

XVIth European Symposium on Language for Special Purpose (LSP):

Specialised Language in Global Communication

Colloquium proposal:

Communication and Language Policies in the Global Marketplace

With the onset of Globalisation, communication across national, cultural and linguistic borders has increased considerably. As a consequence of this development, organisations need to develop and implement communication and language policies. Some of these are implicit, but an increasing number of organisations also develop and implement explicit communication and language policies.

This colloquium will address the issue of language and communication policies in the global marketplace. It will consist of five short presentations, each of these followed by a discussion among all participants.

Duration: 3 hours. Active participation is expected.

1. The Concept of the Communication Policy Revisited (Peter Kastberg)

A communication policy is both a sign of change and an instrument for making changes. As such it constitutes the interface between what may be called an 'old communicative order' and a 'new communicative order'. Secondly, within an organisation, a communication policy plays the part of an interface between strategic decisions and operational actions. As policies they should support decision-making processes when it comes to ensuring that any instance of communication is in line with the mission, vision and values of an organisation.

Question: What, then, are the discrete characteristics of a communication policy? I.e. what distinguishes a communication policy from other organisational policies?

2. Communication Policy as a Means of Corporate Communication (Marianne Grove Ditlevsen)

Within the concept of corporate communication, a communication policy is situated at the tactical level and functions as a 'mediator' between the overall strategy and the operational communicative efforts of an organisation. Being a policy, i.e. a general statement that is designed to guide a person's thinking about decision making in an organisation, a communication policy should specify a definite course of action to be followed under certain circumstances and, in addition to this, it should allow for a certain amount of self-governance.

Question: What does it mean that on the one hand, the communication policy serves as a guideline and, on the other hand, it should allow for a certain amount of self-governance?

Language policy is a term that covers a number of different concepts, among them the choice of language or languages to be used in a given setting, the terminology used in any given (set of) languages, the range of languages accepted in a given setting, the range of languages taught, the genre conventions applied, the level of discourse or the spelling conventions applied. This part of the colloquium will address language issues that pertain specifically to global communication in the marketplace. Even so, there are several points of

departure for a discussion of the concept of language policy. Below is an outline of some of them.

3. 'Our corporate language is English' (Karen M. Lauridsen)

'Our corporate language is English' is a sentence often seen in lieu of a language policy. What does it mean for organisations not based in a country in which English is the official or national language? Is all written and oral communication in English? Or is it only at a certain level of management that the common language is English? Do the employees on the floor communicate with each other in English or in their local or national language(s)? Which language(s) is/are used when the organisation addresses customers and other external stakeholders?

What do we mean when we talk about a corporate language policy? Does the term cover one, or does it in fact cover a whole spectrum of realities?

4. On the implementation of language policies (Morten Pilegaard)

In corporate settings, strategic plans and language policies often fall short of expectations if un-backed by proper implementation procedures and tools. The successful implementation of a language policy requires the creation of mental, physical and virtual spaces; continuous development through knowledge sharing and dialogue between corporate 'sub-communities' of practice; and not least tools facilitating its incorporation into processes and products of communication.

Questions: Which conditions and tools are critical for corporate language policy implementation processes and outcomes? How do we commission language activists to make them successful language policy ambassadors? Is corporate language policy a bottom-up or a top-down process?

5. Language policies on the WWW? (Kirsten Wølch Rasmussen)

Companies present themselves on the web by means of a multitude of different genres (promotional, technical, and legal genres), traditionally characterised by different discourse conventions (personal and informal style vs. impersonal and formal style; clear and simple vs. highly complex language). The use of different genres and conventions fulfilling various communicative purposes may be rather unproblematic in a non-digital environment, but their juxtaposition on the company website seems to create a need for policies or strategies ensuring a certain degree of discursal homogeneity in order to present a uniform image of the company to the customers.

Question: How do companies deal with this situation? - Do they adopt a language policy ensuring a homogenous representation, adapt texts to the demands of the web as they go along, or do they not perceive the discursal diversity as a problem?

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