

File name: Words and actions episode 1 V1
Audio Length: 0:34:54
Date transcribed: 7 September 2019

Erika: Hello everyone, and welcome to Words and Actions, a podcast about how language matters in business, politics and beyond. This podcast, as our tagline suggests, is about just how important language is in business and professional contexts. Language for most people is trivial. It's everywhere, we all speak a language, most of us more languages. And therefore, we rarely stop and look at this thing, and rarely examine this thing.

Our podcast is about just that. We would like to help you to take a step back, to look at language, making the familiar unfamiliar. And challenge what is generally considered taken for granted. What we specifically want to do is to show the power of language, and how it works in businesses.

Your three hosts for this episode are Erika, who is me, Veronika, hi Veronika.

Veronika: Hello.

Erika: And Bernard.

Bernard: Hello, Erika and Veronika.

Erika: My name is Erika Darics I'm phoning in from Birmingham, and I'm a senior lecturer at Aston University where I teach subjects related to communication in business and management.

Veronika: My name is Veronika Koller, I work at the linguistics department at Lancaster University and have done for a long time. So I'm also based in the UK. I'm particularly interested in corporate communication and business discourse, but also political discourse. And my aim for this podcast really is to show how we can use language to make it work to meet our goals in all sorts of professional interactions.

Bernard: So, I'm Bernard De Clerck, I'm talking to you from the lovely city of Ghent. I work at the department of communication, translation and interpreting at Ghent University. I'm also teaching business English to

master's students alongside grammar and pragmatics. And it's the actual intersection of all these things that I'm studying in language.

And I liked what you said, Erika, about making what is supposed to be trivial not trivial at all, and making what is expected to be normal not so normal by focusing on the details in language and how they matter and how they can have a huge impact without people realising it. So, that's basically why I'm doing it, to raise awareness about these facts of language.

Veronika: You often hear that, it's not just that language is seen as trivial, it's sometimes actually put down a bit, isn't it? I mean, you get all these sayings, especially in a business context like "talk is cheap" and "actions speak louder than words". And yeah, "they talk the talk, but they don't walk the walk". So, as if language was just nice to have or an add on, and that's exactly what we're trying to challenge here with this podcast.

Bernard: Absolutely, because communication is often seen as a soft skill, and that in itself I think is a bit downplaying the importance of language when you refer to it as a soft skill. It should be a hard skill, just like all the other things, I think.

Veronika: It's a bit of an unfortunate metaphor, I often think. Yeah, but we are stuck with it, I suppose.

Erika: Yes, if you look at any job advert these days, you will not find a job advertisement for a white-collar position that doesn't list communication skills and interpersonal skills as one of the top required skills in industry and business, right?

Veronika: Absolutely, but I think sometimes what people think they mean by language and communication, there's a bit of a misunderstanding. So, often it's when we say, "Yeah, communication is important." What people often mean is it's important to pass on information for the people who need to know the information. And with this podcast we want to go beyond this, don't we?

Where we say, "Okay, it's not just about content and the information you pass on, it's crucially also about how you do that. How you use

language to get stuff done, while also keeping people reasonably happy within your organisation."

Erika: Yes, precisely. And so, while we are doing this, we are going to be drawing on research from ourselves and our colleagues in applied linguistics and related fields. So, for the listeners, we will be publishing these research articles or links to relevant books on our accompanying website.

So, we encourage our listeners to follow the research up, if they are interested in any of the articles that we quote. And similarly, we will try to avoid using technical terminology, but if we do, we will make sure that we write down the definitions or add those terms to the description or transcription for the relevant episode.

Veronika: Let us know if we get it right. If we plunge too much into technical terms and fail to explain them, give us some feedback on our website, and let us know, okay? Thanks.

Bernard: Talking about making things easier and more palatable for the audience, I was thinking about the first chapter of your book. And then, you were actually referring to language as Lego, right? Where you have different bits and pieces and I think that's a nice concept to start with because attention to detail is indeed important.

And I think that could be a nice take to develop the whole discussion that we'll have today. Could you just elaborate a bit on what you meant by this metaphor?

Erika: Well, we use the Lego metaphor in our recent book called "Language and Business Language at Work", which is Veronika's and my book for students of linguistics, but also students on business degrees. And of course, the wider public if they're interested in language related issues. And we use the Lego metaphor to show that you can go about communication training or becoming a good communicator in two ways.

First is if you follow the instructions, these instructions we equate with popular advice that is so prevalent on the internet, do and don't lists. Tick boxes about what works, what doesn't work, what are the words

that you have to avoid and all these kinds of very prescriptive approaches to understanding and communication and doing it right.

What we say is that instead of following the manual, what you have to do is you have to learn how each piece works, what is the meaning of each of the pieces and how they work together?

Veronika: When you do that, you can actually become creative with it. You know what you can do with a yellow square or a red triangle, and you can come up with your own creation. And it's not pre-made, it's not according to the 67 steps in the introduction actually, but something that you have yourself created.

And that is just right for the context in which you're going to use it, because that's an important point, that language use needs to be suitable for the context in which it is used. That's why you can't just go on formulae and best practice examples and learn them by heart more or less.

Bernard: Yeah, that's true, and at the same time, what I'm also a bit wary of, is the fact that some people say, "It's not that important, is it? As long as we understand each other, it's okay." But I don't actually agree, and I would actually like to give an example of one of those pieces of Lego that turned out to be quite important, which might be interesting in business.

And it's an article that I read by Andrew Kehoe and Matt Gee I think 2014. And they examined 86,000 items listed on eBay, and they looked at the prices and the biddings, and what they found was actually quite staggering. For instance, when you advertise, or when you want to sell a man's watch and you compare that with another way of formulating the same products or advertising the same product as in a gent's watch, the increase in price is spectacular.

For instance, what I read was that you get £34 for your man's watch. But when it's a gent's watch you get £70 for it.

Veronika: Wow, that's double.

Bernard: You see, and that's just one word. And we're talking about money now, but of course, the most important thing in life is love. And that, too, I read a recent article by Tess van der Zanden and she actually

examined the importance of language in online contexts. So, more specifically, dating sites.

And she compared a profile of people with a language mistake in it, and then people without a language mistake in it. And guess what? Your romantic appeal drops significantly when there's a typo or a kind of sloppy language in the way you advertise.

Veronika: I guess that's worth knowing.

Bernard: Well, you see? So, it does make a difference, and I think it's important because when you have a look on the internet and people talk to each other, it's all 'YOLO' and 'swag' and these new vernaculars and emoji. And people tend to get a bit sloppy, but they also tend to forget I think how important language is in some of these contexts.

Veronika: Yeah, but you've said it, it's context again. I think there's lots of context where your LOLs and your emojis are exactly what you need.

Bernard: Absolutely.

Veronika: But then, there are other contexts where they would be really unsuitable, and it's developing this sensitivity for context. So, to be competent across contexts, to be as competent with your emojis as you are with your formal business email or whatever else it happens to be, really.

Bernard: That's it, yes. And knowing when to use what, I think that's a key issue that many people tend to overlook nowadays.

Erika: And it's exactly the kind of issue that no do and don't list can prepare you for, right?

Bernard: True.

Erika: So, it's understanding the context, understanding your audience, understanding the purpose of why you are saying things and what those things want to achieve is very important. And this is why approaching effective communication by trying to understand both the elements that are part of it, and how they work together, is crucial.

Today's guest on the podcast has actually written about that a lot. His name is Professor Michael Handford and he's calling in from Cardiff

today, where he is a professor of applied linguistics. Mike's research is very interesting because he worked for many years in international contexts where he taught communication and language skills. And he realised through his work that there seemed to be a disconnect between what is being taught and how real life works.

So, we're going to be chatting to Professor Handford from Cardiff about these questions. Welcome on the episode, Mike.

Mike: Thank you very much. I want to thank you, I feel very honoured and pleased to be on your inaugural podcast, it's very exciting, it's fantastic.

Erika: We know that you've previously taught communication skills and trained professionals in a variety of countries. I wonder if you can tell us more about these aspects of your work.

Veronika: And also, what industries have you worked with? We'd also be interested in that.

Mike: In terms of say the different professions, most of the work I've done has been with different types of engineers. But I also worked with international marketing people, international sales, trainee young managers, upper management in some companies. Largely with multinational type companies. A lot of it's been based in Japan or involving Japanese multinationals working in other parts of Asia.

So, for example, in Singapore or Bangladesh and also some in Europe as well. So, a little bit in Germany, and some in the UK. And in terms of the types of companies, so one that I'll talk a little bit about in a minute I think is a Japanese company that builds plants. I don't mean green plants that grow in the ground, like power plants.

Veronika: Right, okay, yes. Thanks for the clarification.

Mike: But also, manufacturing companies, I've done quite a lot of different types of manufacturing companies. So, for example, vehicle manufacturing companies, one big truck company, a car company. And also, finance companies as well. So, those are some of them.

Veronika: Wow, that's quite a range. Yeah.

Erika: How is communication related to all of these fields? And why is that important? What role did you see for communication from engineers who build power plants to salespeople?

Mike: So, I can give you a clear example, I think, of that. One of the earlier projects I was involved in ended up being several years I was working with this Japanese power plant company. And they were very interested in developing their international business. So, of course, if you're thinking about building stuff, the important people really are the engineers. They're the ones who have the technical knowledge.

But what they were finding was their engineers were not very effective at making essentially sales presentations to potential clients. So, they brought us in to look at how we could train the engineers to communicate in a more effective way.

Now, of course, you could say, "Well what does effective mean?" So, in this way what we saw was that we listened to some of their presentations and they were highly technical, they were really quite boring. And they were not showing any awareness of their audience, who were often not technical people, were not engineers, were upper management in these other companies and were thinking should we buy this product or that product?

So, we worked on things like when you're making a presentation, what kind of rhetorical devices can you use? Starting your presentation with a rhetorical question, for example.

But also, things like consider your audience, what's their background knowledge? What do they need to know? And what don't they know? So, if you're very technical and you're using very technical language, you're just going to lose them.

Veronika: Really, it sounds like the difference between passing on information, and actually relating to somebody through communication.

Mike: Yeah, absolutely. So, that's a really big theme, actually, I think we might touch on later, mightn't we? There is that assumption in language that communication is all about transferring information. And of course, transferring information is extremely important.

Veronika: That's only one aspect, yeah.

Mike: It is exactly, yeah, there's so much more that we do.

Veronika: You have written in the past also about how people like engineers, how they can be prepared for suddenly having to talk to salespeople. What's out there in terms of communications textbooks, training materials, these kinds of things. It's a huge industry, isn't it?

And I think you weren't always quite happy with what you saw in communications textbooks. Would you like to tell us a bit about what you see as the main problem with your average communication textbook?

Mike: There are probably several. I think if I probably touch on say two or three. I mentioned earlier the importance of the interpersonal side of communication. So, when we're communicating it's not just about information, it's also about for example developing relationships. But also, not damaging those relationships a lot of the time by making mistakes or saying things that we probably wish we hadn't said later.

So, that's one aspect; is enough spent in training materials, showing people and helping them how to actually develop relationships through language? So, one thing for example is small talk. Now, say if you get two types of training materials, I suppose. One is for people who use English as their first language, and one is for people who use English as their second language, or as a lingua franca.

Now, I was talking to a very good friend, who's British, English is his first language. And he said something to me that I'd never seen in a textbook, but which I then put in a textbook. And this was when he's in a meeting for the first time with people who use English as the lingua franca, who don't use English as their first language, he uses small talk in order to gauge their English linguistic ability. And then, he will change his communication and his vocabulary in order to make sure that they fully understand him and that he can develop a good relationship with them. So, he's using small talk with a very strategic goal in mind, he's not just talking about football for the fun of football. He's talking about it so that he can make sure he clinches the deal.

So, I think in a lot of textbooks you don't see that awareness of why people use small talk or why people need to develop relationships, because a lot of the time what we're trying to do in business is

something with a transactional goal at the end of the day. We are trying to sell something, or we are trying to improve something. But we can use things like small talk in order to do that, so I think that's one big area that isn't focused on very much in a lot of material.

Bernard: Can I just ask a follow-up question on that? You were talking about the Japanese engineers before and how they have to give better presentations. And I was wondering what kind of training they had before you came in and what was the language level? Because that's something the listeners might be thinking about as well. So, what did you have to work with? What was their level to start off with?

Mike: The tradition in a lot of Japanese companies is what's termed on-the-job training, which often means you're thrown in at the deep end and expected to learn.

Veronika: Pick it up by osmosis somehow, yes.

Mike: Exactly, yeah. So, for a lot of the training that we did, actually, we were the first formal communication training that they'd had probably since university. Because they were dealing in international contexts, by and large the training was in English, for them to communicate in English. Although a lot of the work I did was with a Japanese professor called Hiro Tanaka, who did some of the work in Japanese as well.

Now, in terms of their language level, I would say it was probably mixed. Over time, I think over the say 10 years between now and the last decade there has been a gradual improvement in spoken ability, I think. But a lot of the time their technical knowledge, their technical language was excellent, but the interpersonal side, the relational side was not as strong, you might say.

Bernard: That's interesting, because we were focusing on transactional processes, and then if you have the intel and the expertise from a technical perspective that's okay then. But if you lack the interpersonal abilities, you run into a wall, and that's basically what you witnessed I think in a way, right?

Mike: That's right, yeah. I think so. I don't know about you guys, but the more I look at language in the workplace and other situations as well, especially the workplace, the assumption is the transactional aspect,

the making the deal is the baseline. For me it's not, I think if you don't have that interpersonal foundation there, people are not going to hear you.

Veronika: No, and it can really endanger your success.

Mike: Absolutely.

Veronika: Yeah, it can not just be not effective, it can actually be damaging, yeah, as you say, endanger your success, yeah. Mike, I have one final question for you, that I was really intrigued by. In your research you often use corpus linguistic methods. Could you explain to our readers a bit what this thing, corpus linguistics, involves and why it's particularly useful for professional communication?

Mike: Okay, yeah. So, I think if you go back into early research on professional communication, it may involve people recording one meeting, for example. And then, analysing that and saying what people do in this meeting, maybe two or three, and trying to generalise from that. Now, that's okay, but if you think about it, two or three meetings is not a lot in the world of meetings. A lot of people have two or three times that in a single day.

Veronika: That's right, and you also have very different meetings, right? You can have the big formal meeting with the chair or just an informal huddle in an office, right?

Mike: Exactly, you can have your manager-subordinate meeting, you can have exactly all these different types. So, what corpus linguistics is is a way of analysing language that involves creating these databases of language. So, you get lots and lots of examples of for example a particular type of language, like meetings. So, for example one I built, the CANBEC corpus has about 60 meetings.

And all of them are transcribed, and that then allows you to look at language across a range of different types of meetings, but it also allows you to count. So, the CANBEC corpus is actually not very big, it's about 1 million words, which in the world of corpus linguistics is not very big. If you look at some of the bigger corpora, you're into billions of words.

This allows you to look at patterns, to look at what are the most frequent words across a range of different texts, which means that you're representing the language much more effectively.

Veronika: Like how it's actually used in meetings.

Mike: Exactly. One of the really big early influences of corpus linguistics was on dictionaries. So, traditionally people would sit in a room and write a dictionary and say, "Yeah, I think that word is important". Corpus linguistics came along, we had these huge databases of language, you could say which words are the most frequent, which words are very infrequent. How frequent are they? How were they actually used in real situations?

So, we've been able to transfer that type of ability to beyond dictionaries now, to look at all types of communication. A big question for a lot of people learning language for example is how is, say, business English different from everyday English?

That's a good question, and I ask people a lot of the time is I get them to say, okay, have a think about it. Which words are used far more in business especially spoken business than in everyday English? And they'll come up with things like 'sales' and 'acquisition' or 'business enterprise' or this type of thing. And a lot of it involves nouns. Now, actually when you compare using corpus linguistics the words that are used most frequently in business meetings compared to everyday English, do any of you know what the top keyword is?

Bernard: We.

Mike: Very good, Bernard, yes, we.

Veronika: You cheat, you read that up. (Laughter)

Mike: And this really shocks people, this really shocks businesspeople, who are like, "Huh? We?" So, 'we' is used four times more frequently in meetings than it is in everyday language. Of course, 'we' is used very frequently in everyday language, too. but it's far more frequent [in business English].

Bernard: Absolutely, yeah.

Mike: And of course, why? Well, that's because it's used to invoke lots of different identities. So, 'we' as in our company, 'we' as in both our companies, 'we' as in our team. And this reflects another very important aspect of language which we haven't really talked about yet, which is the identity aspect of language.

Veronika: Yeah, but it's good that you flag this up now, because this will come again and again when we talk about stakeholder communication and brand identity and constructing employees and all the rest that's to follow in this series.

Erika: This is going to be the topic in many of our following podcasts, Mike, you will be pleased to hear.

Mike: Great. You asked me earlier a question about what I see as some of the main issues with textbooks and now you're asking about corpus linguistics. So, something I'm working on at the moment brings these two things together in my mind. And it relates to the way culture, particularly ideas like intercultural communication, has been taught in textbooks and the importance of it for effective business communication.

So, if you look at a lot of textbooks, when they teach culture and by culture, I mean things like the way that we communicate every day, non-verbal communication, ways of being polite to each other in a particular culture, these types of things. It's very, very much defined, and I'm talking about business textbooks, it's very much defined at the national level.

Veronika: Yeah, like culture is nation, yes.

Mike: Exactly.

Bernard: Absolutely.

Mike: And then, also if you look at the way it's taught, it often reinforces a lot of stereotypes.

Veronika: Doesn't it just?

Mike: So, for example, the Japanese are the most polite people in the world. And I'm basically quoting this. The Brazilians are the friendliest on the planet. And it's like how could you quantify friendliness? How could

you quantify politeness and compare? And also, it ignores the great variety that exists within any nation, as well. So, there are big problems with that.

Veronika: It's within nations, but it's also across nations. Again, I keep coming back to context, so for instance if you are within, say, Nigeria then it might be very important what ethnicity you belong to, or what state, or what have you. But if you live as a migrant in London it may be more important that you are from the West African diaspora, where you look beyond countries. So, again, it's context, isn't it?

Mike: Isn't it? And then, also when we're looking at workplaces of course, this idea of culture is very relevant, but it's relevant in terms of things like professions. So, engineers may have different ways of communicating to salespeople, which can cause big problems in companies if there's not an awareness of these differences. In the same way that somebody working for Apple may have a quite different work culture from somebody working in Google.

And even in a team, a local team, you may find that there are big differences in the way that they have different communicative practices. So, we need to very much broaden that idea and move beyond just seeing culture and intercultural communication in national terms. Which I think is often quite detrimental to communication.

Veronika: Absolutely, and again, it's something that we will come back to over and over again during this series. So, another really important early point here that culture is not nation. And that we really, really need to become a bit more sophisticated in how we use culture in a communication context, yes.

Bernard: Absolutely. It also reminded me of a quote that I read the other day. So, the importance of the interpersonal aspects and I would like to read it out to you, that might be a nice way to round off this interview. It's a quote by [actor and playwright] Rick Lenz and he says, "Those who say it's not personal, it's just business are lying. All business is personal, and the best business is very personal."

And I think that is actually what we have been talking about during this interview, how context and interpersonal attention and things like that

how important they are. Our lives, professionally and personally as well, of course.

Erika: So, it's the combination of transactional language or the kind of language that we use when we want to achieve things infused with or combined with all those other strategies and techniques that we use to create good relationships, communicate friendliness, create identities. And I guess that's a good cue into the last part of our podcast, where we are going to look at one specific artefact or data.

And we may actually examine this combination of trying to achieve a certain goal combined with relational aspects. And I invite you, Mike, if you have time to stay to perhaps look at this data with us.

Mike: Sure, I'm just trying to get it up on my screen now.

Veronika: Well, I can introduce it, we will have it on our website. So, we talked about corpus linguistics and the use of computers to analyse language, etc. This example is extremely low tech. It's a text that is handwritten on a whiteboard. I found it in the staircase of the residential private estate where I live.

So, it's an estate with 45 different flats and a couple of houses, really quite a big community. And stuff to do with the grounds and the building are run by a management company. And every staircase in this estate has a whiteboard, very often it's used for residents to communicate with each other. Like, congratulations to you, you just had a baby, that sort of thing.

But occasionally it's also used by the management company to talk to the residents, which are their main stakeholders, of course. And this particular example is about compliance, really. So, it's getting the residents to do something. And the context is that there was a fire inspection, if you know the UK, you know that health and safety looms very large.

There was a fire inspection and the people said, "Look, people are storing their buggies and their prams and their bikes and what have you all in the communal areas, on the landing. We can't have that, it's a fire hazard." So, the management company needs to get the people

who live there to store away their buggies wherever they can, or their bikes.

So, in a way, they're trying to get their main stakeholder groups, the residents, to do something. And to do something that may be difficult for them, they may not have enough space, it may be a hassle, etc. So, in interpersonal terms, that's what's often known as a face threat, okay, so you're asking, in a way imposing on your stakeholders, who after all pay you as the management company and the board of directors to run the estate.

So, they're sort of threatening the face and trying to make them do something that may be a hassle. And it's really interesting in this text how they get people to comply and lessen that imposition that they make. So, one they make it very personal, it's handwritten, okay? And they have added a smiley at the top, good mood, they've said "many thanks" at the end and drawn a little heart, etc.

They've also communicated awareness, so they say, "We are aware that it is very difficult for your things, when you have babies and toddlers. So, we have been clearing out a cupboard." We've done something, so show awareness, show a bit of empathy for the situation of the people you're talking to.

Also, they take recourse to another authority, saying, "From a recent fire inspection, nothing should be stored." So, saying basically it's not us imposing on you, it's the health and safety officers, the fire people who say that, we're just passing it on. And finally, just one last thing that they do which I thought was interesting was that they also draw on other communications.

They say, "We'll give you more detail in our next newsletter and you can also email us, take a card to see our email address." So, a lot of things to achieve compliance with something that their stakeholders might actually find a bit of an imposition.

Erika:

Can I just say as you were talking about the low tech element, I kept thinking about Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message". I know he didn't write about these specific types of communication, but the idea that they chose to handwrite this for the residents instead of

printing a letter, or posting a letter, or choosing to communicate via more formal means.

I think this just shows how important it is to choose the right way of sending that content or communicating that content. Because as you rightly pointed out, this takes away from that imposition, from that directness, from that order, it's more friendly with the smiley face and the heart. So, I thought the choice of medium is really important here.

Bernard: Absolutely. It also shows effort, because it's much, much easier to type out a letter and to post it on the whiteboard. But look at the spacing, for instance. It's perfect, right? The spacing between the words and between the actual sentences. It's not easy to pull this off in one go, I think. So, they actually did the effort and I think the people who live there appreciate that.

Veronika: So, they do a lot to be personal, to be friendly, and to sweeten the pill of the imposition like basically you have to move your stuff out here. I thought it was just an everyday example, and maybe you can think of other examples, where somebody needs stakeholders to comply with something and how do they use language and media to do that?

Mike: And I think something else that you could say about this, if you wanted to really get into the nitty gritty of the language as well, things like the use of 'we' is quite interesting. But also, the use of what we could term the modal verbs, so things like 'should' and 'can'. Another way to say this as you said would be, "You have to clean out your corridor."

Veronika: Absolutely, yeah, that would not have gone down well, I'm sure.

Mike: No, so the use of 'can', "can you label your things"? A more heavy-handed approach would be you should, or you must, or you need to. Whereas it's can you, so it's a very as you said non-face threatening way of making this request.

Veronika: And ultimately, also that anticipates our next episode really, where we look at language and power and social identity. It's a bit about power as well, isn't it? Because the management company, they do run things, but every resident pays them a monthly sum to do so. So, in a way, they're almost like employed by the residents, so they are not

necessarily in a position to just unproblematically say, "You do this, you do that." So, it's quite a complex relationship, really.

Bernard: Yeah, what I also find interesting is that you have these passive clauses, you have these modals. But at the same time, that's at least how I see it, you see slight warnings. For instance, in the sentence "this includes outside your front doors", so this is a kind of message, look, outside your front door is not private property, so you can't put anything there either.

And I actually like that, that they added this, they're assuming that people might be thinking okay, but when I put it in front of my door, no one will be bothered by it except me. So, that is something I really appreciate, you do find this layered-ness so it's all friendly, and you have the smileys and things like that as well. But at the same time, there are little subliminal messages there as well. So, do this properly.

Veronika: And the last thing, one thing I noticed, so Mike, you noticed the use of 'we'. So, anyone who's ever worked with corporate communication knows that 'we' looms large, you've just told us, it's four times as frequent in business English than in regular English, if that's a word. And here, they've actually for once clarified who we is, because very often you'll get this corporate we.

And you don't know who it actually is, and here they make it clear. They say, "We, the directors of the management company". They explicitly say that in brackets. And being a resident, I actually quite appreciated that.

Bernard: Then, we were thinking about examples like no smoking versus thank you for not smoking and things like that. And when you start looking, you will see them all over the place, and what's interesting about it, the self-awareness is raised there when you see all those. And it can be quite fun to talk about them.

Erika: I would encourage our listeners to take our example and look around their environments and see if they can find any messages or signs and just examine how the writers of those messages are trying to make the public comply. And we would be really happy if you could send us some of these examples via our Twitter account or through our website.

- Veronika: Yeah, so send them in, and keep them coming.
- Erika: Yes, and by that I would like to thank Mike for joining us, it was wonderful to hear about your research. And we wish you the best of luck.
- Mike: Thank you very much. It's been a real honour and a privilege, and it's lots of fun. And best of luck with all of your remaining ones, thank you.
- Erika: We would like to also invite our listeners to join us again next month, when we will be talking about language, the role of language under the radar and the less obvious functions of language in business and professional contexts.

END OF AUDIO

References

- Kehoe, A. and Gee, M. (2016) The most profitable words on Ebay. <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/research/stories/ebay-language-study>
- Cambridge and Nottingham Spoken Business English Corpus (CANBEC). https://www.cambridge.org/elt/corpus/corpora_canbec.htm
- van der Zanden, T., Schouten, A., Mos, M., & Krahmer, E. (2019). Impression formation on online dating: The effects of language errors in profile texts on perceptions of profile owners. Paper presented at the conference Etmaal van de Communicatiewetenschap, Nijmegen/The Netherlands, 7-8 February.