



**Discourse, communication and the enterprise.
Genres and trends.**

Giuliana Garzone and Maurizio Gotti (eds)

Peter Lang. Bern 2011. 451 p.
Linguistic Insights - Volume 134

ISBN: 978-3-0343-0620-1

www.peterlang.com

Reviewed by:

Anne Marie Bülow

Department of International Business Communication

Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

amb.abc@cbs.dk

This volume in the Peter Lang series *Linguistic Insights* contains conference papers from 2009 dealing with four main areas within the field of discourse and communication studies relating to business or organizational communication, viz. a section surveying and projecting hopes for the academic field, one on organizational language issues, one on corporate reporting, and finally on public relations in the sense of media and promotion studies. The majority of the contributors come from Italy, with Belgium running second.

The collection shows the tension in the field between discourse studies for their own sake (for example genre studies in texts containing visions, missions and CSR and environmental reporting, which are readily available on the internet), and those that seek to relate their textual findings to the world around them. Thus Charles advocates studies of the kind practiced in Helsinki, where the researchers follow the paths of



communication used by their subjects without ever considering the original nationality of the networking employees, while other contributions, more traditionally, pay attention to the specific localisation that is used in translations or parallel websites, or compare closely similar companies.

Many readers will find most interest in the studies of texts that are less familiar to Western analysts. For oral discourse, subtle power and control issues transpire in the chapter by Engelhardt, who followed meetings in a German subsidiary in the Czech Republic. Here language policy dictates that meetings should be in the language of the majority, and German expatriates therefore have to rely on the interpreter. However, when this person is not present to police the proceedings, people manage, triangulating between Czech, German and English, and the patterns of code-switching are revealing. The section on corporate reports, in its turn, contains studies that consider the ideological context. Several studies analyse annual reports from Chinese and Russian companies, and show thought-provoking instances of intertext between official state policy or legislation and the companies' efforts to construct a legitimate identity.

Genre analysis is a staple of studies in organizational discourse, and it can be a little schematic where the analyst's main contribution is ticking off points and introducing slight changes to established paradigm. But in the media section, genre analysis is put to good use with studies that follow a diachronic development. Thus Degano argues that financial news has moved from the special interest pages to headline news that is basically political; thus 'the market' is ascribed a different kind of agency.

Discursive insights are always interesting when applied to corporate or organizational texts. But with the heightened awareness of stakeholder management and multimedia affordances, it would be true progress if more analysts were numerate and took on the *full* annual reports, and not just the prose from the Communications department like the CEO's letter. If the conference's keynote spoke up for studies of real-time communication in context, it could be supplemented with a plea for more studies of texts checked against their economic or ideological context and, not least, their effects. Perhaps the next conference in the series will produce a volume that takes on that challenge.
