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Chapter 12

Sociolinguistic awareness in business professionals: Breaking stereotypes and language myths

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1. Introduction

As an applied linguist who has conducted empirical research and consultancies in business and organizational communication over the past two decades, I have seen first-hand the positive and long-lasting impact that empirically-based approaches can have on the daily working lives of professionals. The applied linguistics research I have conducted places real-life interactions at its core. It has taken place in a range of organizations of varying sizes, from SMEs through to multinationals. It has involved engagement across public, private and third sectors in local, national and international settings. It has varied in approach – it has been carried out 'for' and 'on' behalf of particular organizations, and it has also involved research where the boundaries between the 'researcher' and the 'researched' have blended together, as collaborative work has emerged 'with' one another (cf. Cameron et al. 1992; Darics forthcoming 2020; Mullany forthcoming, 2020). The principles of 'sociolinguistics', in terms of enhancing knowledge of the interplay between language, organizations and the societies in which organizations operate, alongside a focus on professional identities (individual, group, departmental, and organizational), has been at its foundation. Most often such research is combined with tools and techniques from the linguistic sub-disciplines of discourse analysis, linguistic pragmatics and corpus linguistics. One of the most crucial aims of this approach has been to impart critical language awareness to those professionals who have taken part, as part of a process of business engagement and impact through applied linguistics research.

However, despite many positives, as Darics (forthcoming 2020) points out it, it can sometimes be difficult to see one's findings embedded in practice; findings may be ignored or misinterpreted, and practically speaking, it can be hard to convince stakeholders of the appeal of sociolinguistics, especially because it is time-consuming to record, transcribe and analyze language data to get meaningful results. It is notable that, despite considerable advances within linguistics and linguistic consultancy work, a good deal of business communication literature and research does not make reference to linguistics in any sustained way (Darics forthcoming 2020, Darics, this volume). At the turn of the millennium, much was being written about the 'linguistic turn' in organizational studies (e.g., Alvesson and Deetz 2000; Maunter 2016) and it appeared that applied linguistics would be well-positioned to play a more pivotal role in business and organizational studies moving forward. Twenty years on, as Darics (forthcoming 2020) describes, whilst the momentum and influence of linguistics research has become prominent in legal, forensic and medical domains, its influence is 'fragmented' in business and organizational studies, though its potential is still significant.

In this chapter, I present evidence from an innovative theoretical and methodological approach, demonstrating how sociolinguistic awareness of business language in the everyday realities of workplace interaction can bring an evidence-based approach to business communication as part of a broader, multidisciplinary framework. In particular, I focus on how an empirical linguistic approach to business communication brings rigour and robustness to business and organizational studies research, as well as to research-informed training programmes and communication consultancies. By placing real-life interactions at the centre of the approach, damaging stereotypes and language myths about how communication allegedly 'works' in business and organizational contexts, and which so frequently circulate in mainstream culture, can be dispelled and disproved. Instead, much-needed practical linguistic tools can imparted, resulting in the acquisition of a sustainable knowledge-base through sociolinguistic awareness. I will now move on to outline the different components of this applied sociolinguistic approach.

2. Applied sociolinguistics in businesses and organizations

Since its inception as a research field in the 1960s, sociolinguistic researchers have successfully investigated the interplay between language and society by highlighting the necessity of real-life, empirical data, making permanent recordings and transcriptions of speech and written language (including digital communication) as it is produced by real-life speakers and authors. In a business and organizational context, this takes us way beyond abstract theorizations or self-perceptions about language use, to accurate, evidence-based observations about how language *is* used in *actual practice*. Sociolinguists have demonstrated time and time again that self-report, in terms of the way we *think* we communicate, is completely unreliable (Labov 1966), with individuals consistently over- or under-reporting their use of particular linguistic features, depending on a range of factors including prestige, stigmatization, stereotypes and language myths. It is only by making recordings of real-life business interactions that we can accurately capture *how* we communicate with one another at work.

Indeed, researchers investigating business communication through sociolinguistics and discourse analysis have produced a large bank of evidence demonstrating how language in business contexts is unscripted, messy and complex (Holmes 1995; Holmes and Stubbe 2003a; Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007a; Baxter 2012; Darics and Koller 2018; Mullany forthcoming 2020). Business language cannot be reduced to single, formulaic structures that will always get the same results. As neat and as tempting as it is to believe that prescriptivist, instrumentalist approaches work, it is not the reality (Darics, this volume). For instance, sociolinguists working within businesses and organizations have long emphasized that the same linguistic form can have multiple functions and that it needs to be analyzed in the context in which it is was uttered for an accurate analytical interpretations to be made (Holmes 1995). For example, Holmes illustrates that tag questions, the short question structures that are 'tagged' onto the end of declarative utterances, e.g., 'isn't it?', 'haven't they?' are frequently used to express uncertainty; however, tag questions can also be used to fulfil the function of being facilitative – encouraging others to speak, or they can also be used to soften the force of an utterance, such as a criticism. In some contexts, they can also be used to challenge another interactant (Holmes 1995). Attention to context, the prosody with which utterances are delivered, the relationship between the participants and what happens next in terms of the hearer(s)' reactions are all crucial in making assessments of how language is being used, interpreted and understood. It is therefore essential for simplistic formulas to be avoided in any consideration of business communication, as these will simply not bring out the subtleties of language in use. A more complex, context-specific model is required (Holmes and Stubbe 2003a; Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007a; Schnurr 2009; Handford 2010). Whilst sociolinguistics does not bring simplistic solutions, it is an approach that brings long-lasting, meaningful results.

In contrast, the business communication training and advice which dominates in mainstream culture and which can permeate its way into business education and consultancy offerings is too often based on unreliable research methods – at worst, these are devoid of empirical evidence of how language works in everyday organizational contexts (e.g., Gray 2002; Annis and Gray 2014). This results in the reification of outdated and inaccurate stereotypes about language use and the perpetuation of language myths. Flawed methodologies prevail, with business training materials based upon the unreliable techniques of self-report, anecdotes and/or artificially created role-plays (see Gray 2002, 2003), which most often bear little or no relation to the everyday realities of business interaction. Pseudo-scientific approaches abound, where prescription and pre-set formulae are prophesized as *the only way* to attain optimum communicative efficiency and effectiveness.

One such enduring model is Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP, not to be confused with Natural Language Processing), based on the initial work of Bandler and Grinder (1982). Although NLP has been widely discredited in academia since the 1980s (e.g., Sharpley 1987), it still prevails as a tool of choice for effective communication change in business. Often based on hypnosis and an approach which claims to 're-wire' the brain, it has become a profitable part of the communication consultancy industry. There are multiple self-help books which claim to assist individuals to re-wire their brain to attain the career they really want (Bandler and McKenna 2010; Bandler and Le Valle 2013). Qualifications include 'certification' to become so-called 'Master Practitioners' of NLP; NLP is still frequently used by large public sector organisations and corporates in the Western world. Many of the consultancy clients that I have worked with have previously been exposed to NLP.

As an alternative, I demonstrate the value of placing critical language awareness through the application of sociolinguistic tools and techniques at the core of approaches business communication. In a number of sociolinguistic studies of business communication since the 1990s (e.g., Holmes 1995; Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Mullany 2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2007a, 2008; Holmes et al. 2013), a series of robust frameworks and approaches have been developed that push the research field forward, but which can also be used as the basis of more practically applicable materials for business and organizational contexts (Holmes et al. 2013; see also Holmes forthcoming 2020).

The approaches in this chapter have been developed with the intention of bringing critical language awareness to all of those who are engaging in everyday business interactions, as well as to consultancy clients and learners engaging with business communication education across its various forms. I illustrate how stereotypes and language myths can be overcome through critical language awareness, despite the persistence of dominant ideologies which hold these stereotypes and myths in place within mainstream culture (e.g., Cameron 2003, 2007). Overall, I will practically demonstrate how the application of sociolinguistic research can result in business professionals being able to achieve the following:

1) To recognize their own spoken and/or written language styles at work, in everyday interactions, (including use of digital language), and those of their team/colleagues/customers, through a sociolinguistics of identity approach
2) To raise awareness of damaging stereotypes and language myths that can prevail in their workplace and prevent these from being reified and perpetuated
3) To be able to identify and reflect upon their own language practices, through a series of linguistic toolkits, and consider how these can affect others at all levels of their organizational hierarchy
4) To identify areas for linguistic enhancement and systems change through knowledge of alternative strategies, without being prescriptivist or instrumentalist
5) To analyze areas where miscommunication and conflict occur to examine different ways in which these can be successfully troubleshooted in future

The ability to investigate these 5 points comes with the caveat that applied linguistics does not have all of the answers to effective business communication – spoken and written interactions, even with the very best planning and execution, are messy, fluid and complex, and sometimes miscommunication and conflict will inevitably occur. Despite the promises of the self-help industry, there is no one way that anyone's workplace communication can be instantly enhanced, or come with a set of guaranteed outcomes. Damaging stereotypes and myths are perpetuated by neo-liberalism, which places an overwhelming emphasis on the role of the individual and the importance of engaging in individual self-improvement (see Brookes et al. 2016), of which the aforementioned self-help genre is a prime example.

In the following section, I detail the innovative set of methods and approaches designed to change the manner in which business professionals view language and communication practices in their workplaces, based on applied sociolinguistic practices. I concentrate in particular upon how a new approach developed, that came to be known as 'Linguistic Profiling' (2015- onward), based on critical awareness of sociolinguistic theories and approaches, along with the integration of a set of tools and techniques from other linguistic disciplines. It provides a practical knowledge-base and a set of tools for everyday use for professionals in businesses and organizations, particularly designed for use by non-linguistic specialists in business and organizational settings. In section 4, I will bring this new approach to life through three case studies which illustrate the different but complimentary methods and approaches through which applied linguistic work can be implemented into business communication spheres. This is followed by a discussion of the implementation of these practices and a set of concluding remarks (section 5).

3. Linguistic Profiling for Professionals: Approaches

The Linguistic Profiling for Professionals (LiPP) approach aims to create reflective, critical language users in the everyday world of work, breaking deeply entrenched stereotypes and language myths, to instead enhance the communication strategies and cultural practices of individuals, groups and organizations. The LiPP approach has developed over a period of time and has gone through different iterations with multiple audiences (see section 4 and

Mullany forthcoming 2020). Linguistic Profiling for Professionals became a research and business unit in its own right from 2015, created with internal investment from the University of Nottingham (2015-2018) and supported by a large European Regional Development Fund grant, *Enabling Innovation* (2016-2019), a multidisciplinary, cross-institutional collaboration with the Universities of Derby, Nottingham Trent and Nottingham.

The LiPP approach to professional communication brings together a range of sociolinguistic approaches with frameworks from discourse analysis, pragmatics and corpus linguistics. At its foundation, however, is work from the sociolinguistics of politeness, and Goffman's (1967) classic notion of 'face', defined as one's 'public self-image' in businesses and organizations. Following later work in politeness theory (Gu 1990), it is important to expand the definition of 'face' to recognize different cultural norms, expectations and priorities – face in Goffman's sense can be a white Western notion (Mills 2003), and in Asian cultures, for example, collective face is the cultural norm. Therefore, notions of both 'individual' face and 'collective' face are incorporated into the model. Next is a focus on professional identities at work and how we construct and negotiate these. Here, the theoretical models of Butler (1999) and Bucholtz and Hall (2010) play a role in terms of recognizing identity as a fluid, dynamic and pluralized concept. Crucially, this opens up space for intersectional approaches to professional identity construction, whereby language, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, etc can all be analyzed, where relevant, to the individuals, groups or organizations in question.

The communities of practice approach (Wenger 1998) is then integrated into the LiPP framework, defined as when workplace groups come together and regularly engage one another around a mutual endeavour. Interactional speech patterns and observable linguistic styles emerge within the interactions of communities of practice (CofP). Within a CofP, shared discourse norms become established practices over time. Individuals and groups belong to multiple communities of practice within workplaces. CofPs vary in size; each CofP has a set of interactional styles which are deemed appropriate for different business contexts. These norms will shift over time, often in response to organizational change. The CofP concept enables participants to critically consider their workplace groupings, and reflect upon how and why they perform different professional identities at work within different CofPs.

The model then moves out to a macro level, as the broader sociocultural context of the workplace is considered, including national and international business contexts. This raises crucial issues, particularly in business settings where different cultural groupings come together and intercultural communication (ICC) takes place. In particular, how much does such ICC draw on stereotypes and language myths? Here, the LiPP approach moves beyond the influential research and consultancy work of Hofstede (2001) and his model of national business cultures to instead argue that culture should not be seen as predictive and fixed; as with identity, it is crucial to view culture as fluid and dynamic. Sarangi and Roberts (1999), Handford et al. (2019) and Handford (forthcoming 2020) have all pointed out that unhelpful and inaccurate national stereotypes abound in business communication training materials, of which Hofstede's model is the most dominant example. Such models are overly simplistic, and do little more than reify inaccurate national stereotypes and myths, which do not account for the complexities of ICC in businesses. They can also be counterproductive and damaging to the very business relationships that they are trying to assist (see Handford forthcoming, 2020). Instead, with the LiPP approach, interactants are encouraged to critique national stereotypes and learn to unpick these tropes. As Handford (forthcoming 2020) points out, 'intercultural business training can provide one of the few educational opportunities for such stereotypes to be problematized, and for alternative ways of interpreting and behaving in the world to be explored'.

As highlighted above, one of the aims of this approach is to provide participants with empirical evidence that disproves deeply embedded stereotypes and language myths. Often, such stereotypes and myths are directly articulated to us by participants at the start of consultancies, research projects and/or training interventions. These have included the aforementioned national cultural stereotypes of working with people from different nations, along with dominant, persistent myths of sociolinguistic relevance, namely that identity is a fixed category because we are biologically hardwired to behave in definitive ways. Some consultancy and workshop participants have initially articulated beliefs that intervention and change in language behaviour is not possible because we are biologically determined to behave and act in certain ways; Classic tropes here are that some people are 'born' to be leaders, with men being biological predetermined to be better leaders than women. Long-standing gender and language stereotypes abound in business training materials, such as men being 'naturally' assertive and competitive, with women being biologically pre-disposed to be more 'nurturing' as leaders; men compete in business interaction, women co-operate; men are direct, women are indirect; men are task-orientated, women are socially-orientated (see Holmes and Stubbe 2003b for a detailed summary of these stereotypically 'masculine' and 'feminine' speech styles). Cameron (2003, 2007) Sunderland (2004) and Mullany (2007) have all pointed out that the strength of these gendered stereotypes is reinforced by a dominant 'discourse of gender difference', that reifies gendered behaviour. It operates via a 'rigid regulatory frame' (Butler 1999: 75), through which our interactions as gendered beings are evaluated and judged.

It is not hard to find where these stereotypes and language myths have come from, as they are so frequently articulated and perpetuated in mainstream culture, as well as through neoliberal genres including the burgeoning self-help industry. For example, business communication 'expert' John Gray (2002) uses his oft-cited 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus' binary metaphor to explain the biological hardwiring of business language. He declares the following:

> On Venus, words are used to express feeling as well as content…a woman will always be more inclined to do business with a man she can trust to consider her feelings. A male manager can quickly create a mutiny of gossip and tension by disregarding how female employees respond to his directness… On her planet when a woman is angry or simply doesn't like a person, she will not bother to connect. She will purposefully hold back from making connection …as a result she will speak fewer words. When a man is right to the point and does not engage in "small talk" to establish a friendly connection, women may mistakenly conclude that he doesn't like her or that he is angry with her.
>
> (Gray 2002: 27)

There are a number of persistent language myths in this short extract, including the presupposition that men will be direct whereas women will be co-operative, facilitative communicators who favour gossip, small talk, speaking less and falling silent. Gray's work is a prime example of biological determinism. However, as Cameron (2007) comprehensively demonstrates, there is no scientific evidence that biological hardwiring exists in male and female brains. She cites a multitude of examples from different cultures around the world which dispel the deeply ingrained gender myth that women are co-operative whilst men are competitive language users. In an earlier work (Mullany 2007), instead of gender differences, I found a remarkable number of similarities between women and men in leadership positions in business communication. What was different was the difference that gender makes – women who favoured competitive, assertive speech styles were more likely to be subject to negative evaluation and judgement. Men who favoured co-operative (stereotypically feminine) speech styles were positively evaluated. This difference is commonly known as the 'double bind' (Lakoff 2003) that women face in business communication. Ensuring participants have knowledge of this and are able to recognize the 'double bind' in practice forms a key part of the approach to gender, identities and leadership taken in LiPP research, research-based consultancies and educational initiatives – see Example X, section 4 (below) for a practical illustration of how this can be successfully conveyed using a transcript of real-life business talk).

A core task of any sociolinguistic intervention in business communication is, in my view, to dispel these language myths and stereotypes. Thinking about gender stereotypes and myths in particular, if equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are to ever be properly addressed within businesses, then an intersectional approach is required, where the full range of relevant sociolinguistic identity variables is examined. Evidence shows that the double bind increases the further one moves away from the prototypical white middle-class man. The EDI agenda is currently a priority for many organisations globally, and this focus is motivated by research consistently showing that diverse workforces are far more profitable and have higher rates of staff retention and satisfaction (Hunt et al. 2015; Bohnet 2016).

One way to ensure that stereotypes about language, culture and communication are broken, including the aforementioned national and gender-based stereotypes, is to practically demonstrate their inaccuracies by conducting empirical research within businesses, building linguistic profiles and creating reflective, discursive spaces where these issues can be discussed. If an intervention is shorter in nature, in the form of a short course or workshop, without the time for building bespoke linguistic profiles, then the key is to educate participants about the inaccuracies of language stereotyping, using empirical examples taken from datasets of real-life business interactions to disprove stereotypes and ensure that participants can identify and critically reflect upon the practices, judgements and evaluations of others.

3.2 Methods

Moving on now to consider the methods and ethical considerations of LiPP, when analyzing interactions of business communication to build linguistic profiles, most frequently, audio recordings of real-life data are used. However, the much richer resource of video data is also used if requested and if full ethical approval can be gained. The LiPP approach focuses upon a range of different linguistic variables, including speech acts (directives, apologies, criticisms, expressions of approval, compliments etc); it incorporates a focus on how the speech styles leaders use to give orders, including directness and indirectness (cf. West 1990), to assess how participants enact power, influence others, make decisions and get work done. It also assesses how turns in business meetings are allocated, including floor-holding and interruptions, along with assessment of types and functions of humour, small talk, miscommunication and the use of narrative in the workplace, building on the empirical work of Mullany (2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2008, 2010, 2011); Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and Holmes (2006). Where appropriate, methods from corpus linguistics are also integrated into the approach (see section 4.1 below and Mullany 2012). Corpus linguistics is advantageous as it enables large banks of interactional data to be systematically analyzed by specialist computational software, thus bringing a more objective and rigorous approach to surveying the overall linguistic patterns of individuals, teams and organizations as a whole.

One of the key challenges to ensuring the practical applicability and usefulness of the methodological and theoretical approach within the LiPP approach is appropriate audience design, which requires almost continual reflection and adjustment. To ensure that workshop participants, consultancy clients, and research collaborators can fully interpret and value the applicability of linguistics research, they need to be able to do so without the need for an undergraduate degree in linguistics. It is important that jargon-free language is used to convey key definitions and linguistic tools appropriately to non-specialist audiences. However, it is also important not to make theories and approaches overly simplistic, to ensure that one's academic credibility and research rigour is not damaged (see Darics forthcoming 2020, for an excellent discussion on this complex issue). The fluidity and adaptability of researcher identities and reflections are key here to ensuring appropriate audience design. This is critical if sustained, long-term engagement is to be achieved.

In order to practically demonstrate the value of creating and adapting the LiPP approach, three case studies will now illustrate the different yet complimentary methods through which applied sociolinguistic work can be implemented into business communication spheres. These approaches have been included in this chapter to bring to life a range of effective routes through which sociolinguistic language awareness can be successfully delivered as part of business communication research and education.

4. Applied Sociolinguistics in Action

The three case studies from the LiPP approach are as follows:

1. Multidisciplinary collaborations with Nottingham University Business School as part of Executive Education corporate delivery packages (2010-2013)
2. The design and delivery of a Massive Online Open Access Course, 'How to Read your Boss' – for global working professionals interested in how sociolinguistics research on business communication can be delivered as an effective form of life-long learning (2014-2018)
3. The creation of research-based consultancies through *Linguistic Profiling for Professionals* (2015-present)

I will now detail the specifics of how these different approaches have been successful in increasing language awareness of business professionals.

4.1.Multidisciplinary approaches to Executive Education

In this project, I worked as part of a multidisciplinary team of academics, consultants and workplace practitioners on a bespoke long-term programme for two large multinationals. The team consisted of academics from business and management studies, sociology, psychology and linguistics, along with a number of independent practitioners as part of the Business School's Executive Education division. The programmes were designed for 'High Potential Growth' Leaders – senior executives in large multinational corporates selected individuals who they identified as having the most potential in their workforces to become the next generation of senior executives. I headed up the business communication strand, with other academics, practitioners and consultants responsible for a range of areas of leadership development and business growth, self-identified by the companies themselves as the key areas where they wished to engage the University as a provider of contemporary research, translated into practical leadership development packages. The overall purpose was to enhance business performance and increase staff retention of their 'high-flyers' by directly investing in their career development.

These intensive Executive Education programmes ran part-time for a period of 6-12 months and were delivered via a wide range of methods and techniques, including blended learning, residential courses, workshops, small group online tutorials and online courses. I designed an online course, 'The Language of Effective Leadership' which operated as a set of foundational principles from my empirically-based sociolinguistic and discourse analytic work (Mullany 2007a; 2008; 2010a 2010b). It covered key linguistic toolkits, all based on empirical research data analysis taken from successful leaders in real-life business and organizational contexts. The ability to identify, question and critique stereotypes and language myths was embedded as a core principle of this approach. The linguistic toolkits included the aforementioned categories of speech acts, humour, miscommunication and conflict, and the communication styles that successful senior leaders used to chair meetings, with a focus on turn allocation, interruptions, talking time and how this relates to successful displays of expert power. The online course was followed by a series of intensive e-tutorials delivered synchronously in small groups, to the high potential growth leaders who were geographically disparate, located in various countries across Europe.

Bringing together cross-disciplinary teams for the development of a particular collaborative purpose enabled an empirically-based approach to be successfully delivered to a number of executives. The tutorials were designed to provide reflective space for the leaders to self-identify where they wanted to focus their discursive attention. The multinational nature of the businesses, with international communities of practice based in different countries unsurprisingly resulted in issues of intercultural communicative competence and the recurrent theme of miscommunication due to different norms, cultural conventions and expectations of 'appropriate' and 'acceptable' behaviour. This was critically discussed through reflection on the use of humour and speech acts, including levels of directness when issuing orders and when decision-making. It was important to ensure that participants went beyond language stereotypes which initially emerged in discussion, to get these future leaders unpicking stereotypes and looking at a detailed, contextual approach, whilst acknowledging that stereotyping is an inevitable part of being human. The key point is to avoid falling back on tropes, including British colleagues as overly sarcastic, German colleagues lacking a sense of humour, being too direct and insensitive to face needs of fellow interactants. This was achieved by re-framing their reflections and analysis via a communities of practice approach and through considering the pluralized nature of sociolinguistic identities, that provided reflective space for them to think about their identities as intersectional and multiple (see also Handford, forthcoming 2020 for an informed discussion on successfully working through stereotyping in intercultural business communication).

One of the advantages of this approach was being subsumed within the University's Business School as part of a recognized multidisciplinary team providing bespoke Executive Education. This emphasizes the importance of fluidity of researcher identity, as it added a different type of credibility to my identity as an academic and practitioner, different to that of a linguistics academic based in a School of English in an Arts Faculty, where most often, those outside of academia assume you study multilingualism and thus ask you how many languages you speak (cf. McIntyre and Price 2018). Being employed as part of a Business School, albeit temporarily, and being introduced as a research consultant and expert in business communication, resulted in participants unquestioningly accepting my expertise and credibility as a researcher, teacher and trainer in the business field, simultaneously setting linguistics up as a discipline with credible observations to make about business communication. This opens up some interesting discussions on the importance of how we categorize and name ourselves as academics, research practitioners, lecturers and trainers, both to the outside world and also outside of our own local disciplinary boundaries; in the case of linguistics this can be restrictive and confusing to those outside of academia (see Mullany forthcoming 2020 for further discussion on this point).

4.2. How to Read your Boss

As a very different approach to the exclusiveness of the Executive Education collaborations, in 2014, I designed and delivered a massive online open access course (MOOC) on the global learning platform, FutureLearn. There were 24 different topics, covering each aspect of the linguistic profiling model outlined in Section 3. It was delivered in bitesize chunks, designed to fit around participants' busy work lives. In contrast to the Executive Education leadership model, this approach flipped the focus in terms of status and levels within an organization, primarily designed for those at junior levels in businesses and organizations to learn more about their boss's use of language and the workings of power through those in senior positions, whilst acknowledging that identity labels and powerful categories such as 'boss' are fluid categories – even CEOs are answerable to shareholders etc. The course had successful international reach and attracted over 45,000 participants in 130 different countries from 2014-2018. When it was first launched, it featured in the top 5 recruiting MOOCs for FutureLearn and in the top 10 of worldwide MOOCs. The 2015 course run featured in the top 10 courses on Course Central, a respected global network promoting excellence in MOOC provision.

Real-life empirical data extracts were embedded as a core part of the course's delivery, designed as practical learning tools. The ability to identify, acknowledge and reflect upon stereotypes at both a national, cultural level and also in terms of stereotypes and myths about social identity categories, including gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, were also emphasized as being key to avoiding the reification of unhelpful and often damaging stereotypes. Participants were taught how to reflect upon their bosses' spoken and written styles, as well as those of themselves and their teams, their departments and the language used by their organization as a whole. Delivery methods and tools including learning journals for participants to document language use at work. Participants were also encouraged to record and reflect upon their workplace interactions, subject to ethical consent. Participants' responses to the course can be tracked by their below-the-lines comments, which appear on every page of the course. Very frequently, participants would share applications of the linguistic approach to their workplaces during the course and share stories as to how the linguistic profiling model was working for them as a form of practical application. The participants' comments generated a large research corpus of its own, which has now been used to assess corpus linguistic methods in online communities of learning about business communication (see Collins 2018).

4.3 Research Consultancies

LiPP research consultancies have been taking place since 2012 and have been funded in three different ways:

1) Through the Higher Education Innovation Fund
2) Through an ERDF cross institutional award, *Enabling Innovation* (2016-2019)
3) Paid-for consultancies, where the client pays a fee to the University for our services as academic consultants

The parameters, direction and relationships between the researcher and researched varies depending upon whether the consultancy is fully-funded, in the form of a University administered award (as with 1 or 2), or whether the client is paying the University for our time as academic consultants (3). In the latter case, the consultancy client will have a clear idea of the area of focus they wish to have investigated and therefore play a much more significant role in the consultancy, though all options involve working collaboratively and reciprocally if they are to be successful (see Mullany forthcoming 2020; Koller and Ereaut forthcoming 2020; Handford forthcoming 2020, for detailed discussion). Those who have committed to taking part in funded consultancies most often have a general theme that they want to work on (e.g., chairing meetings) and we then work together to come up with focus that will be of most interest and practical value to them. With both the funded and 'paid for' options, we hold detailed initial consultations with key stakeholders within the businesses to collaboratively establish the consultancy parameters, including data collection methods, timeframes and deliverables. We use the development of linguistic profiles of individuals and/or groups as a starting point to drive the consultancy process. Within the consultancy offering, the tools and techniques of sociolinguistics are most often initially combined with corpus linguistic techniques to form linguistic profiles to analyze data taken from the particular business contexts that participants have identified as important settings to investigate.

Once language data of business interactions are recorded and transcribed, they are tagged so that they can be run through corpus linguistic software, which independently generates language frequencies and patterns (see below). Corpus linguistics is advantageous for investigating professional communication contexts as it provides a more objective approach, using computational software to assess patterns and saliency from large banks of texts. This can go some way towards addressing a common critique of professional communication research, that it is too qualitative (see Darics forthcoming). It has been used successfully in a number of studies of professional communication, including Handford's (2010) study of interaction in business meetings, Mullany et al's (2015) study of healthcare discourse and Hardaker's (forthcoming 2020) study of digital communication on Twitter; (see also Mullany (2012) for an overview of corpus linguistic approaches in the workplace).

Whilst a number of corpus linguistic packages could be used, WordSmith Tools (Scott 2005) has the functionality to go beyond just developing lists of words that are used frequently, to instead produce a more reliable analysis know as 'keywords'. In order to assess if a word is occurring by something more than just chance, WordSmith compares one corpus with another to check the likelihood of occurrence. It then produces a 'keyword' list. We have used the spoken section of the British National Corpus (BNC) as a comparative corpus for this analysis, the most common and reliable comparative corpus that is standard practice in the field. This ensures that the word lists are not based on chance, but are instead part of a linguistic pattern of an individual's communicative style.

The initial step of creating a 'linguistic profile', what sociolinguists would more commonly refer to as an 'idiolect', or 'speech style', has been to use the corpus linguistic technique of 'keyword' analysis to produce a list of the top keywords which are spoken in a range of different contexts by a particular leader or group (Baker 2010). Most often, our participants have selected business meetings as a primary site where they wish to have their language use analyzed. Business meetings are also practically appealing, as most often these are scheduled in advance and therefore a researcher's presence or the presence of recording equipment can be planned. The method of recording, whether audio or video, is part of the negotiation and ethics discussions will then take place between the researcher and the researched. Most often, we follow the recording principle adopted by the Language in the Workplace team in New Zealand under the directorship of Janet Holmes, where recording equipment is given to those being researched, thus handing over a modicum of control to the researched, as they decide when to record, when to switch off etc. (Holmes 2006).

The research consultancy reported on below as an illustrative case study was one of a series of consultancies funded by the UK's *Higher Education Innovation Fund*. It is a prototypical example of the LiPP model used when we have fully funded consultancies available. This consultancy is with a small business based in the UK and focuses in particular upon the communicative practices of its CEO. The organization in question had responded to a call for companies publicized through the University's largest, externally-facing business network. The request for consultancy clients was generic, asking for leaders and managers who wished to gain a deeper understanding of their communication practices. The consultancy was carried out by myself and Malgorzata Chalupnik, the project's Research Assistant.

After initial email contact, an exploratory meeting was held with the CEO, Sophie (a pseudonym), to discuss what their communication interests were, and what applied sociolinguistics as a consultancy offering could offer them. This client wished to know more about the impact of her communicative style on her immediate team, which had recently undergone organizational change, and if gender stereotyping was having a negative impact on how she was evaluated and judged. Sophie identified meetings as being the most important speech event to investigate, as well as the most practicable option. Once consent had been obtained from all who could potentially be recorded, we left a digital audio recording device with her for a two-month period, and she took on responsibility for turning it on and off. During this time, she recorded a series of regular meetings with her immediate team, which totalled over 55,000 words of spoken data.

Sophie's top 20 business meeting keywords are given in Table 1:

1	'cos	11	income
2	we	12	Brighthill*
3	mmm	13	that
4	yep	14	acorn
5	yeah	15	grant
6	okay	16	group
7	hmm	17	salaries
8	so	18	Lucy*
9	area-based	19	Amal*
10	Choice*	20	grants

Table 1: Top 20 keywords from CEO Sophie in a corpus of business meeting discourse
*equivalent pseudonym used to protect client identity

From this keyword list, the prominent use of the informal 'cos' at number 1 signals the favouring of an informal speech style that is borne out in the rest of the data. The use of 'cos' signals Sophie is justifying reasons why decisions have been taken and is explaining and disseminating information to her team, which would be expected by an effective leader and meeting Chair. Sophie clearly favours inclusive 'we' when using pronouns (number 2), demonstrating a collective approach which works to strengthen team dynamics and a collective sense of responsibility. It is also notable that the minimal response 'mmm' was 3rd in the list, closely followed by other minimal responses 'yep', 'yeah' (4th and 5th) and 'hmm' (7th), which all indicate that Sophie is an active listener, thus signalling a supportive chairing style. We also examined a range of qualitative data, including the use of small talk, meeting openings, giving orders and decision-making. Example 1 illustrates how Sophie successfully takes charge of the meeting at the initial opening, after letting a short interaction of small talk and humour take place:

Example 1
Sophie, Amal and Jon hold a morning meeting to prepare for an evening board meeting

1. Sophie: Right (.) okay

2. Amal: You look very serious today {Mr G} with tie and glasses and everything
3. Sophie: It's board meeting attire
4. Jon: Board meeting attire
5. Amal: Oh is it?
6. Sophie: ((laughs)) Yes
7. Amal: Oh I'd better put my gear on too
8. Sophie: ((laughs)) right okay (.) so we have twenty thirteen fourteen

At line 1, Sophie begins, using the discourse markers 'right' and okay' to signal the start of the meeting. Her junior colleague Amal immediately takes the floor and invokes humour, drawing attention to the fact that her male colleague, who she refers to informally as 'Mr G', was dressed differently than usual, with a 'tie and glasses'. Sophie very briefly extends the humour at lines 3 and 6, with the declarative 'it's board meeting attire', which Jon repeats to join in collaboratively with the humorous exchange, signaling a facilitative conversational floor. Amal uses an interrogative at line 5 and Sophie replies with the contextualization cue of laughter at line 6. Amal then continues the humour by commenting that she should get change her clothes too by putting her 'gear on'. At line 8, Sophie effectively and swiftly moves away from small talk to core business talk. Following a short laugh, she issues the same two discourse markers again as in line 1, this time without the pause between them, to signal the start of the meeting. This is followed by a further discourse marker 'so' (number 8 on Sophie's keyword list) and then a prototypical example of her use of inclusive pronoun 'we'. The humorous exchange which Sophie allows to take place is here functioning as a tension releaser – the team has a difficult board meeting scheduled later in the day, for which Jon has bought smarter clothes and is wearing glasses– Sophie allows brief humour to take place, arguably so that her team feel bonded and more at ease, before they go through a set of difficult financial figures in preparation for the board meeting with the company's trustees.

The linguistic analysis demonstrated that Sophie was a successful meeting Chair and leader who was well-liked and well-respected in her organization. Sophie received a 12-page linguistic profile of herself based on the combined corpus and sociolinguistic analysis, which foregrounded how her style differed from all of the unhelpful gender stereotypes of women's speech styles, along with a portfolio of multiple examples of data extracts of the discourse strategies that she uses to enact power, get tasks allocated and get work done effectively, including very careful management of small talk, humour, agenda-setting devices and giving orders.

5. Discussion and Concluding thoughts

One of the key aims of this chapter has been to bring tangible evidence from different approaches to demonstrate how methodological and theoretical innovation from applied linguistics can be of benefit to raising language awareness in business professionals. So much of how we communicate in business settings takes place rapidly and sub-consciously – often it is only when things go wrong, when miscommunication occurs or when perceived impoliteness or rudeness takes place, that we tend to scrutinize our interactions more intensely (cf. Culpeper 2005). However, the approach outlined here argues for reflective language awareness, based on the science of linguistics, as opposed to simplistic and stereotypical language models that have too long dominated business training and organizational studies.

In order for the damaging stereotypes and language myths so frequently articulated and reified in popular culture to be broken down and dispelled, it is fundamentally important that business professionals can pinpoint, reflect and challenge them. Analyzing and reflecting upon their own speech styles and practices, as well as those of their own leaders, colleagues and subordinates, from perspectives informed by real-life spoken and written business communication, is one effective way in which this can be achieved. It is critical for all business professionals to go beyond techniques of self-report when considering their communicative styles and instead recognize that how they think they communicate and how they think they are evaluated and judged can be very different from everyday workplace realities.

It has been the intention to practically demonstrate how this applied sociolinguistic approach has a great deal to offer organizational studies and business and management education, as well as enhancing the research field of professional communication and sociolinguistics. Through the development and evolution of the LiPP approach over the past 10 years, and the innovative theories and methodologies that underpin this, the importance and value of taking interdisciplinary approaches is clear, as is the importance of audience design – language awareness needs to be pitched appropriately – if the linguistics is too technical, it will not be understood; if the linguistics is too basic, it can easily be dismissed as commonsensical or lacking in academic rigour. The further down the scale we can move towards co-creation and go beyond the two separate categories of 'researcher' and 'researched', the more integrated and useful studies and interventions can be. However, it is essential to be aware that there are number of complexities with such an approach, including when those who have commissioned consultancies agree with research findings and/or when academics feel their integrity is being compromised by taking an approach they do not agree with (see Mullany 2008; Darics forthcoming 2020).

Whatever happens in future in terms of how far applied linguistics becomes integrated into business and organizational communication, as a bare minimum, it is essential that flawed frameworks, based on biologically essentialist views, and essentialist notions of local and national cultures, are replaced by models informed by linguistic knowledge. This will facilitate a move away from pseudo-scientific approaches that reify stereotypes and perpetuate language myths. Instead models that demonstrate how language *really* works in business contexts, in all of its complexities, should be applied to research, consultancy and education. Scientific knowledge of how language systems work is precisely what applied linguistics researchers specialize in and this can bring a great deal to the fields of business education and management research through interdisciplinary endeavours which directly involve end users. Moving away from simplistic interpretations and instrumental approaches is essential if effective, long-lasting knowledge and expertise about business communication is ever to be disseminated into practice.

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