

7th International GEM&L Conference

Euromed-Marseille

Marseille, March 21-22, 2013

Identities, Languages and Company Cultures: Cohesion through Diversity?

Call for papers

In recent years, diversity, globalization and multiculturalism have become prominent issues for organizations and companies, but the role played by language in these three phenomena has received little attention. The domination of English and/or the attempt to impose a single language in companies clouds the reality of a linguistic diversity which itself reflects the identities of the different actors inside organizations. Companies oscillate between the need to create a “common corporate language” and the need to take into account language diversity.

Company operations not only require technical know-how to accomplish a given task, but also the capacity to communicate. Although Taylorists consider the act of speaking a hindrance to productivity (Boutet and Gardin, 2003), work is conducted in a more efficient and comfortable way thanks to verbal exchanges. This explains why diglossia is a frequent feature in the daily practices of organizations: “I work in English, but I speak to my colleague in French”.

Language and the way of communicating reveal the identity of those who speak and act. Language and the way of communicating also contribute to identifying a company culture: “tell me how you speak and I will tell you where you work”. The language used, the accent, the vocabulary or the way of communicating are traces or provide clues as to the identity of an individual in terms of the social or professional grouping to which s/he belongs. Such sociolinguistic variation, an important field of study since the founding work of William Labov, has thus become an area of interest in management research: integrating a community, being capable of working within it, and being able to acquire and transmit knowledge are all linked to the use of language specific to the particular organization.

The consequences of associating questions of company (or organizational) identity-language-culture are numerous. Seen through this triple perspective, a language strategy creating greater organizational efficiency results from language policies which have been thought out and implemented not only in company communications but also in translation practices, language training, the writing of documents or in the choice of monolingual or multilingual tools. Multi and intercultural situations provide fertile ground for observation and they add a further dimension to the question of language use, viewed particularly through the prism of identity.

Boutet et Gardin (2003) « Une linguistique du travail » in *Langage et travail. Communication, cognition, action*, Borzeix, A. et Fraenkel, B. (coord.), Paris, CNRS. p. 90-112

We welcome both theoretical and empirical papers on the above topics. Proposals dealing with the following questions will be particularly appreciated.

Language as “material”

- 1) How does language use reveal professional culture?
- 2) How does language use reveal the culture of a company or organization?
- 3) How are language and identities (individual, professional, organizational) linked?
- 4) Are the functions of language as defined by Jakobson relevant to understanding identity in organizations?
- 5) Are there forms of rhetoric which identify a company culture?
- 6) How do specific forms of professional rhetoric cross boundaries in a multilingual situation?
- 7) What criteria can be used to define a corporate language?
- 8) How do speakers create boundaries through language use and what are their implications?
- 9) Signifier, signified and referent: what are the dynamics in monolingual and multilingual situations of communication?
- 10) What is the role played by metaphor in creating the identity of a company?

Language dynamics

- 1) What could constitute a “company language policy”?
- 2) What criteria can be used within a company to decide on the use of one language in particular or of several languages?
- 3) What does the choice of one language in particular reveal about the company culture?
- 4) How may identity be affected when English is adopted as a corporate language?
- 5) How does professional language in a given company co-exist with the corporate language?
- 6) How does language competence affect professional identity?
- 7) What is the impact of company jargon on communication? How can such jargon be defined?
- 8) Towards a typology of misunderstandings and risks of misinterpretation in multilingual situations: (“I think they understand me” and “I dare not say I have not understood”)?
- 9) How does managerial or entrepreneurial discourse reveal the components of a company culture?
- 10) Are there standard criteria for the strategic choice of one language in particular?

Guidelines and criteria for submitting short papers:

Short papers should explain the purpose of the paper, theoretical background, the approach taken, the methods of analysis, main findings and contributions. The proposal should indicate clearly how the paper links with the overall theme of the conference.

Scientific Committee :

Francesca Bargiela, University of Warwick

Anni Borzeix, CRG Ecole Polytechnique

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Susanne Tietze, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield Business School
Marc Valax, Université Lyon 3
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Authors' guidelines:

Submission through *easychair*, please open an account at the following address:

<https://www.easychair.org/account/signin.cgi?conf=geml2013>

Proposals (3000 words including references and annexes) in French or in English.

Submission:

Text in a Word document ((Word : .doc, .docx) : Title Times New Roman 12 capitalized bold, body of text Times New Roman 12.

You should submit your proposal at <https://www.easychair.org/conferences/?conf=geml2013>

Schedule:

Proposal:

by 15 January 2012

Notice of acceptance / modification:

8 February 2013

Final paper:

by 8 March 2013

Selected articles will be submitted for publication in the journal: *Gérer et comprendre*: September 2013.

Authors are requested to refer to the editorial guidelines of this journal and respect their maximum of 40000 characters.

(www.anales.org/gc/fonct-redac.html)

For any information concerning the conference, please contact: scientifique@geml.eu

We look forward to receiving your contributions.

Philippe Lecomte, President of GEM&L

Dardo de Vecchi, President of GEM&L Scientific Committee

Deadline to register for the 7th GEM&L International Conference: 15 February 2013