Cultural conceptualizations in talk about business: a cross-cultural perspective

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Abstract:
The buzzword ‘internationalization,’ when used in business contexts, might lead to the understanding that business practices and language – mainly English – become progressively homogeneous. The framework of ‘English as a Lingua Franca’ (Seidlhofer, 2004) itself is an example of this belief in homogeneity (Wolf & Polzenhagen, 2009). Based on the framework of Cultural Linguistics (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2011) and World Englishes (Kachru, 1985; Wolf & Polzenhagen, 2009), this paper contests this thesis and attests that English as a common business language conveys different conceptualizations that are dependent on cultural backgrounds.

Metaphors in business language have already been investigated through different perspectives: business media discourse and corporate mission statements (Koller, 2004; 2011), for instance. Because, as mentioned above, conceptualizations of/in business differ culturally, this paper aims at exploring how Germans and Brazilians in middle and top management positions in international companies construe the concepts of business practices and values through means of metaphor and culturally-based image schemas when speaking in English.

Data will be collected from a corpus of interviews with German and Brazilian business people. Data analysis follows what Quinn (2005) defined as ‘organic approach’ to data analysis, i.e, a series of methodological steps that evolve naturally out of each other, instead of being based on pre-defined analytical procedures. Preliminary results have pointed to relevant distinctions in cultural conceptualizations utilized by Germans and Brazilians.

References:


