# Organisational Consulting and Training Experiences: Intercultural Identities and Discursive Practices in the Creation and Management of Learning

*Janet Bowker*

*Abstract*

This article describes and compares two parallel specialised corpora in the field of organizational and managerial discourse: firstly, recordings of a three-day workshop with clients overseas held by a large American multinational consulting group, and secondly, the audio data from a series of in-house employee training sessions, held by the same company in North America in webcast, audio-conferencing mode. The focus is on the role of discourse, together with differences in linguistic patterns and pragmatic objectives, which emerge in the BELF (business English as a lingua franca) intercultural context, as opposed to the mono-cultural North American context, in the achievement of learning objectives and the conveyance of professional knowledge and competence. The article concludes with a proposal for a model to describe these inter-relational, identity construal dynamics.

*Keywords*: corporate identity, organizational consulting, in-service training, webcasting modalities

## 1. Introduction

This research contrasts two sets of corporate teaching and learning experiences, a three-day workshop delivering human resources expertise as part of client services in Malaysia, and a set of in-service professional development seminars, "webinars", by the same organisational consulting company, in North America. Two basic issues are investigated: firstly, given the asymmetry in roles and participant status between learners/trainees and the imparters of knowledge, the experts/trainers, the study hypothesises that this will affect discourse and language preferences (Nair-Venugopal 2003; 2001; Vine 2009). In line with this, the analysis focuses on how discourse reflects and itself is vehicular in adjusting the relative

power and social distance positioning of the interactants in the achievement of workable, successful relationships, and the role these dynamics play in reciprocal identity construal.

Secondly, as a corollary to this, it is assumed that these learning and training experiences will be marked by a great deal of "facework" (Goffman 1955: 213-31; 1967: 31ff; 1981: 128; Gumperz 1982: 213) and "trustwork" (Watson 2009: 494) in portraying how one sees oneself, and in construing how one would wish to be seen by others. Given the centrality of participant roles, status and identities within these two differing socio-cultural contexts, the study considers how far it is possible to identify the role of interculturality in the construction of interpersonal relationships in the two settings, and the implications of a cultural factor for discourse creation. At the same time, this invokes issues related to the creation and sharing of expert, professional knowledge. More specifically, this entails tracing the discursive indexicality of attitudes displayed by interlocutors throughout the encounters, as they respectively assess the competence, the abilities and achievements of both parties (learners and instructors) who are conjointly responsible for the successful achievement of learning objectives.

The analysis therefore attempts to discover similarities and differences in discourse practices between the first potentially risk-taking, "face-threatening" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 24, 65) client event abroad (where trainer competence will need to be demonstrated with more care, given the nature of the audience and the circumstances of the encounter, to be described later), and the second, safer "face-maintenance" situation on American home ground (where the relationships are internal to the organisation and have a longer, more stable history).

## 2. Descriptive and explanatory theoretical frameworks: changing conceptualisations of face, identity and interculturality

Identity has been increasingly conceptualised as rooted in interaction "diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter" (Goffman 1955: 214). Many scholars of identity are working within this social-constructionist framework, as illustrated by Benwell and Stokoe ([2006] 2010), who stress the "constructionist" as opposed to the "essentialist" nature of face and identity:

Identity is a public phenomenon, a performance or construction that is interpreted by other people […] Identity is who people are to each other and how people display who they understand each other to be. […] Who we are to each other, then, is accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse. (Benwell and Stokoe [2006] 2010: V)

This is a basic tenet of the approach adopted in this investigation into rapport management and identity construal. Another significant theoretical area of relevance would seem to lie in the classic works on "politeness" models, (Lakoff 1973; Brown and Levinson 1987; Scollon and Wong Scollon [1995] 2001) which have stimulated so much recent research. Yet it is fair to say that hardly any aspect of the theories has gone unchallenged. There are many problems raised by the dichotomy "positive" and "negative" face (Brown and Levinson 1987: 59-60 *et passim*). Basically, the static listing of discrete, reified analytical categories explains little about the actual processes and "operationalisation" (Goffman 1981: 31) of rapport management embedded in talk-in-interaction.

The works of Arundale (2006; 2010) provide us with a different conceptualisation of face and facework, at the same time side-stepping and going beyond politeness theory, and substituting it with a new, unifying explanatory theory. In his "Face Constituting Theory" employing a "Conjoint Co-constituting Model", Arundale explains face as participants' "*interpretings*" (2010: 2078) of relational connectedness and separateness, conjointly constituted in specific relationships. More specifically, in this framework, power and social distance are also conceptualised as "matters of contextual face interpretings brought into play by the participants" (Arundale 2006: 208). The onus on researchers who adopt this approach, then, which is also central to this particular study, is to assess the roles of participants through the development of their discourse, during which they evaluate (more or less consciously) their own face interpretations of group facework, which can be subjectively construed as being threatening, supporting or maintaining of both face and identity.

Social-constructionist descriptive and explanatory frameworks also extend to changing notions of culture in discourse research and, more specifically, "interculturality". One central shift in the conceptualisation of intercultural and cross-cultural contact is a

move away from the idea of culture in terms of "a bounded object", describable using pre-determined "off-the-shelf categories", which have often, in the past, been binary oppositions or contrasts (Bargiela-Chiappini 2009: 1-15). Interculturality, instead, is in-creasingly being viewed as "a process of co-constructed meaning creation", producing and elaborating "culture in the making" (Bargiela-Chiappini 2009), which is leading many scholars to describe these processes through a close examination of the dynamics of intercultural encounters and practices (Salvi and Tanaka, 2011, have compiled a representative range of recent research).

This process-based perspective has a significant bearing on the present study when considering the role of culture in the findings about similarities and contrasts in discursive performance, participant evaluations and communicative outcomes.

## 3.  Data and methodological approach

Three main procedural priorities emerge from the adoption of the approaches previously outlined:

*a*)  The importance of naturally-occurring, empirically rich authentic micro-data, particularly audio and increasingly video recordings, to be used for finely-tuned analysis.

*b*)  A micro-level analysis using conversational-talk in interaction analytical instruments to discover how social actions, describable in pragmatic, illocutionary functional terms, are realised in language, linguistic preferences and patterns.

*c*)  The value of ethnographic participant observation and feedback from the interlocutors themselves about how *they* perceive what is happening during the interactions.

The data for this study consists of a selection from a self-compiled, specialist corpus of business communications which I have been gathering, recording, transcribing and analysing for a good number of years.[1] The audio-recordings used in this analysis

---

[1] The company concerned is a global-leader, North American-based multinational group specialising in organisational consulting and employment transition. The documents span both internal, in-house communications, mostly in computer-mediated modes, and recordings of external client solutions interactions (meetings, workshops, presentations, briefings etc). To date the corpus has

are taken from two sub-corpora: the first is a three-day workshop in Malaysia, where the consultants (all very experienced in South-East Asian business practice) had been invited to bring state-of-the-art knowledge, models, skills and practices in the field of human resources to an unknown audience (both to the consultants and between themselves), all H.R. professionals in public and private organizations (around six hour oral modules, plus slides, and workshop material). The second is a series of in-service training and development audio-conferenced "webinars" in North America, by the same company, using some of the same facilitators, and delivered to employees and managers throughout the ranks, most of whom were close colleagues or had known each other for some time (nine hours plus slides).

The data was divided into its three main functional stages:

*a*)  The **power point slides**: the objects of teaching and learning are made directly explicit and may be said to constitute *a statement of the competence* (the professional content knowledge, skills and practices) to be delivered by the company spokespeople (the experts and instructors), in both situations.

*b*)  The **oral presentations** by the consultants and the trainers, convey the subjects of the learning, *displaying the competence*.

*c*)  The **interaction with the audiences**. In this stage, the knowledge is shared with the learners and trainees, who are invited to *evaluate and apply the competence*.

## 4.  The analysis

### 4.1. The Malaysian Encounter

4.1.1. The slides: nouns and "nouning"

Analysis of the set of power point slides reveals a marked high frequency of compound noun groups and nominalised phraseology in the Malaysian episode:

---

been used to investigate a number of topics and themes related to corporate culture, image, identity, and reputation, including channels and multimodality, intercultural business encounters (Bowker 2011), and organisational metaphor (Bowker 2012).

(1) (Slide) The Group and Client Solutions
– Employee Engagement and Communication
– Leadership and Professional Development
– Organizational Research and Analysis
– Remuneration and Rewards
– Strategic Talent Management

In line with cognitive linguistic thinking about the pragmatic value of the noun category, we can hypothesise that the knowledge which is being presented is imbued with "factive status", creating a kind of "conceptual reification" through the elimination of reference to agents and actions (Langacker 2009: 288): the audience is simply presented with "facts" and "points of fact".

4.1.2. The oral presentation: "Argumentative Reservation"

The oral data of the Malaysian encounters is marked by what has been termed "Argumentative Reservation" by scholars of argumentation (Montolio, 2008, describes its place in the rhetorical tradition). This refers to the strategies used in the expression of reservation to qualify and mitigate the force of one's assertions and opinions. The consultants are at pains to limit the strength of their recommendations in a wish not to appear over-assertive or overly authoritative in what is a delicate socio-cultural situation, according to the accounts of the consultants themselves.[2] Vague language and negativisation are found to be key features in these boosting-hedging dynamics.

(2) (Sequence: Consultant)
So there are some companies in the US that I work with, because the

---

[2] The main facilitator says that the encounter was marked by tensions and communication problems from the start, with a perceived lack of collaboration and suspicion on the part of the audience, finally resulting in their request to stop recordings. The feedback from the consultants sheds invaluable light on the deficiencies at three levels of socio-cultural context. At a micro-level, the event itself, the audience was apparently very mixed in professional background, bringing different sets of expectations to the occasion; in organisational terms there was a lack of congruity in norms concerning professional styles, degrees of directness and involvement; at a macro-level, they noted a marked degree of ambiguity on the part of the Malaysian professionals about the value of American business norms and practices.

market is a little more consistent maybe over time and there's a sort of a reliable source for that industry that they have actually created individual job ranges and they just move it according to the market […]
(Audience member) I'm not sure what the value is of looking at these items from a universal perspective.

The presenter's use of vague language, *some companies, a little more consistent, maybe, a sort of,* and *they just move it*, defuses the expert's proposal and underplays her authority. This is, however, misinterpreted by the audience, who virtually challenge the consultant's competence with a charge of irrelevance to themselves, to "us".

(3) (Sequence opening: Consultant)
There are some very sophisticated global companies using this approach.
(Shift 1: Consultant) I'm not necessarily saying this is a great way to go so much as encouraging you to think […].
(Sequence adjoiner) We did a benchmark study in 2009.
(Shift 2: Consultant) I'm told it's not statistically significant—it wasn't really meant to be a research project as much as a study that was for one of our clients, a global company. All household names.
(Audience member) This looks like an interesting study, but do you have any research that *is* considered statistically significant, and focused on Asian companies?

The consultant's use of negativisation counterpoints the initial claim to American superiority, *some very sophisticated global companies*, not wanting to exclude Asian practice or alternatives. Again the audience's reaction is an insinuation that competence is not only lacking, *any research that is statistically relevant*, but also incomplete, *focused on Asian companies*.

Throughout the oral data, these are running themes: that the professional consulting advice is in some way defective. The external visiting experts are made to feel they are in a double bind: if they give strong weight to their proposals, they are interpreted as superior and even bullying, giving advice which is extraneous to Malaysian needs and wants (and possibly to regional S.E. Asian experience, in general). If they attempt to include and discuss relevance with the audience, they are accused of not doing what they were supposed to do, and being paid to do, "where is the expert advice"?

4.1.3. Participant interaction: Sharing the "knowledge"

The indirectness of the strategies described above continues into the solicitation techniques used by the consultants, often using oblique question routines embedded in hedged pre-sequences, as the next extract shows.

(4) (Sequence opening: Consultant)
So there are some companies in the US that I work with, they just move it according to the market. Do you move the ranges down? Yes, if you have to.
(Shift 1: Consultant) I wanted to ask. How are people managing this internal salary structuring versus the market place? What sort of techniques are working for you?
(Audience: silence and collective murmurs)
(Shift 2: Consultant) So, in the first instance, we […].
(Shift 3: Consultant) I don't have enough data to know if this is true in Asia. Does this tie in with what you're hearing?

The discourse shifts as the presenter changes footing and adjusts from "expert" to "knowledge seeker", and attempting repair work when reactions are not forthcoming. The audience is invited to establish relevance and applications, and to co-create "the expert knowledge", in what is clearly becoming a trying communicative situation.

## 4.2. The US in-house organisational training encounters

4.2.1. The slides: "Directive Acts"[3] and the Imperative Mood

The most striking linguistic feature of the set of slides in the American data is the very high frequency of the imperative form. The following example, taken from a session of *"How to improve your meeting facilitator and presentation skills"*,[4] is typical.

---

[3] The term "Directive Act" is used in the sense given by Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 179-211), in their classification of five categories of illocutionary act: assertive, commissive, directive, declarative, expressive.
[4] The topics of the training and development webinars are very varied, including practical task completion, professional skill development and personal professional growth.

(5) (Slide) **"Get ready: planning"**
– Create the agenda
– Review previous agendas for any follow up
– Ask for input
– Create a timetable
– Don't over-plan
– Generate interest
– Allow participants to prepare

Clearly the imperative mood is not functioning to issue coercive commands or orders[5]. The socio-cultural context of the messaging frames it, instead, as a means of conveying suggestions, advice, and recommendations, in a direct, informal but business-like manner. The interpersonal space is close, creating a proximal stance, as opposed to the distal positioning of the nominalisation of the slides in the Malaysian situation. Space does not permit here, but throughout the in-house data, imperative forms were found to convey a wide range of interlocutionary functions and speech actions: instructions, commentaries or demonstrations, explanations, and even creating narratives, as well as invitations and sets of proposals, all stimulating interactivity through these short, directive acts.

4.2.2. The oral presentation: coding the directive act

Presenters use a set of repeated strategies to talk about their slides, involving direct question and answer routines, narrative techniques (including the use of direct speech), humour, and even more imperative forms. Clearly a great deal of rapport-face management is the issue, the "competence face" of the corporate spokespeople being one which is closely linked to creating solidarity, a sense of inclusion and building value with trainees, while downplaying the personal power and authority of the trainer, as the next two extracts illustrate.

(6) (Slide) "Today's objectives"
– Share best practices

---

[5] My analysis incorporates Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar perspective: the indicative mood is related to "propositions", ideational meaning sets and the exchange of information, whereas the imperative mood relates to "proposals", and to interpersonal meaning sets.

– Select 1 skill or technique to focus on as a meeting facilitator or participant
– Have fun and participate
– Let us know what else we can do to support you
(Trainer): You are invited to participate with each slide, sharing stories and examples of what today is all about. Real life examples help us to connect and learn, so every question and example adds value. So, don't sit back, just say what you think.

The imperatives have been expanded and the speech acts are made explicit. At the same time she defuses her own power, acknowledging the value of shared expertise and experience, and in this way redistributes interactive-interpretative space. In example 7, narrative techniques and rhetorical questions are to the fore.

(7) Slide: "Meeting Personalities: Accommodating differences"
(Trainer): So, in terms of participants here come characters we've all met. And the gentleman with his hands […] the tangent talker, so what are you going to do about that? […] so "really appreciate your thoughts – we can take the rest off line – I very much want to hear from everyone else in the room" – end of story.

4.2.3. Sharing "the competence": informalisation and humour

Table 1, below, summarises the main differences in information sharing. In contrast with the Malaysian situation, where audience participation is solicited using indirect forms, hedged questions and pre-sequences, the US sessions are marked by informality and directness of style.

TABLE 1
Participation solicitation style: directness and indirectness

| Indirect solicitation, pre-sequences, questions: Malaysian workshop | Direct and elliptical questions, imperatives, exclaimers: US in-house training |
| --- | --- |
| – I wanted to ask. How are people keeping track? What sort of techniques are you using?<br>– I don't know what the protocol here is in Malaysia – do you accept people back? | – Does this resonate with anybody? (silence) Oh come on!<br>– Can you relate to that? I know I can.<br>– Anyone want to share a story on that? |

Humour emerges as an important strategy which marks a style shift to greater informality and "conversationalization" (Fairclough 1992: 204) in the American data. The following excerpt is typical of the kind of joking relationships the groups display between themselves, in their "democratized" interactional environment:

(8) (Audience member 1): This is me again, sorry. Is there a method when some are more long-winded than others, to mm, kind of, in a nice way, break into that and move on? Any suggestions on that?
(Trainer): I'd love to hear from someone in the group.
(Audience member 2): *I use a bell*. (laughter)
No, I'm kidding but […].

The following excerpts show how humour, prompted by different types of group interplay, is used in these training episodes to achieve varying reactions and responses.

(9) (Trainer): That's a tough one. Any thoughts out there from anyone?
(Silence)
(Live panel member 1): *Anyone*? (laughter)
(Trainer): I don't know if anyone has an example or a story they want to share on that note? (Silence)
Live panel member 2: *Just a story*? Please? (laughter)

Here, the live-audience panel members show solidarity with the trainer. The potentially face-threatening moment, no manifestation of interest from the audience, is defused, mitigated by her colleagues, filling in the empty space with a jocular, echoed request for input, showing face support and affiliation.

(10) (Trainer): It's not about doing things better – it's about doing things differently. It's different for all of us. We all have different meetings with different groups. Some with direct support – some of us not. *Some of us who are new – some of us that are not*. (laughter).

Again, this demonstrates the variety of style, tone and function of humour. Here, the trainer is making fun of herself, becoming the target of a joking "aside". The oblique reference to her own age has the effect of downplaying her status and authority as "resident expert", and is appreciated by her audience as an alignment technique.

## 5. Discussion of findings: a proposed dynamical model of conjoint identity construal

Table 2, below, summarises the findings of the discourse analysis of the two sets of data.

TABLE 2

The pragma-linguistic exponents of the force dynamics of interpersonal relations

| Pragmatic framing/entailment | Malaysian data | US in-house data |
|---|---|---|
| **The slides**: Stating the competence. | Compound noun groups, clusters: reification, distal perspective. | Imperative mood: direct, proximal perspective. |
| **The oral presentation**: Displaying the competence: creating and transmitting the knowledge. | Hedging devices, negativisation, vague language: Argumentative Reservation: depowering, qualifying the authority. | Frequent use of imperative forms. Directive acts with rhetorical questions and narrative sequences: democratising, distributing the authority. |
| **Interaction**: Sharing the competence: displaying solidarity, opening interpersonal and interpretative space. | Indirect question routines, and pre-sequences: demonstrating the application and relevance of the expert information. | Direct questions: elliptical, polar, WH-open: informalisation and conversationalisation. |
| | Infrequent occurrence of humour. | Frequent occurrence of humour. |

In both situations, face and identity are co-constructed in language through the participants' perceptions, interpretations and evaluations of positionings related to two fundamental axes of inter-relational management: the concentration or distribution of power, authority and status on the one hand, and social distance, describable in terms of proximal-distal interactional and interpretative space, on the other, as Figure 1 below shows.

The differences in the discourse of the two episodes are marked: the Malaysian encounter turned out to be delicate, potentially face threatening, and requiring a lot of trust-facework, while the company on its own ground, with a long relational history between interactants, was in a relatively low-face-risk situation. In fact, despite

a shared instructional goal, premised on the successful building of trust and credibility in both cases, the company's discursive construal of the experts' "competence face" is very different in the two encounters. The pragmatic resources used in the provision of efficacious overseas client solutions contrast significantly with those used in updating the company's workforce professional skills and knowledge.

---

FIGURE 1
A dynamical model of interactional face and identity construal
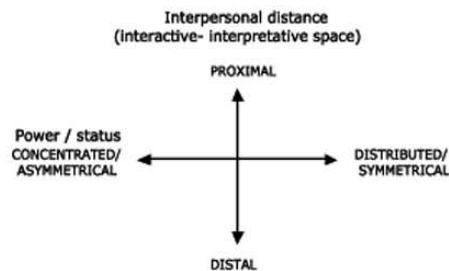


Discourse analysis also reveals a significant difference in success in achieving learning outcomes. Section 4 describes how participant feedback provides us with clues about the nature of communication difficulties in the overseas situation, to explain, in part, the audience's reactions and behaviour, at various levels of micro and macro-organisational context. A fundamental issue, however, would seem to lie in the degree of match or mismatch, alignment or misalignment, between consultant-trainer intentions and their audiences' perceptions and evaluations, in the two cases. This may well be rooted in the wider socio-cultural context and be directly related to the value ascribed to the content of learning, the competence being transmitted.

In the Malaysian episode, the receivers of knowledge show their deep ambivalence about the North American multinational group's attempt to provide them with global, expert business knowledge. It is as if they show that they need it but do not desire it, at the same time, hence the double bind revealed in the discourse. On the contrary, the in-house training initiatives are fully legitimised

by their obvious added value to an already highly successful group, fully alert to the challenges of successful knowledge management in global business; employees are part and parcel of the knowledge-able company. What is at stake in the acquisition of knowledge is fundamentally different in the two professional scenarios.

The data and the analysis suggest, then, that there may well be a wider cultural factor at work which could go towards clarifying these two intercultural and mono-cultural business encounters.

## 6.  Concluding remarks

In this brief article I have examined how social-constructionist accounts can illuminate a discursive study of interpersonal and inter-relational interactions in corporate and managerial data, and how both conceptualisations of "Face Constituting Theory" and "Interculturality in the making" have prompted new directions and objectives in analysis. The difficulty of identifying and defining the role of "culture" using these frameworks is also apparent. To finish, it is salutary to consider the inter-relatedness of elements in mobile cultural configurations, which are kaleidoscopic and composed of many lenses. The eminent Malaysian sociolinguist and scholar of intercultural communication, Shanta Nair-Venugupal sums this up:

We need less confined ways of analysing ICC (intercultural communication) and understanding what is basically communication between individuals or groups who may or may not occupy the same cultural spaces, or who may, or may not display cultural asymmetry, assume the same cultural roles and positions or participate in the same cultural practices […]. This approach roots communication firmly in social interaction. It takes into account and explains how a number of factors mediate the effects of the cultural principle and cultural variability, such as the role of language in constructing identity as multiple agencies, and reality as fluid potentialities, rather than as fixed options in the marketplaces of such encounters. (Nair-Venugupal 2003: 26)

The perspective adopted in this research has been firmly focused on this recommended close-up view of ground-level interactional events. And yet a cultural factor of a larger dimension has emerged, even though its nature and extent cannot be defined unequivocally. One

indication points to the role of BELF in the world today, increasingly implicated in what could be called conflicting competences, possibly intrinsic to global-local tensions in a panorama of fast-changing regional business realities.

The challenges for future research are many, and Arundale (2010: 2103) makes a plea for many further empirical investigations in order to enable verification and comparison, further generalisability and to put claims (such as those pertaining to culture) on a more scientific footing. For the moment, however, this specific investigation may serve as a contribution to the developing field of relational pragmatics, and impetus for a renewed "qualitative upturn" in business discourse analysis.

## References

ARUNDALE, ROBERT B., 2006, "Face as Relational and Interactional: a Communication Framework for Research on Face, Facework, and Politeness", *Journal of Politeness Research* 2, pp. 193-216.

ARUNDALE, ROBERT B., 2010, "Constituting Face in Conversation: Face, Facework and Interactional Achievement", *Journal of Pragmatics* 2 (8), pp. 2078-105.

BARGIELA-CHIAPPINI, FRANCESCA (ed.), 2009, *The Handbook of Business Discourse*, Edinburgh U.P., Edinburgh.

BENWELL, BETHAN and STOKOE, ELIZABETH, [2006] 2010, *Discourse and Identity*, Edinburgh U. P., Edinburgh.

BOWKER, JANET, 2011, "Crossing National Business Borders: 'Doing' US Management Consulting in a Global Context", in R. Salvi and H. Tanaka (eds), pp. 187-212.

BOWKER, JANET, 2012, "From Communities of Practice to Communities of Learning: Interdiscursivity in Changing Corporate Priorities", in P. Gillaerts *et al.* (eds), pp. 115-38.

BROWN, PENELOPE and LEVINSON, STEPHEN, 1987, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*, C.U.P., Cambridge.

FAIRCLOUGH, NORMAN, 1992, *Discourse and Social Change*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

GILLAERTS, PAUL, DE GROOT, ELIZABETH, DIELTJENS, SYLVAIN, HEYNDERICKX, PRISCILLA, JACOBS, GEERT (eds), 2012, *Researching Discourse in Business: Cases and Corpora*, Peter Lang, Bern.

GOFFMAN, ERVING, 1955, "On Face-work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction", *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes* 18, pp. 213-31.

GOFFMAN, ERVING, 1967, *Interactional Ritual. Essays in Face-to-Face Behaviour*, Doubleday Anchor, New York.

GOFFMAN, ERVING, 1981, *Forms of Talk*, Blackwell, Oxford.

GUMPERZ, JOHN, 1982, *Language and Social Identity*, C.U.P., Cambridge.

HALLIDAY, MICHAEL A.K., 1994, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Arnold, London.

LAKOFF, ROBIN, 1973, "The Logic of Politeness; or Minding your P's and Q's", *Papers from the 9th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, Chicago, pp. 292-305.

LANGACKER, RONALD W., 2009, *Investigations in Cognitive Grammar*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin-New York.

MONTOLIO, ESTRELLA, 2008, "Advising without Committing: The Use of Argumentative Reservation in Texts Written by Consultants", in G. Garzone and S. Sarangi (eds), *Discourse, Ideology and Specialized Communication*, Peter Lang, Bern, pp. 251-75.

NAIR-VENUGUPAL, SHANTA, 2003, "Approximations of Social Reality as Interpretations of Culture: Extending a Framework of Analysis in Intercultural Communication", *The Journal of International Communication* 9 (2), pp. 13-28.

NAIR-VENUGUPAL, SHANTA, 2011, "Subversive Strategies: Language and Interaction in Malaysian Business", in R. Salvi and H. Tanaka (eds), pp. 167-84.

SALVI, RITA and TANAKA, HIROMASA (eds), 2011, *Intercultural Interactions in Business and Management*, Peter Lang, Bern.

SCOLLON, RON and WONG SCOLLON, SUZANNE, [1995] 2001, *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*, Blackwell, Oxford.

SEARLE, JOHN and VANDERVEKE, DIRK, 1985, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, C.U.P., Cambridge.

VINE, BERNADETTE, 2009, "Directives at Work: Exploring the Contextual Complexity of Workplace Directives", *Journal of Pragmatics* 41, pp. 1395-405.

WATSON, ROD, 2009, "Constitutive Practices and Garfinkel's Notion of Trust: Revisited", *Journal of Classical Sociology* 9 (4), pp. 475-99.