

Business Linguistics in 21st Century

Asst. lect. Abeer Ibrahim Taifor

Ministry of Education/ Najaf Directorate of Education/

Al-Manathira School for Outstanding Girls

Abeer.alabudi@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The progressing society requires a development in Applied Linguistics areas to study language changes. The advent of the 21st century has accompanied globalization in scientific, technical, and economic activities on an international scale, which has magnified the role of English language in international communications. The present paper is assigned to trace back the development of Business Linguistics as a new area within Applied Linguistics for studying the language of business. It defines Business Linguistics with reference to its role and benefit in the marketplace.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics, Business linguistics, Business Discourse, 21th century.

لغويات التجارة في القرن الحادي والعشرين

م. م. عبير ابراهيم طيفور

وزارة التربية/ مديرية تربية النجف الاشرف/ ثانوية المناذرة للمتفوقات

الملخص:

ان المجتمع المتطور يتطلب تطورا في مجالات اللغويات التطبيقية. رافق ظهور القرن الحادي والعشرين العولمة في الأنشطة العلمية والتقنية والاقتصادية على نطاق دولي، مما عزز دور اللغة الإنجليزية في التواصل الدولي. تهدف هذه الورقة لتتبع تطور لسانيات التجارة كمجال جديد في اللغويات التطبيقية لدراسة لغة التجارة. تعرف الدراسة علم لغويات التجارة وتوضح دوره وفائدته في بيئة العمل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم اللغة التطبيقي، لغويات التجارة، الخطاب التجاري، القرن الحادي والعشرون.

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Introduction

Business Linguistics (BL), as a sub-field of Applied Linguistics, deals with language used in business context and studies business discourse. (Foucault,1972:49) states that business discourse can be identified according to the theme or topic of discourse which should be about business subjects. On the other hand, (Stubbs,1983:1) describes discourse as the "language above the sentence or above the clause" which allows discourse analysts to analyse discourse textually and contextually. As such, business discourse can be conceptualised in relation to business context. Consequently, (Daniushina,2010:241) defines BL as "a multidisciplinary synergic field for researching the use of language and communication in business". She (Ibid.:242) suggests that BL should be introduced as a separate discipline of Applied Linguistics establishing its methodology and scientific apparatus. Therefore, BL "is a field that explores the specific functioning of language in a business context, investigates the use of language resources in business activities, and studies verbal and para-verbal aspects of business communication". The practical value of BL lies in its contribution to improving communication competence in the business domain. By understanding the specific language resources and communication processes in business, professionals and entrepreneurs can enhance their effectiveness and efficiency in their professional activities.

1. The Role of BL in the 21st Century

BL emerges as a multidisciplinary field that aims to bridge the gap between linguistics and business communication studies. In the 21st century, BL plays a crucial role in understanding and effectively utilizing the language in the context of business by studying language strategies and certain linguistic devices. The most important role of BL is marketing and advertising. Language plays a vital role in marketing and advertising to promote objects, as such BL can provide insights into the language techniques, persuasive strategies, and discourse patterns used in marketing campaigns, branding, and advertising (Daniushina, 2010: 242).

By understanding the linguistic aspects of consumer behaviour, businessmen can develop more targeted and compelling marketing messages to reach their target audience. It is also important to enhance businessmen's communication competence. Effective communication is vital in the globalised and interconnected business world. By understanding the linguistic nuances, professionals can enhance their communication competence, both in oral and written forms, leading to improved business interactions, negotiations, and collaborations (Daniushina, 2010: 243).

With the rapid growth of digital technologies and online platforms, language use in the digital sphere has become increasingly important. BL explores the language of websites, social media, online reviews, and digital marketing. Understanding the linguistic aspects of digital communication enables businesses to optimise their online presence, engage with customers effectively, and maintain a positive brand image in the digital realm.

In conclusion, BL can offer valuable insights into the language aspects of various business activities. By understanding and applying the principles of BL, organizations can gain a competitive edge in the dynamic and globalized business environment.

2. Definitions of Business Linguistics

It is (Daniushina, 2010, 2011) who proposed the term “Business Linguistics” and suggests to establish it as a branch of Applied Linguistics. BL refers to the different approaches used to study and analyse language in a business environment. (Daniushina, 2010: 242) defines BL as an interdisciplinary field that focuses on the study of language in a business context and the way language works in business. It analyses “verbal and para-verbal” components of business communication as well as the use of linguistic resources in business discourse. In her document (Daniushina, 2011:177), she defines BL as a complex and interdisciplinary field that focuses on researching

the discourse employment in business and the specialised verbal features of commercial communication.

Depending on (Daniushina, 2010, 2011), (Alhumsi, 2021:25) defines BL as “the study of language function that deals with business as well as the linguistic field of business communication.”

Therefore, BL is an interdisciplinary field that explores the role of discourse in business settings, examining the linguistic features, communication strategies, and discourse patterns that shape organizational communication, marketing efforts, workplace interactions, and intercultural communication in the business world.

3. Historical background of Business Linguistics

As a new discipline, BL has emerged in the last two decades within Applied Linguistics. (Daniushina, 2010:241) is the first linguist who defines BL and identifies its sources, major areas and practical purposes. Contributions of Applied Linguistics research into Business English have brought forward useful information about the nature and the prominent features of business communication. As a new interdisciplinary and not well defined field, BL can be traced back into different sources such as “Sociolinguistics and Psycholinguistics, Text linguistics and Functional styles, Pragmatics, Discourse studies, Cognitive and Communication Theory, Theory of Organization, Organizational psychology and Organizational Communication, Management Studies, as well as in applied research of teaching and learning Language for Specific Purposes” (Daniushina, 2010: 242). Thus, it is still within the context of the corporation

The major areas of BL are business discourse, media discourse, professional sublanguages, the language of public relations, business lexicography, business rhetoric and intercultural communication. These areas of research and application highlight the diverse aspects of language use in business contexts that fall within the scope of BL. By studying these areas, BL aims to enhance communication competence,

improve language resources, and contribute to effective and successful business communication (Daniushina, 2010: 241).

Business, as a great operator of social development has been around the world, and affects people's lives causing new areas of social thought. No doubt, business cannot be done without using language. Such a use of language demands some applied fields to serve its linguistic needs. In the West, during 1980s, thus, there arose an applied field which emphasises the study of the business sublanguage and business communication such as "researching, bargaining communication" by (Angelmar and Stern, 1978), "language at work", "The language of business" by (Johns, 1980, 1986), "communicating at work" by (Adler, 1983), "negotiation interaction" by (Donohue and Diez, 1985), "language of business negotiations" by (Lampi, 1986), etc. In turn, it became a new field of linguistics, although the term "Business Linguistic" has been not found.

Different studies on business language and business communication have been conducted by "F. Bargiela-Chiappini, L.Beamer, V.Bhatia, Ch.Candlin, A.Johns, C.Nickerson, A.Pennycook, G.Poncini, L.Putnam, C.Roberts, P.Rogers, H.Spencer-Oatey, J., J.Swales, I.Varner, L.Yeung and others. Additionally, and at "the end of the 1990s the subject of the study-'how business uses language to achieve its goals' [such as profitability, customer satisfaction, innovation, employee development, social responsibility, operational efficiency, market leadership] and the basis for its methodology were determined by (Ehlich and Wagner, 1995), (Firth, 1995), (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997a, 1997b), (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson, 1999)" without obviously referring to BL as a linguistic term (cited in Daniushina, 2010: 243).

4. Benefits that Businessmen Gain from BL

Scholars in Business Linguistics may help businessmen to use invisible argumentative and persuasive linguistic capacities, create a positive image and improve the situation of their company and product in the public consciousness, to build and maintain a connection with both



existing and potential customers and shareholders. An example of the effectiveness of linguistic means is that “business practice can be seen in the increasingly active work of web-sites and the blogs of many global companies” (Ibid.).

BL provides businessmen with a deeper understanding of language use in business contexts. By applying BL principles, businessmen can improve their communication skills, both oral and written. They can learn to use appropriate language choices, discourse strategies, and persuasion techniques, leading to more effective and impactful communication with clients, colleagues, and stakeholders.

BL equips businessmen with the knowledge and skills to navigate cultural differences in communication successfully. By understanding cultural norms, communication styles, and intercultural communication challenges, businessmen can build strong relationships with international partners, negotiate effectively, and avoid misunderstandings. Thus, BL offers insights into the language techniques, persuasive strategies, and discourse patterns used in marketing and advertising (Daniushina, 2010: 242-43).

Clear and effective written discourse is essential in the business world. BL can provide businessmen with guidelines for producing well-written business documents. By applying BL principles, businessmen can improve their writing skills, ensuring their documents are concise, coherent, and professional. This includes reports, proposals, emails, and other written materials used in business communication. The same way, businessmen can benefit from BL by improving their oral communication skills, navigating cross-cultural challenges, developing persuasive marketing strategies, achieving successful negotiations, leveraging language technology, and fostering continuous professional development. These benefits can contribute to their overall success in the business world.

5. Business Discourse and Linguistics

The notion of 'business discourse', and respectively the foundation of 'the language of businesses into the writing of academic field are attributed to (Johns,1980, 1986). (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007: 3) term business discourse as being "all about how people communicate using talk or writing in commercial organizations to get their work done", and as a "social action in business contexts". Depending on the field of discourse analysis, (Daniushina, 2010: 242) describes business discourse as the "verbalization of business mentality, realised in the form of an open multitude of thematically correlated texts on a wide range of business issues, considered in combination with their extra-linguistic contexts". One view sees discourse in terms of the topic types such as immigration, ecology, war, and so on. In this sense, (Foucault, 1972,49) conceives discourse more ideologically as "practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak". (Stubbs,1983:1) understands discourse meaning as "language above the sentence or above the clause" which allows analysing discourse textually and contextually. For instance, political discourse can be conceptualized in relation to the political context. In the same vein, (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:261) argue that discourse encompasses linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. (for more clarification, see Flayih and Taifor, 2018)

Linguistically, discourse is described at different linguistic levels: syntactic, semantic, stylistic, and rhetorical. In accordance with the socio-cultural definition, (van Dijk, 1997: 2-3) refers to the social dimension of discourse, that is the sequence of contextualised, controlled, and purposeful acts accomplished in society.

Discourse is a social practice, whether talk or text, that is people use to do things, for instance, to blame, to apologise, to show themselves positively, etc. (Gill 2000: 175). Although Bargiela- Chiappini offers a general definition, she admits that it is difficult to define business discourse. This is due to the complexity of this field that involves a multidisciplinary scholarship that incorporates linguistics, communication studies, organization studies, ethnomethodology, critical

studies, sociology, international management etc. This imminently leads to the fact that each discipline viewing business discourse from its own perspective (Bargiella-Chiappini 2009:1-2).

Generally, business discourse mainly includes two sides which serve to establish communication for business purposes through the use of variety of means in varied contexts. The first is known as spoken business discourse and manifested in business meetings, interviews, presentations, etc.; whereas the second is known as written discourse including emails, faxes, letters, business reports, etc.

Spoken business discourse refers to the language and communication practices used in verbal interactions within the business context. It encompasses various forms of spoken communication, such as business meetings, negotiations, presentations, phone conversations, and informal discussions among professionals. It can be analysed by using theories as discourse analysis, conversation analysis, genre analysis, critical discourse analysis, speech act theory, politeness theory. These theories provide frameworks and analytical tools for studying spoken business discourse, enabling researchers to gain insights into the complex dynamics of language and communication in business settings. Spoken discourse theories center their analysis on language use in spoken interactions, such as conversations, meetings, presentations, and negotiations.

Whereas written business discourse refers to any form of written communication used in a professional setting, such as emails, memos, reports, and business letters. It is essential for effective communication within organizations and with external stakeholders (Bill Birchard, 2021). Theories of analysing written business discourse include discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, text analysis, pragmatics and stylistics. Written discourse theories primarily focus on analysing language use and communication patterns in written texts. Written discourse theories, on the other hand, often place more emphasis on the formal aspects of language, such as grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and sentence structure. Written texts tend to be more



planned, revised, and edited, allowing for greater precision and control over language.

6. Literature Review

It seems that the starting point of BL is from Europe. Studies with diversity in methods, interests and approaches cover a broad scope of topics through investigation, and contextualisation of their approach. Danyushina is the first who claims that BL should be considered as a separate field of Applied Linguistics. In her documents, “Business linguistics and business discourse (2010)” and “Business Linguistics: A New Interdisciplinary Synergy (2011)”, she explores the field of BL as a sub-discipline that combines Applied Linguistics and Business Communication studies. The author defines BL as a complex and interdisciplinary field that focuses on researching the use of language in business and the specific verbal aspects of business communication.

In her document (Danyushina, 2010:241-42), she discusses the establishment of this new branch of Applied Linguistics. The author explores “the sources, key areas, and practical purposes” of BL, as well as the definition and functional typology of business discourse. Her paper suggests that BL is a field that investigates the specific functioning of language in a business context, the use of language resources in business activities, and “the verbal and para-verbal” aspects of business communication. The author argues that Business Linguistics intersects with related disciplines such as Media Linguistics, Judicial Linguistics, and Political Linguistics, and emphasizes the importance of understanding language and communication in business for professionals and consumers alike.

(Danyushina, 2011:178) highlights that business discourse has its own unique characteristics and features, such as "essence enlargement" and the use of various linguistic devices to achieve pragmatic purposes. The author emphasizes the importance of studying business communication and argues that it deserves linguistic attention

comparable to other specialized fields such as Political Linguistics or Legal Linguistics.

The author suggests that a discursive approach should be adopted in studying business discourse, emphasizing its social orientation. Discursive analysis is seen as a crucial method for investigating and understanding the complexities of business communication. Overall, the paper introduces and advocates for the establishment of BL as a distinct field of study that explores the intersection of language and business communication.

Before that, (Nickerson's, 2000) study on emails involving Anglo-Dutch multinational corporations is conducted to examine the influence of the organizations and culture on the realisation of discourse. The method used is genre analysis of written organizational genres as well as survey responses and collection of business documents. The author concludes that Dutch employees in multinational corporations write in English which plays a key role in communication.

Using different approach, (Gimenez, 2000: 246-247) tries to investigate business written discourse. His study is conducted to investigate the effects of spoken language on e-mail messages within the context of business written discourse/ communications, and the analysis of these e-mails focuses on three distinguished characteristics; register, style, and contextual elements. The author uses the analytical method in this study by analysing register and context of language as well as making comparison of business email messages and letters. It concludes that E-mail communication is becoming more informal and personalized and the language and style of e-mails reflect spoken discourse. E-mail messages are affecting business written communication.

The study found evidence to suggest that electronically mediated communication is already affecting business written communication, showing a tendency towards a more flexible register. The analysis of 63 business e-mail messages showed that punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are not given much consideration in business e-mails. Most of the e-mails analysed in the study were sent to request or provide

information about prices or availability of products, indicating that e-mail is seen as an appropriate medium for such communication needs.

E-mail communications where an established relationship exists between company and customer tended to display the most evidence of a personalized register. The business e-mail samples contained simple, straightforward syntactic structures compared to business letters, as well as a higher number of elliptical forms and contracted forms.

Using a distinct language approach, as evidenced by the topic of their inquiry and methodologies, (Arvani's, 2006) contrastive study is conducted a pragmatic approach. The study aims at investigating distinctions between business English letters created by native speakers (British) and non-native speakers (Iranians) in a business context. It analyses business letters written by Iranians and native speakers, focusing on lexical density, schematic structures, and politeness strategies. The author uses the method of discourse analysis to investigate politeness strategies in fifty business letters sent between four Iranian enterprises in Tabriz and their business counterparts in England. The corpus had 25 letters written by Iranian authors at four large firms in Tabriz, and the remaining 25 letters produced by native English writers in nine companies in England. The results in this study demonstrated that the writers of the Iranian letters had given all their attention to surface linguistic features at the expense of utterly overlooking the pragmatic characteristics of language such as; the use of politeness strategies. The employment of positive and negative politeness strategies in letters was researched in order to show the pragmatic discourse elements of business letters produced by the two groups. This section of the study revealed that Iranian business letters had signs of politeness strategies. The Iranian communicators wanted to convey their messages simply by using more casual and direct language in their letters, without considering how to apply forms acceptable to their counterparts.

Although it is a newborn discipline, a number of studies on BL have grown in various parts of the world involving scholars from various disciplines particularly in the last two decades. Using different methods,



(such as discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, textual analysis, conversation analysis, and critical discourse analysis) studies in business discourse try to investigate certain aspects, and are influenced by the researcher's area of interest and his/her scholarly affiliation (Bragiela-Chappini,2009). Nonetheless, no one terms the field as BL before (Daniushina, 2010, 2011).

Within the same field, (Grygiel, 2015:1) made a survey on Business English from a linguistic perspective. He (Ibid.) defines Business English "as a specialised area of English relating to the language used in business". Thus, he contextualises business discourse within business context depending on the concept of "*languages for special/specific purposes*". In this sense, he sees Business English as being "taught and learnt for a utilitarian purpose" which has a relationship with English for Academic Purpose. In this way, he conceptualises Business English within "ELT (English Language Teaching) which began to emerge in the 1960s as a response to a growing awareness that there were certain types of learners who had specialised needs that General English courses did not meet" (Ibid.: 2). The study finds that studying "Business English can be pedagogically-centered" indicating the active role of the researchers involved in the investigation of Business English in teaching. It is also found that studying business English can help in translation. "In this case, rather than language, a more precise object of analysis is a specialist text". Business English is investigated to inform training programs to get knowledge "how to use language to be more successful in achieving one's goals in business rather than simply describe the language of business" (Grygiel, 2015: 11).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, BL is a newborn branch within Applied Linguistics in its concentration on the linguistic problems faced by people in business. It started in Europe, spreading around different parts of the world. Although researches don't name the field clearly, researches on business discourse and communication have used this area of study since



the end of the 20th century. The contribution of research in Applied Linguistics into BL has brought forward useful information on the nature and the prominent features of business communication. Its main purpose is studying and analysing different forms of discourses within business context. BL can improve businessmen's communication competence by supplying them with linguistic strategies that make their discourse(s) more persuasive and polite. In this sense, BL bridges the gap between linguistics and business communication studies. So, businessmen can benefit from BL to improve their communication skills. Additionally, BL can be taught in academic organizations to help people how to manage their business lives easily and correctly.

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