

Kristina Pelikan (2019): *Enhancing and Analysing Project Communication*. (Forum für Fachsprachen-Forschung 151). Berlin: Frank & Timme. ISBN 978-3-7329-0564-5, 296 pages.

Kristina Pelikan's dissertation, published in English, tackles issues of project communication especially against the backdrop of communicative efficiency. Following a well-established research tradition of applied linguistics, Pelikan takes as her point of departure a case study carried out in the context of the international AMASA Project ("Accessing Medicines in Africa and South Asia") in which she participated while working for the Swiss Tropical und Public Health Institute. Generally, the optimization of communicative processes and their products is not only a central issue shaping the research discourse on LSP (see among others Heidrich/Schubert 2020: 9ff.) but also poses many questions that have yet to be answered (Kalverkämper 2016: 57f.). Another major rationale developed by Pelikan is based on her conceptualization of project communication: Whereas STEAM fields and economic sciences study project communication as a part of project management (ISO 69901-1 2009: 5), Pelikan also introduces the concept of transdisciplinarity as used in German applied linguistics.¹ Her thesis, written and defended at the TU Berlin, combines both concepts – communicative efficiency and project communication (and transdisciplinarity) – in order to suggest ways in which project communication may be enhanced.

Pelikan's targeted readership are linguists, funding agencies and project managers. This seems to be mostly apt as not only the publication of the thesis as part of the series "Forum für Fachsprachen-Forschung" locates it in the tradition of research on LSP but also and especially its selection of theories and models. The chapter "Appeals and Wishes" (p. 254ff.) offers useful advice not only to academics working in the field of LSP research or in other related disciplines but also to those actually engaged in project work as, for example, project managers and funding agencies.

Moving on to the organization of the book, it must first be noted that PhD theses in the German-speaking countries are increasingly being composed as cumulative works that usually are not required to be published as a monograph. However, this approach is as yet relatively new for German doctoral theses in linguistics. Accordingly, the decision of the TU Berlin to accept a cumulative linguistic doctoral thesis that is published as a monograph can be regarded as novel. The cumulative publication as monograph explains why each of the five major chapters – 3.1.2 (p. 62f.), 4.1.3 (p. 112ff.), 5.1.3 (p. 158ff.) – contains information on the AMASA project as the object of investigation that is comprehensively presented in chapter 2.1 "Study design – case study AMASA". Issues like these lead up to the question to what extent criteria suitable for a work conceptualized as monograph can be adapted to a cumulative work published as a monograph for procedural reasons.² The overall research aim "to present applied linguistics used for solving problems related to communication in a concrete case study" (p. 21) is specified in the relatively short introduction by the two research queries: "Which systematic approaches could be revised based on AMASA as a case study?" and "Can a winwin situation between systematic and applied approaches be established?" (p. 51). Likewise, the individual articles comprised in the volume are presented as parts belonging to a whole. This frame sheds new light on them so that their original individual results and insights gain especially by their synopsis in chapter 7, "Summary".

Next to the case study AMASA (2.1), chapter 2 presents conceptual approaches to LSP discourse research, especially the pragmalinguistic context model (2.2) and applied linguistics (2.3)

1 An overview can be found in Lutz (2015: 33–39).

2 Pelikan (2019: p. 57f.) provides an overview explaining how the articles in the monograph are related.

that will become relevant again only in the synopsis of the results in chapter 7. Chapter 2.4 is devoted to English as Lingua Franca (ELF) as it is used in the AMASA project. 2.5 primarily presents the research query and outlines the “general methods” (p. 52) such as observation, interview design, triangulation of data and so forth.

Chapter 3 comprises three articles, beginning with the description of the project language by applying Kalverkämper’s “gestufte Fachlichkeitsskala“, i. e. of project language “as specialized communication completely consisting of high and less featured parts and embedded in English as lingua franca“ (p. 65). Based on this, a) different mother tongues and LSP, b) geographical distance and c) the media usage (p. 69) are presented as “barriers to efficient communication” (p. 67ff.) as defined by Roelcke’s (2002) model of communicative efficiency (p. 68f.). Communication optimization (p. 69ff.) as a means of problem-solving is introduced with reference to methods of knowledge management, strategies of integrated communication, communication technology and linguistics (p. 75f.). The TOM model approaches these problematic areas in similar terms, namely as technology, organisation and human being (p. 100f.; p. 147f.). Like Schubert/Heidrich (2014), this thesis integrates these different concepts of efficient communication and communication optimization: “All these methods focus on conscious communication optimization by direct intervention as requested by Schubert (2009: 110).” (Pelikan 2019: p. 77)

Similar to 3.1, chapter 3.2 deals with the “interplay of multilingualism and a lingua franca” and, in chapter 3.3, with the “idiolect of project members” (p. 92) as a form of international project communication that comprises not only different mother tongues and different LSP (p. 80f., p. 92) but also the phenomenon of transdisciplinarity (ibid.). On this occasion, one of the most prominent innovative features of Pelikan’s conceptualization must be mentioned, namely that she approaches project communication, due to the diverse disciplinary backgrounds, as much from the vantage point of transdisciplinarity as she considers the conflicting or interacting different mother tongues and LSP as multilingualism. Transdisciplinarity and multilingualism are considered as phenomena of communication that overlap at an object level, yet are analyzed as parts of one concept, the idiolect. While it occasionally seems somewhat futile to repeatedly read descriptions of the AMASA project in various subchapters of the monograph,³ the repeated description of concepts such as (barriers of) efficient communication (for example, in 3.1.3 and 3.3.3) and the varying presentation of the TOM model also in figures – once pertaining to idiolects (p. 100), once to strategic communication via/despite emails (p. 147f.) – create coherence within the monograph because each time different areas of the overall investigation are as much highlighted as they are seen in context.

Chapter 4.1, the first of the two chapters that make up chapter 4, tackles the relation between project specific terminology (p. 127) and a standard variety. Although this does not necessarily result from the modelling of idiolects at the micro level of the individual project members in chapter 3, it nonetheless relates to it at the meso level of the project. Categories of project terminology such as newly coined terms, terms with new project-specific meanings, selection of already existing terms and already existing meanings (p. 127) are systematically derived from the corpus. Chapter 4.2 is devoted to emails as a medial form of communication that affects the

3 The same applies to the repetition of mostly identical figures showing the circle of applied LSP research (Fig. 12/p. 57 und Fig. 43/p. 200) and the figures showing communication optimization (Fig. 18/p. 75 und Fig. 29/p. 159). Obviously, this is due to the compilation of the book, yet it nonetheless impedes on the comprehension of the graphically elaborately designed monography.

efficiency of communicative processes and the specific form of the composed texts. The table presenting factors that influence the efficiency of communication such as varieties, orthography, text structure and so forth (p. 145) offers a particularly clear and comprehensive overview of the issue. As regards the process of communication, the study concludes that to reduce “email flooding, the content communicated via email was apportioned on different communication tools” (p. 148) by introducing, for example, a newsletter and a web-based collaboration platform (p. 151). At this point, a more comprehensive discussion of the topic against the backdrop of current research on the efficiency of the individual forms of communication (drawing, for example, on Dürscheid 2016) might have further benefitted the thesis. For example, it could have probed the functionality of the distribution of contents on the aforementioned forms of communication.

Chapter 5 sets three articles in relation to each other. It systemizes project communication by deducing a classification of project communication at a meso level (5.2) located between the macro level of structures of LSP and the micro level of project members. Consequently, it addresses the second central research query, namely if a win-win situation between systematic and applied approaches is feasible: Chapter 5.1 systemizes the results of the AMASA project at the meso level of the project seen against the backdrop of Roelcke’s (2014) more recent suggestion of a classification of languages for special purposes (p. 164ff.) that also includes other classifications such as Göpferich’s (1995) and Gläser’s (1990), among others. It thus realizes Roelcke’s (2014) advice to apply his approach and modify it if necessary. Chapter 5.2 accordingly modifies these and other models on the basis of the present research findings “to establish the structure of variety of possible communication situations occurring in research projects, and this typology could be adapted to the different phases of projects and different linguistics settings” (p. 194). The horizontal axis is oriented at Roelcke’s differentiation between a primary, a secondary, a tertiary and a quaternary sector (as types of economic sectors) and applies these to the domain of research (as types of academic sectors) (p. 180ff.). The vertical axis (p. 183ff.) is described by the criteria (1) “tacit knowledge about research collaboration“, (2) project specific language, (3) every day communication, (4) LSP from different fields (see vertical axis), (5) languages “from fields rather than academe“ (p. 184), (6) procedural knowledge which “also reflects on the LSP” (ibid.) and (7) the number of participants. These criteria enable Pelikan to discuss the vertical axis of research as applied to interdisciplinary (p. 185ff.), intradisciplinary (p. 187), multidisciplinary (p. 189) or transdisciplinary projects in a well-founded and highly differentiated way. This result is central to her monograph because it is here where the concept of project communication is fleshed out and differentiated. A classification like this promotes the LSP research discourse considerably and scrutinizes existing LSP classifications.⁴ In accordance with Roelcke’s (2014) concept of LSP classification, chapter 5.2 thus answers the first central research query (see chapter 7): “Which systematic approaches could be revised based on AMASA as a case study?”

Chapter 5.3 focuses on the interplay between theory and practice that applied linguistic research explores⁵ – captured here as “*theoria cum praxi*” (p. 199ff.). The focus is thus on the second central research query: “Can a win-win situation between systematic and applied approaches be

4 The fact that the different types of project collaboration are visualized in individual figures makes it easier to compare the differences between them.

5 Reformulation a real-world problem by scientific paradigms, a problem analysis, that may lead to new theories and methods” (Knapp 2011: 121 quoted in Göpferich 2014: 151) and a real-world problem solution are steps of an applied linguistics’ approach that the German Association for Applied Linguistics (GAL) follows (Göpferich 2014: 151f.).

established?" In contrast, Pelikan's classification-based description of the reciprocal relationship of collective knowledge comprised by the "different perspectives and the coproduction of knowledge" (p. 205) and its expression in the idiolect (as described in 3.3) is much more elucidating. Here, Pelikan compares types of idiolects and differentiates them according to the type of collaboration into trans-, inter-, intra- and/or multidisciplinary teams (p. 207ff.).

In chapter 6, "Collaboration and efficiency", 6.1 describes the technical side of the web-based collaboration platform and its support tools as forms of internal communication (p. 229). Chapter 6.2 discusses the research impact of projects and describes project-external communication via activities of dissemination – as regards AMASA specifically via leaflets, the project website, scientific publications, presentations and so forth. Compared to the roughly 30 pages describing internal web-based communication and external activities of dissemination, only two pages reflect on the efficiency for written project communication in general, drawing on the concept of efficiency described in chapter 3.1 and on Bereiter's concept of epistemic writing (p. 246ff.).

As regards the answers to the two central research queries, the summary is particularly elucidating: The results on the classification of languages for special purposes – as presented in 5.2 – are related to the pragmlinguistic context model: Chapter 7.1 summarizes sociological and psychological categories and semiotic factors of the investigation in order to outline in 7.2 how project communication can be enhanced. Chapter 7.3 deduces a holistic approach of applied LSP concerning communication optimization, also along the lines of inter-, intra- and transdisciplinarity from the optimized classification model. Chapter 7.4, "Appeals and Wishes", provides suggestions for project leaders and funding agencies and also points out how applied LSP research can be integrated into curricula.

It should be noted that this is only the fifth monograph written in English and published in the series "Forum für Fachsprachen-Forschung" which by now comprises 159 volumes. The choice of language reflects the international scope of the research project. Only very occasionally do vague wordings seem to impede on comprehension and it has to be kept in mind that the various standard varieties of English make it far more difficult to assess linguistic aptness than this is the case for a language such as German that is spoken by a comparatively small community of speakers. Considered from a technical point of view, the referencing and formatting of the articles originally published in various journals and collections has been consistently unified. The conventional layout of an academic monograph has been realized with the exception of one minor flaw (one chapter 2.2.1 is not followed by another one 2.2.2). The high-quality figures – often in color – blend in very well with the overall text layout. The fact that both central questions are presented in boxes highlighted in color is but one example for a visual layout that considerably enhances the clarity and comprehensibility of the book in general.

Those who expect to read a monograph that realizes the typical text conventions of a German linguistic dissertation, will probably be confused when reading Kristina Pelikan's thesis. Those who have already read one or the other article collected here, however, will immediately recognize that they are compiled systematically. These readers will particularly gain by the monograph's hitherto unpublished frame that sheds new light on the results of the individual articles. Pelikan's book is an important contribution to the investigation of efficient project communication, to the reflection of classifications of languages for special purposes and it is an excellent example illustrating the interdependency of theory and practice in applied linguistics.

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