over into other realms of individual and social experience. Hence, ongoing research on language uses in the professional and occupational activities belongs in the mainstream of contemporary applied linguistics. Without it, theorists, researchers and policymakers are likely to oversimplify the complexities and contradictions that connect the study of language and society.

Conclusion: Where We May Be Going

In the 1990s, Maggie Jo St John's review of ESP clearly identified its greatest strength in the range of effective textbooks, the product of a strong pedagogic tradition which also informed the professionalism of the teachers. Within this "materials-led movement" (St John 1996: 15), the role of the intuition of the materials writer is paramount; this, St John admits, was a cause of concern. In research-led Business English, findings from direct observation and analysis of (business) practices and languages are made available to the textbook author. Thus, for example, discourse-analytic research using ethnographic tools could shed light on the "generic features of different events such as meetings, [. . . .]

common features of effective communications, [. . .] the role of cultural influences and the way in which language and business strategies interact" (St John 1996: 15).

It is worth remembering that Business English began as a materials-led movement rather than a research-led movement that produced a number of successful textbooks and teaching resources inspired by writer's intuition about, or "informed understanding" of, business communication (St John 1996: 15). While adequate in the early days, this approach has serious limitations: discursive and ethnographic studies of business interactions conducted in the 1990s have demonstrated the complexity of the verbal strategies and contextual influences at play in real-life dyadic and multiparty talk. Perhaps paradoxically, the gap between pedagogy and praxis seems to have widened, especially in the field of intercultural business communication where English is very often deployed as a lingua franca: a cursory examination of some of the multi-edition US textbooks raises serious concerns about stereotypical and ethnocentric contents and an ignorance of the findings of a well-established tradition of empirical research in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand (but also see the work of Laura Miller 1994 on Japanese-American communication). Clearly, Business English needs to open up to the challenges raised by empirical research conducted within the discourse tradition, intercultural pragmatics, intercultural rhetoric (Connor and Rozycki, this volume), and intercultural communication, to name but a few of the relevant fields. There have already been some efforts in this direction. For example, Clarice Chan (2009) draws on empirical research in business meetings to develop a checklist which she uses in materials evaluation. Helen Spencer-Oatey and Peter Franklin (2009) exemplify the process of theory and practice informing and enriching each other in intercultural communication.

The deliberate focus on Asia of this chapter intends to offer a platform for the debates surrounding "English as an Asian Language;" these are not exclusive to the context of world Englishes scholarship but also animate a small but growing body of research focussed on English as a language of Asian business. This latest development is best appreciated in the development of Asian business discourse(s) (Bargiela-Chiappini 2011; Tanaka and Bargiela-Chiappini 2011), which is an attempt to widen the original Western scope of business discourse research to include alternative, indigenous perspectives and concerns. Attention to local practices means that findings from language needs analysis (e.g. Kawaguchi, Otha, and Ito 2009) that are useful to Business English need to be supplemented by qualitative research that taps into employees' understanding of what communication in the workplace is about. Unexpected findings include the realization that "lack of knowledge about one's language and lack of judgment as to its proper use causes miscommunication too" (Yamauchi and Orr 2008: 2) and the belief among some respondents that this is the most difficult component of communication. Emic interpretation emerging from, for example, interviews with employees, observation of their work practices and analysis of interactional data is invaluable to "correct" self-perceptions of communicative values and practices which are often spread by popular textbooks (Yamauchi and Orr 2008).

The dialogue between business discourse research, with its emphasis on the analysis of all aspects of communication in organizational settings, and Business English pedagogy, concerned with ensuring that students and trainees can operate effectively in the workplace, starts from the premise that English is no longer studied as a "foreign language" but rather as an international language; and as "an indispensable language for international communication in Asia" (Honna and Takeshita 2005: 379). The appropriation of (Business) English as one of the Asian languages (Honna 2003) is a first step towards the demythologization of its foreignness; it is also an invitation to move beyond prescriptive models in Business English teaching to adopt instead findings from descriptive and interpretative research that have been available for some time. Dialogue between disciplines for a fusion agenda for Business English teaching and research depends on sustained effort to bring together teachers and researchers, applied linguists and (organizational) discourse analysts and linguistic anthropologists. The current climate is favorable to multidisciplinary research, at least in the Anglophone countries, and is a fertile ground for such dialogue to take place with the blessings of academic institutions and funding bodies. Let us make the most of it while it lasts and work together towards the recognition of Business English as a mature, research-led scholarly enterprise as well as a practically useful academic subject and degree program.

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