



English as Business Lingua Franca (BELF)

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What is it?

English as the Business Lingua Franca (BELF) is similar to ELF in that it refers to the use of English as a *shared* language by speakers of different mother tongues in interpersonal encounters. Both concepts are thus ontologically distinct from English as Native Language (ENL). What sets BELF apart from ELF, however, is the B, 'business'. Business ELF reflects three key contextual features: its domain of use (global business), the role of its users (business professionals), and the overall goal of the interactions (getting the job done). These features are closely intertwined with business knowledge, which functions as a common frame of reference that eases, or in fact enables, communication among internationally operating professionals. Indeed, the global communicative competence of such professionals consists of business knowledge, BELF, and multicultural competence.

Who uses the concept?

BELF is mainly used by researchers in applied linguistics, in particular in business communication, recently attracting interest among scholars in international business and management. Although practically non-existent in corporate communication and PR research at the moment, it is likely to attract more attention in the future since the linguistic resource utilized in the communications of multinational companies is crucial for their performance.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

BELF is inherently intercultural as its users come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In spite of the differences, however, they share the

overall 'culture' of international business. BELF as a concept is highly context-dependent and situation-specific, reflecting the dynamic nature of intercultural dialogue.

What work remains?

In the domain of international business, BELF research contributes to our knowledge of how intercultural dialogue takes place in this specific, but significant, context in today's world. So far we still know little of how knowledge is actually shared and constructed in BELF, how different native languages affect its use, and how the nature of corporate genres used in multinational companies affects the choice of the resource used for communication in official/corporate vs. individual/private level genres.

Resources

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