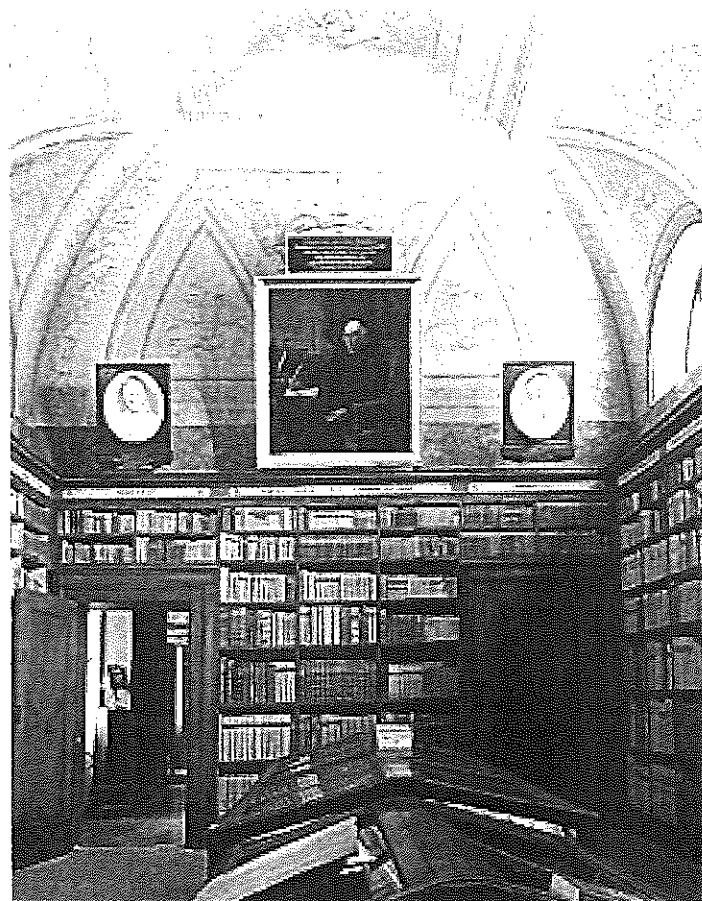


Linguistica e didattica delle lingue e dell'inglese contemporaneo

Studi in onore di Gianfranco Porcelli



a cura di

Bruna Di Sabato e Patrizia Mazzotta


Pensa
MULTIMEDIA

LINGUISTICA E DIDATTICA DELLE LINGUE
E DELL'INGLESE CONTEMPORANEO
STUDI IN ONORE DI GIANFRANCO PORCELLI

a cura di

Bruna Di Sabato e Patrizia Mazzotta

ISBN 978-88-8232-840-5

2011 © Pensa MultiMedia Editore s.r.l.
73100 Lecce – Via Arturo Maria Caprioli, 8
Tel. 0832.230435 – fax 0832.230896
www.pensamultimedia.it
info@pensamultimedia.it

- 141 Sulle tracce dell'approccio lessicale nei libri di testo di italiano L2
Maria Cecilia Rizzardi e Gabriele Luoni – Università degli Studi di Milano

**LA LINGUA INGLESE NEL MONDO ODIERNO:
RIFLESSIONI DI LINGUISTICA E DIDATTICA**

- 167 Parole, metafore, idee
Paola Tornaghi – Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca
- 203 Reflections on Genres and Rhetorical Choices in the Language of Economics
Rita Salvi – Università La Sapienza di Roma
- 213 Specificity at the heart of our role: well-known contents for renewed and "global" Business English teaching
Annalisa Zanola – Università degli Studi di Brescia
- 229 Promoting the theatre production presentations as a genre
Marina Bondi e Anna Stermieri – Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia
- 251 Il policentrismo e la variabilità culturale nella didattica dell'inglese contemporaneo
Matteo Santipolo – Università degli Studi di Padova
- 277 Insegnare l'inglese nella Cina di oggi: una panoramica
Maria Luisa Maggioni e Erica Doppiati – Università Cattolica del S. Cuore di Milano

VALUTAZIONE E AUTOVALUTAZIONE

- 297 Migliorare la conoscenza della lingua straniera e la competenza interculturale valutando e correggendo gli errori degli altri: casi di *slip of the pen/tongue*
Emilia Di Martino – Università Suor Orsola Benincasa di Napoli
- 317 Autovalutare le proprie competenze linguistiche: un questionario di orientamento per gli immatricolandi alla Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere
Paola Desideri – Università G. d'Annunzio di Chieti-Pescara

**Specificity at the heart of our role:
well-known contents for renewed
and “global” Business English teaching**

Annalisa Zanola
Università degli Studi di Brescia

L'insegnamento della lingua inglese degli affari (Business English, English for Business) da tempo reclama una sua specificità, difficilmente associabile a modelli predefiniti, data l'assoluta eterogeneità nella tipologia di docenti, discenti e contesti di apprendimento, all'interno e all'esterno degli Atenei italiani. Pertanto, una definizione degli obiettivi e dei contenuti dei corsi, del ruolo del docente, degli strumenti didattici e della metodologia da adottare è fondamentale per una lingua di specialità di così ampia divulgazione da essere divenuta ormai nell'uso più 'general' che 'specific' (English for General Business Purposes contro English for Specific Business Purposes).

Secondo le indicazioni metodologiche che da decenni Gianfranco Porcelli elargisce a ricercatori e studiosi del settore, si ribadisce in questa sede l'urgenza di minimizzare la distanza che separa il mondo accademico da quello della formazione del docente di lingue straniere, nella speranza di offrire ad entrambi un punto di contatto e di arricchimento reciproci; e nella convinzione che ogni insegnante di questo settore debba controllare a fondo tale apprendimento, poiché diversamente, per usare una metafora cara al maestro professor Porcelli in tema di 'testing', sarebbe come un medico che finge di avere solo persone sane attorno a sé – un pessimo medico!¹

The role of the business English teacher has substantially changed over the past few decades, in a variety of ways. These changes have been driven by different social, economic, political and cultural

1 Il ricorso a questa metafora mi è caro perché familiare in conversazioni sul tema avute con Gianfranco Porcelli. Un'attestazione della medesima si ha tuttavia in una sua intervista del 2006 a cura di Nunzia Latini per *Educazione&Scuola*, reperibile in <http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/stranieri/porcelli.htm> (ultima modifica 6 giugno 2009).

applied to the Italian context, we will try to highlight the specificity of the Business English teacher in the Italian academic landscape, with particular attention to his/her relationship with the public (who are the students of English for International Business – also called EIB – language courses? Who are the EIB speakers? Are they native or non-native speakers of English?), with the contents and materials (which texts and tools for EIB teaching?), and with the specific communication requirements of financial and accounting experts.

1. Business language for business people

The importance of the command of business language by business people has been understood for centuries. Daniel Defoe, when writing *The Complete English Tradesman* in 1726, was quite explicit on the importance of comprehending and being able to use the language of business. He wrote:

I therefore recommend it to every young tradesman to take all occasions to converse with mechanics of every kind, and to learn the particular language of their business; not the names of their tools only[...] but the very cant of their trade, for every trade has its nostrums, and its little made words, which they very often pride themselves in, and which yet are useful to them on some occasion or other (Defoe 1987 [1726]: 25-26).

His book is filled with much advice and insights into business that are just as relevant today as when he wrote it. The implication of Defoe's advice is a clear implicit understanding that there is a language of business that is separate and 'specific' from that of general English.

guage through learning. From a content perspective it has been referred to as education through construction, rather than instruction, and from the language view, using languages to learn and learning to use languages.

ic interaction, the professional relationship between the interlocutors, and the topic under discussion. Indeed some business communication may be no different from the English used by the general public. There are, however, a number of identifiable characteristics of EIB.

EIB may be considered either *English for General Business Purposes (EGBP)* or *English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP)* (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998; Goddard 2007). EGBP courses are often for either inexperienced learners or for learners at an early stage in their careers. There is a similarity here between General EFL courses and courses in EGBP in that the latter are often extensive courses, with groups formed on the basis of language level, and with most materials containing work on the four skills, vocabulary and grammar, but set in a business context. This context is simply used as *carrier content*. For example, the *Profit&Loss Account* in a financial statement could be used as the 'carrier content' for teaching the present perfect (e.g. 'Distribution costs have increased this year'). These courses, which teach a range of English through business settings, can not accurately be described as ESP courses. The language activities tend to be core EFL activities and are not designed to meet particular needs.

In contrast, ESBP courses are often run for experienced people with specific reasons for taking the time off work for study. These courses are often 'tailor-made' with a focus on specific communication skills, such as 'presentations, report-writing, etc.' The programs are usually intensive, of short duration and with small groups. Furthermore, participants in ESBP courses may be at different levels of language proficiency and aim at fluency rather than accuracy.

For the teacher, the principal differences between teaching an EGBP course and teaching an ESBP course will be the following:

EGBP	Extensive course	One coursebook	Predictable pattern to the lessons	Familiarity with the teaching materials
ESBP	Intensive course	Varied materials (authentic)	Intercultural sensitivity is a priority	Intercultural competence and awareness

1. The fundamental concern of most business people is not language learning for its own sake, but how language learning will impact the company's bottom line and/or their salaries.
2. The teacher of EIB is working in a world where most communication is between non-native speakers (NNSs), and the language of communication is English as a world language (EWL).
3. The growth of EIB will increase the need for awareness of cross-cultural issues. It may well be that EIB teachers become consultants and advise on the effectiveness of intercultural communication in global companies.
4. Another area of importance for the EIB teacher is the study of discourse communities and the role of text within those communities. This may involve the use of specific corpora to look at what is said and how it is said in particular genres.

5. Who is the EIB speaker?

EIB is spoken and written in global companies. By 'global' we mean that customers, colleagues, team-members, managers can be located in almost any part of the world. All communication between them is in English, and the English they use is English as a World Language (EWL) or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) rather than the Native Speaker (NS) Variety of such countries as the US or the UK (Jenkins 2007). International English is about effective communication: although non-native speakers want to communicate effectively, they do not necessarily want to use native-speaker communication style. Equally, native speakers need to be able to use International English. Aspects of native-speaker English are not very helpful when communicating with non-native speakers. Let's consider some examples from Goddard (2007: 24):

[...] idiomatic expressions which have their roots in British culture (e.g. 'He's on a sticky wicket', or 'In for a penny in for a pound') are unlikely to be understood by non-native speakers. Furthermore, non-native English is

world of business first hand⁴.

Moreover, as we underlined before, the EIB teacher becomes more a consultant than a teacher. Many EIB teachers who work in companies are obliged to behave as much like consultants as

4. *I tend to teach useful phrases. My students don't need grammar and I'm less confident when teaching it anyhow.*
5. *I've taught many fluency lessons but I'm not sure how to do a business simulation.*
6. *My students want presentations on their course but there are 8 in the group – how can I involve them all in the lessons?*
7. *I'm in a bit of a rut and could do with something to motivate me again.*
8. *My students get through case studies really fast – am I missing something?*
9. *My general English students loved grammar – how can I cover this with my business English students so it's relevant?*
10. *I'm not sure how interesting teaching one-to-one would be for me – my teaching experience has been to large groups so far.*

As for concerns and problems with staff training, once teachers are involved in it, common comments about internal staff training by teachers and teacher trainers are:

1. *I already teach so many hours. I don't have time for training!*
2. *It's in your contract so you have to come to the workshop.*
3. *I never feel I get anything from the training sessions at work. I need something practical I can use in class.*
4. *I never feel I get anything from the training sessions at work. I already know how to give fun activities in class.*
5. *You didn't miss anything at Friday's training session. In fact you could have read it at home.*
6. *I hate being observed by my boss.*
7. *I don't have time to observe my peers.*
8. *It's hard to demonstrate the effectiveness of the training.*
9. *My staff work all over the city. There's never one time when we can all be in the same place for training.*

As a result of so much confusion about the subject, many teachers follow a self-development action plan, based on the following statements:

1. *I often formally meet colleagues to share ideas about teaching business English.*
2. *I subscribe to a journal with ideas for Business English teachers.*
3. *I have a favourite ELT website I visit to get ideas.*
4. *I sometimes write an article or send in an idea to a journal/website.*
5. *I attend workshops/teacher training at my school.*
6. *I attend external workshops/conferences (e.g. BESIG)*
7. *I sometimes give workshops to other teachers.*
8. *I participate in online teachers' forums/discussion chats.*
9. *I observe peers and invite them to observe me.*
10. *I subscribe to a magazine to improve my business knowledge.*
11. *I team teach with a more experienced teacher.*

5. *using power.* It might appear that teachers of EIB are in the unenviable and powerless position of knowing less about business and management than their group of learners. Most EIB teachers have a language teaching background and do not have first-hand experience of business. Nevertheless, what EIB teachers do need to understand is: what business people do in their jobs, what and how business people communicate, and how language is used in business situations.

We will conclude here with some considerations on teaching EIB in the academic world. In principle, the qualities associated with corporate EIB teachers should also be developed in EIB teachers in the academic world. However, there are significant differences between corporate and academic situations. In universities, for instance, teachers usually deal with undergraduates with little or no experience in the business world.

In the corporate world, the trend is towards short and job-specific courses with an emphasis on skills and language. On the contrary, in the academic world there may be short courses designed as 'pre-session' or even 'inter-session' courses, but the emphasis is on helping learners cope with their future studies or professions.

Perhaps the most significant difference between the corporate world and the academic world is the assessment procedure. In many corporate EIB situations, tests may be inappropriate: it is unlikely that EIB trainers in the corporate world will ever have to cope with the type of formal assessment carried out in large academic institutions.

Finally, there is a question of culture. In the UK/US academic world, the learners usually have to adapt to language and cultural expectations of British/American Universities. In the corporate world, learners may use English language but not adopt the cultural values that go with it.

7. Which materials for EIB?

Some recent surveys (Flinders 2005: 156-176; Nelson 2000; Reed 2006: 184-196; Reed 2007: 167-168) give a clear idea of the

Nevertheless, some form of authentic exchange of competence and information between financial and language experts in academic contexts in Italy is still lacking.

The financial specialized genre of ARs is one example of how relevant interdisciplinarity is in ESP (Zanola 2008). Financial specialized discourse is based on texts that require the attention of both financial and linguistic experts, in order to be adequately taught to and carefully analysed. Moreover, research in textual linguistics has underscored the fact that texts combine different features in order to change readers' minds. There are no pure texts, and there is no 'perfect' information. In ARs informative, descriptive and argumentative texts are interwoven in order to guarantee:

- from the linguistic point of view: the *effectiveness and efficiency* of the genre;
- from the financial point of view: that ARs' effectiveness and efficiency comply with the Financial Reporting Standards and give a 'true and fair' view of the financial position of the company. The Notes to the Financial Statements inside an AR are a great example of effectiveness and efficiency of the specialised language in a specialised professional context. They respond both to the main principle of any business organisational performance and to the foundations of human communication.

8. Conclusion

Internationalisation is, perhaps, a fact of life. During the last forty years, international trade has increased by 1500 % (Time, 1998). We have global television channels, international magazines, global popular music and global films. English is the language of global business. Nevertheless, we need more than language in order to communicate internationally. We also need cultural understanding; after all, language shapes culture and culture shapes language. Teachers and learners of English for International Business must be aware of the issues at stake so that they may avoid the misunderstandings that can arise from culturally insensitive use of language.

- Defoe D., 1987 [1726], *The Complete English Tradesman*, Gloucester, Alan Sutton Publishing.
- Defoe D., 1697, *An Essay upon Projects*, London, printed by R.R. for Tho. Cockerill.
- Di Sabato B., Cordisco M. (eds.), 2006, *Lingua e contenuti: un'integrazione efficace*, in *RILA*, numero monografico, 38, 1-2, Roma, Bulzoni.
- Doheny Farina S., 1991, "Creating a Text/Creating a Company. The Role of a Text in the Rise and Decline of a New Organization", in Bazermann C., Paradis J. (eds.), *Textual Dynamics of the Professions. Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Dudley Evans A., St John M., 1998, *Developments in English for Specific Purposes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Flinders S., 2005, "Business English Materials", in *ELT Journal*, 59/2, pp. 156-176.
- Frendo E., 2005, *How to Teach Business English*, Harlow, Pearson-Longman.
- Goddard R.J., 2007, *Teaching English for International Business*, Bedfordshire, Authors OnLine Ltd.
- Guirdham M., 1990, *Interpersonal Skills at Work*, Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall International.
- Jenkins J., 2007, *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitudes and Identity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins J., 2006, "Points of View and Blind Spots: ELF and SLA", in *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 16, n° 2, pp. 137-162.
- Johnson C., 1993, "Business English State-of-the-Art Article", in *Language Teaching*, 26, pp. 201-209.
- Marsh D., 2006, *English as Medium of Instruction in the New Global Linguistic Order: Global Characteristics, Local Consequences*, Jyväskylä, University of Jyväskylä, (<http://www.metsmac.org/2007/proceedings/2006/Marsh-D-METSMaC-2006.pdf>)
- Marsh D., 2002, *Content and Language Integrated Learning. The European Dimension*, Jyväskylä, University of Jyväskylä.
- Marsh, D., Frigols M.J., 2007, "CLIL as a Catalyst for Change in Languages Education", in *Babylonia*, 3/07, pp. 33-37 (<http://www.babylonia.ch>).
- Marsh, D., Wolff D., 2007, *Diverse Contexts – Converging Goals: CLIL in Europe*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang.
- Nelson M., 2000, *A Corpus-based Study of the Lexis of Business English and Business English Teaching Materials*, unpublished thesis, University of Manchester, (<http://users.utu.fi/micnel/thesis.html>).