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[Introduction 0:00:00 - 0:00:11]

Erika: Welcome back to Words and Actions. This is series 2, episode 14. Words and Actions, as most of you already know, is a podcast that focuses on the use and importance of language in business, politics and various other areas of public life.

In this podcast, our aim is to raise awareness about, and fuel your interest in, different aspects of language and how they are used to shape our perceptions of reality. We draw on academic research and insights from professionals, as we will do today, when we have a very exciting guest from South Africa.

We also provide lots of extra information on our blog, [wordsandactions.blog](http://wordsandactions.blog), and also you can follow us on Twitter [[@\\_WordsActions\\_](https://twitter.com/_WordsActions_)] or share your comments on Facebook [<https://www.facebook.com/WordsandActionsPodcast>].

Bernard: Yes, thank you for that introduction, Erika. We actually had a mini-series on applying for a job in the first... Can I call it a season? Yes. I suppose I can, right?

Veronika: Oh, yeah.

Bernard: Yeah. It sounds very Netflixy! The first season, we had a mini-series on applying for a job. We thought we could do this again. This mini-series will be on language and entrepreneurship. There's a lot to say about that. We thought we need to devote different sessions or different episodes to this.

The first episode will be devoted to how entrepreneurship is actually talked about. Again, how language creates our perceptions and maybe even expectations about what it is to be a good entrepreneur or what it is to have a new venture as an entrepreneur. That's the first session.

The second episode will focus on how language matters when you, as an entrepreneur, are actually trying to sell the idea, primarily to funders. Then we're thinking along the lines of pitches and presentations. Thirdly, of course, you need to sell the product or the service in the end. Then we're thinking about entrepreneurship and the use of creative language in actually selling the product or that service.

So, that will be the mini-series. But today, we start off with the portrayal of the entrepreneur.

Veronika: Perhaps we should quickly portray ourselves, really, by way of introducing ourselves. You've just been hearing Bernard de Clerck speak, who is at the University of Ghent in Belgium. Then there's Erika Darics on the podcast from Aston University in Birmingham, UK.

Erika: And who is speaking now is *Professor* Veronika Koller from Lancaster University. (Laughter)

Veronika: Well, thanks for getting that in, Erika! (Laughter) Together, we've been running this podcast for over a year. As Bernard said, we're starting on a new mini-series, because it worked quite well in the first season, on language of entrepreneurship.

Let's perhaps just start with a quick question. One aspect we want to look at is how entrepreneurs are usually portrayed in the media and other public discourse. Bernard and Erika, when you hear the word, 'entrepreneur', what image do you have in your mind?

Erika: You won't like my answer, Veronika!

Veronika: Go on.

Erika: It's Steve Jobs. (Laughter)

Veronika: The prototypical entrepreneur. Yes. Okay. Any other things that pop into your head?

Bernard: Steve Jobs. Elon Musk. I'm thinking of people with a kind of, if you like, rock star status. Celebrities, almost. I'm also thinking of people's net worth and, if I may say so, money. That is what I associate the typical image of the entrepreneur with.

Veronika: Right. So, it's a rich person. It's a person with a lot of charisma, perhaps with an almost celebrity status. We often have a hero narrative around that. How they started out in their little garage and came to world domination. There's lots of myth around them etc.

Bernard: Yeah. Think of Ben and Jerry's, for instance. In the first season, we talked about Ben and Jerry's ice cream. There are two guys who didn't like sports so they started making and selling ice cream. That's a typical story of an entrepreneur. Then they became famous, let's say.

Veronika: Yeah. What language do we typically find when entrepreneurs are talked about or described in the media? What words or phrases come to mind?

Erika: Bernard mentioned 'net worth'. There are words around money, 'income', 'generation', 'start-up' and techy words like that.

Bernard: Yes. I'm also thinking of 'economic growth', 'a catalyst', 'job creation', 'profits'. That's what I'm thinking of as well. When you actually have a look at definitions—and there are many out there in the literature, but also on media platforms and things like that—you get things like, "What counts as good entrepreneurship?" To put it bluntly, a money-making machine is what you often read. This notion of success is often tied to money, let's say. Creating value.

Veronika: Of course, that's one of the main functions of entrepreneurs in an economy. You do have this whole field of meaning to do with economy, finance and value. But I think you also have another field of meaning around their personalities because they are almost put on this pedestal as celebrities, right?

Bernard: Absolutely.

Erika: We see many of those phrases used in the media. 'Flamboyant', 'quirky', 'the unstable genius.' I'm looking at some newspaper titles about Steve Jobs and those words are actually almost a way of glorifying their really, really questionable behaviour. There is this title that says, "Working for Steve Jobs wasn't easy and pleasant but it made me smarter." These kinds of excuses for their behaviour.

Bernard: Yeah. They kind of get away with things. I'm thinking of Elon Musk, for instance. I'm not sure if you know this but he actually manufactured a flamethrower and he called it, 'This is not a flamethrower'. The reason why he called it, 'Not a flamethrower' is because of customs. Then he could actually export it. Those are the kinds of things that these people get away with because of their status.

Veronika: When somebody is a bit less unusual, shall we say... None of you said, 'Oh, when I think of an entrepreneur I think of Bill Gates' because he doesn't have this sort of erratic behaviour.

Bernard: Yeah. Which Richard Branson does have, again, you see?

Veronika: Yeah. Oh, and by the way, they're all men. Have you noticed that?

Bernard: Uh huh.

Erika: Oh, yes.

Veronika: That's something we'll come back to. Okay. But let's perhaps, then, take it to the real world. Not everybody is an Elon Musk or a Steve Jobs. What else does entrepreneurship actually encompass?

Bernard: When I think of that, I also think of start-ups and local businesses. In Belgium, for instance, what you see a lot are the typical go-getters. The people that are the propellers, let's say, of gentrification in cities by opening up nice restaurants or local businesses. For me, that too would count as an entrepreneur.

Veronika: Yeah, definitely. Local businesses. Somebody with an idea. Can anyone think of an idea in their own neighbourhood?

Bernard: For instance, down the road there is this shop that we have. It's called Recyclette. It's a nice blend of 'recycling' and the French word bicyclette'.

Basically, what you should know is that there are thousands and thousands of students in Ghent. There are also thousands and thousands of bicycles. Bicycles are a kind of commodity. They get stolen and then they get abandoned. People just do that. Now, what this guy does is he refurbishes these bicycles and he sells them again.

- Veronika: So, it's a mixture of recycling and bicycle.
- Bernard: Yeah. It's a nice idea. That is the innovative aspect, if you like. But to be honest, he does sell them at fairly high prices because he is, of course, an entrepreneur in that respect as well.
- Erika: There is also an interesting language angle there. How this entrepreneur managed to translate their core USP into a name that sets them apart. Recyclette. It's really quirky.
- Bernard: Yeah.
- Veronika: Can we think of other examples of language creativity? When people give names to their businesses?
- Erika: Hairport. (Laughter)
- Veronika: Oh, hairdressers! Don't get me started on hairdressers. (Laughter) What is it about hairdressers? Also, I can think of, 'A Cut Above' as another one. You have it in Germany, as well. Schnittstelle, which is like 'cutting edge'.
- Bernard: Yeah. I go to Het geknipte huis. You also have it in Dutch, I'm afraid! (Laughter) There's a lot of that going on.
- Veronika: Yeah. I guess there's just a lot of competition. There are lots of hairdressers and you need to stand out somehow. That's where you try to be a bit creative, more or less successfully. We'll come back to language creativity, actually, at the closure of this mini-series when we go to the third part on using language creatively. But yes, hairdressers... (Laughter)
- Bernard: What is interesting is that you have, indeed, these different types of entrepreneurship. We have the Elon Musks of this world. We have these local businesses. We also have the scalable start-ups. Those are all different types of entrepreneurship.
- What is interesting is that one category often does not view the other category as being a real entrepreneur, whatever that may be. So, that's very interesting to talk about. This conceptualisation of what is a true entrepreneur, it's not straightforward I would say.

Erika: No. I guess the terms, the terminology and the labels that are often used reflect this. Looking down on certain types. Think about, 'mumpreneurs', right?

Veronika: Yeah. Here, we come back to the gender aspect. Often, or almost always, these rockstar entrepreneurs are really men. Also, in terms of metaphor, they are sometimes described as pioneers, captains and trailblazers. Heroes, visionaries. All of which, culturally, have male connotations.

Where does that leave 'mumpreneurs'? Perhaps we should explain what we mean by mumpreneurs, really.

Erika: Well, mumpreneurs are those entrepreneurs who start their businesses alongside their family duties, so to speak. Usually during the early years of raising a child. These types of businesses are often referred to as 'kitchen table start-ups' because they come out of people's kitchens.

Often, they are stereotypically feminine because women want to find a balance between being able to be with their families and doing something else as well.

Veronika: Yeah. We could of course mention why that is only a concern for women. But be that as it may, how have they been portrayed?

Erika: There has been a lot of research on this, of course. The picture is not nice. What do you think we can find in academic scholarship? How are mumpreneurs talked about? What do you think, Bernard and Veronika?

Bernard: The fact that there is a separate word for that probably also leads to a different interpretation. Is it a kind of wannabe entrepreneur? Something like that? Is that an association that you would get?

Veronika: My stereotype is also of a woman who does something that's culturally very feminine. So, starts sewing and selling baby clothes or something like that. I'm obviously a victim of my own stereotypes here, but I don't think of a tech start-up where I hear the word 'mumpreneur'.

Erika: Maybe your views are also influenced by what's out there in the media and academic scholarship because you're right. Very often, the way

these entrepreneurs are talked about is that their business came out of necessity rather than desire to change the world, like we hear about Steve Jobs, Elon Musk and all the others. It's not about helping mums with a new burp cloth or whatever but changing the world through the right hue of blue on the screen. (Laughter)

Veronika: Not that we're sarcastic! No! (Laughter) But what's also interesting, on the other hand, is this word. It's again a word that combines two things, what we call a portmanteau word or a blend. [So 'mum' and 'entrepreneur'. It also has this identity to it: "I'm both a mum but also I'm an entrepreneur."

What's going on there? Is it because you can't just be a stay-at-home mum or, to use a more old-fashioned term, a housewife? Is that something that's looked down on socially, so you have to be more than that?

Erika: I guess it depends on who you ask or who was asked for research or in the media. Some women and some people embrace that. They like that additional title because it sets them apart from people who are *only* stay-at-home mums.

I guess it leads back to our earlier discussion about how the way we talk about entrepreneurs affects how we think about them and how people themselves think about themselves. Because nothing is solid about entrepreneurship, it's all intangible. Because, going back to our original question, what is entrepreneurship anyway?

Veronika: Yeah. Also, Bernard, you mentioned earlier that it's very often... We hear a lot about the economy, finance, money and net worth etc. But of course, that's not what drives all entrepreneurs.

Bernard: No, that's true. You have this kind of construct. But of course, you also have people who are not interested in money. Or at least money is not the primary interest. I'm referring to social entrepreneurs, and there are lots of them. But what is symptomatic, perhaps, is they do not really come up first when we think about the idea of an entrepreneur.

But let me give you an example of social entrepreneurship. It's called Kromkommer in Dutch. Here is the translation: 'crook-cumber'. What they do is they prevent fruits and vegetables that don't live up to the aesthetic standard from being thrown away. For instance, we all think a cucumber should be straight. A banana can be bent. But what do we do with bent cucumbers? We tend to throw them away.

They don't. They just use them and put them in soups and salads for the impoverished. That, too, is changing the world and it's not just about making money.

Erika: Right. I can also think of other types of entrepreneurs who already have a job. See if you can figure out who I think of. People who already have a job but then they act like entrepreneurs within their companies or organisations to come up with a novel idea or something new.

Veronika: Well, we are it, aren't we? Because we are all three employed by our respective universities but nobody told us to do a podcast on business communication, language, business and politics. So, what are we? We are intrapreneurs, is a phrase that I've come across.

Bernard: Okay. So, this evening I will go to bed and write in my diary, "Dear diary, today I discovered that I'm an intrapreneur."

Veronika: Now, here's a new facet in your identity, Bernard! (Laughter) But it's perhaps no coincidence that you get three academics doing something entrepreneurial because entrepreneurial thinking, spirit or attitude is something that is very much prized at this point in history at universities.

For instance, take our three universities. Ghent has a centre for student entrepreneurship. Aston, where Erika is, has start-up support for graduate entrepreneurs. Lancaster, the management school, has entrepreneurs in residence.

Certainly, there's a discourse that very much encourages people to be proactive and self-motivated and all the rest of it. There's been a lot of research on that going back to the '90s, even. About entrepreneurial universities, entrepreneur academics etc. We'll put some references for that work in the blog.

Erika: Yes. Very often what you see in these programmes—especially I'm thinking about [**\*\* 0:16:02**] at Aston— [is that] they help entrepreneurs figure out how to create a gap, so to speak. We will hear about this in our interview guest's part. How to create a gap. How to—through words and through a story—show how the services or products you offer can fill that gap.

Veronika: Yeah. It's not just about... We've looked at how various kinds of entrepreneurs are spoken about. But also, it matters how they themselves speak.

Erika: Very much so. I have an excellent example from someone who has already been mentioned before: Steve Jobs. It's 2010 and he comes out onto the stage to introduce a product nobody has ever seen before. He walks on the stage in 2010 and his first words that he utters in that presentation are, "We want to kick off 2010 by introducing a truly magical and revolutionary product, today."

Veronika: No less than that, right? 'Magical', 'revolutionary.' And that intensified, 'truly magical and revolutionary'.

Erika: Yeah. Then he goes on and he talks about some other stuff that Apple did that year. Then he goes back and tells a little bit about the history or the story going back to '76. The invention and reinvention of mobile phones and all sorts of things.

Then he says this, and I would like to invite you to comment on the language that he uses: "The question has arisen lately that there is room for a third category of device in the middle of something that's been a laptop and a smartphone."

Veronika: Ah. "The question has arisen." Now, that to me has really religious overtones. Like rising from the dead, almost, or something like that. (Laughter) Maybe it's just me and my Catholic background. For me, "The question has arisen," sounds very grand but almost religious, really. What about you, Bernard? How do you react to that?

Bernard: Yes. Similar. "Behold, behold!" It's like that! (Laughter)

Veronika: It's a grand gesture, that's for sure. It's a very marked way of putting something. It's not like, "We've been wondering lately." It's, "The question has arisen". An interesting passive construction there, really.

Erika: Also, conveniently it doesn't say who is asking this question, right?

Veronika: Indeed.

Erika: Then, in the talk, he keeps justifying the production of this product that the listener still doesn't know what he is trying to get at, because we don't know this product yet.

Then he says, somewhere further down, "In order to really create a new category of devices, those devices are going to have to be far better at doing some of the key tasks. If there is going to be a third category, it's going to have to be better." And he goes on still painting that picture.

Veronika: Yeah. Lots of hyperbole, here. Comparison. But it's not just better, it's "far better".

Bernard: Raising expectations.

Erika: Exactly. But we can see how he's now created a gap and he's slowly moving towards filling that gap. Then he goes on bashing another product, the netbook. He says it's slow, it's low quality, it's a cheap laptop. Then he says, "It's not a third-category device."

Veronika: Yeah. He's created this concept, a "third-category device". That is now a thing. Right. We'll put a link to the YouTube video on our blog and you can watch the video. You'll see that there's also a visual aspect that's quite interesting. What he does with the visuals.

Erika: Yes. Let me tell you the final bit. When he arrives at the thing he says, "We don't think they are a third-category device..." – I mean netbooks – "...but we think we've got something that is and we would like to show it to you today for the first time. We call it the iPad." Then he pulls one out from his pocket!

Veronika: I mean, it is asking for a drumroll, isn't it? (Laughter) It's a great build-up. Then you have the "we", whoever the "we" is. Never quite sure in

corporate communications. "We call it the iPad." That's sort of the climax of his address, really.

Bernard: We can actually see that it works, right? You talk things into being and people want it, people need it. Then you see people queuing up with their sleeping bags because there is a new iPhone out, for instance. So, it does work. But I think it's part of our job to disentangle that and to dissect the language that brings these situations about.

Veronika: Yeah. You can talk a lot into being, some of which may be useful and some of which may create an artificial need. An artificial hype.

There is always a shared responsibility between entrepreneurs and customers, I suppose. Because a lot of what you can talk into being may not only be useless but environmentally damaging, for instance. Create a lot of landfill.

But having said that, entrepreneurs also, of course, develop and market very useful things. At one point, somebody started a business around selling washing machines and I will be forever grateful!

Bernard: Suitcases with wheels, for instance. Let's not be too critical because, of course, we do indeed need entrepreneurs to make the world a better place, let's say, in this respect.

Erika: Or entrepreneurs who argue that language is important in business.

Veronika: Yeah. Service entrepreneurs who offer language consulting. Which is the perfect segue into our interview guest today because now we'll talk to a life-sized entrepreneur about how she talked her own venture into being and started a business around language consulting.

[Music 0:21:33 - 0:21:38]

Veronika: Right. We are all very pleased to welcome our interview guest today, Munene Khoza, who joins us from Johannesburg. Munene has an MA in Language and Linguistics but she has since worked as a brand consultant. She's worked in name changes for brands. She has worked in corporate communications more widely.

She joins us today because, for a couple of years, she ran her own language consultancy called Mint, which she founded and ran. So, we're very curious to hear about her experience as an entrepreneur. Welcome to the programme, Munene.

Munene: Thanks for having me, Dr Koller.

Veronika: Oh, it's Veronika, please! (Laughter) Okay, I should say to our listeners that Munene used to be my student. But there is no need for Dr Koller now, Munene. (Laughter) That's all fine.

Tell us your story. You founded Mint Language Consultancy and ran it for a couple of years. Just tell us a bit about how you got to do that, how it worked and then why you moved on to do something different.

Munene: Sure. I think the story begins a little bit before I started Mint, just in terms of my professional career post-studies. I ended up obviously being a passionate linguist but with a keen interest in business, trying to figure out how best to understand business. The mechanics of it, stakeholder engagement, what are the challenges businesses face and how to resolve them.

I was advised that a great space to learn that is management consulting. For about four or five years I actually worked in management consulting, largely in the change management space and managing the communications around organisational changes, usually around systems. The point being, there was still that golden thread of language, despite my working in that business space.

I became increasingly interested in the role of language in business and how to monetise the value of words and language in corporate. I didn't quite find the right, obvious position in corporate.

So, I thought to myself, "Why not create one of my own? And another space for other business-interested linguists to operate and contribute something meaningful?"

Veronika: Which is, of course, exactly the entrepreneurial thinking. Like, "It doesn't exist. Well, make it exist," right?

Munene: And that's exactly it. I think there's been a lot of rhetoric in media and discourse around just entrepreneurship and driving that, even within businesses. So, I felt the push and as if I could do it. Then I started Mint. Which, as you indicated, was a language consultancy where we offered a range of language-based services, predominantly to corporates. Things like copywriting, copyediting, communications, strategies, training etc.

I started off as a one-man show. The team grew to about five of us, all linguists/journalists. Just passionate language practitioners. Yeah. So, the journey began in July of 2016.

Veronika: Right. And now you have moved on to a corporate job yourself. How are you finding the difference between working for your own small enterprise and going back into the corporate world?

Munene: I think there are pros and cons to both, as there are in any kind of professional situation. As an entrepreneur, I think you intimated that it's creating something new. It's bringing something interesting to the market. But there are also huge challenges.

As I indicated, academically my background is in the humanities. (Laughter) I'm essentially innumerate. And there's a huge component, as an entrepreneur, in terms of understanding financials and funding. And finding the linguistic and business tools to convince people that there's value in words was a big challenge. That is not a 'nice to have'. That's a business imperative.

So, it was a lot of convincing. A lot of driving the messaging and the narrative of my business. That was a big challenge. Going back to the financial and administrative challenges, just a huge amount of documentation. I know it would differ from region to region, country to country, what the requirements are. But there were massive requirements around governance, legalities, finances.

When you're running your own business, you're responsible for all of that and finding the right people to partner with on those elements of the business.

- Veronika: Yeah. You really have to be an all-rounder, by the sounds of it.
- Munene: That's it. Particularly at the beginning, not only are you the linguist but you're also HR, finance... You put on several hats. While you get a breadth of experience, the benefits to your question around, "How does corporate differ?" is that it's quite easy or quite beneficial in that you can get a depth of experience, exposure and understanding of a brand. Because you're just focusing on doing the work.
- Erika: I really like your example, Munene. I think it's an excellent word of warning to some of our listeners who are interested in finding out how they can go into work and maybe start new businesses around language. That as much as we would like to think that a passion for language is enough, we need to have all those other skills as well to start a new business.
- Munene: Oh, certainly. Right from the beginning, if you're not self-funded and having to go out and look for that funding, you need to understand how business people think. Often, business people don't quite understand, as I said, the monetary value or the bottom-line value of language.
- Bernard: Can I just speak up on that? How did you convince them, then? Because you founded your own agency and you used language to make it happen. Can you think of particular moments that you thought, "Okay, now language will be of crucial importance and I will use it to my best interests"? Can you give examples of particular moments in that process?
- Munene: Perhaps I could take a step back to my time in management consulting. This trickled into how I was able to motivate a lot of the time with new clients at Mint. Change management. A prime example. If you are perhaps looking at reductions in a company...
- I worked with a lot of mining companies during my time. It was quite volatile and quite unionised. So, we were looking up organisational changes often. Now, if you do not manage your communications and plan your communications and execute your communications effectively, one, you face the threat of union action, to be quite frank.

Second to that, a lot of these companies are listed. If there are ructions in the media and if your message is not being articulated or disseminated properly, that can affect your stock price.

These are two examples, in terms of perhaps in a unionised environment, perhaps in you're looking at stocks, at companies where your communications are part and parcel of reputation. And reputation is integral to the bottom line, once again.

**Bernard:** Yeah. So, it's not just what you say in terms of reputation but how you say it, of course. Okay.

**Munene:** And anticipating challenges. I think a big problem and an oversight is that a lot of corporates look at comms as a reactive exercise in response to stimuli. The best communicators and the best corporates plan ahead. They anticipate the challenges, plan and write up their comms accordingly.

**Veronika:** I think that's a very important point you raise there. If something goes wrong, if there is a crisis—internal, external or whatever it may be—then suddenly, "Oh, we need to put some communications out there." Right?

It's really interesting what you say there because a couple of years back I did an interview study with language professionals. People who did work in similar things as you do and did. People who worked in public relations, communications, brand strategy, linguistic consulting and that sort of thing.

Many of them talked about how difficult it was to persuade potential clients of the importance of language, really. One person who I interviewed at the time, for instance, said, "I think clients are starting to understand that language is really important." Certainly, the more advanced agencies and brands are starting to realise that. But, for the majority, they still really don't get it. Is that something that echoes with you?

**Munene:** Yeah, that definitely resonates with me. But you've kind of prompted a thought that I thought was important to share with you. Often, because

people don't understand the value of words, one of the mistakes I made early on—and a big learning that I would like to share with any entrepreneur looking to work in the space—is not to undervalue your product.

My costing model, to start off with... It was just wrong. I think I undervalued, again, the expertise and what we could bring. Once I got that right, people started taking it a little bit more seriously. “Why is this this expensive? Who have you worked with?” So, it's just a consideration.

To your point, it's almost like when you're looking to buy a watch. (Laughter) I don't know if it's a good analogy. But for me, if you're looking at a Rolex, you'll say to yourself, "Okay, the price tag is high but it grows in value. There's prestige associated with it," etc. So, it's almost like you've got to think of your product as the Rolex or whatever you want to position yourself as.

But you've got to give it real thought, who you're targeting and how you're costing your product, because that speaks to the value before you've even tried to convince anyone.

Erika: Right. I guess this boils down to really good business planning. You will probably like to hear that one of the genres that we want to explore later on in the podcast is the business plan. Maybe if you can share some tips with our listeners about this genre, this text, called the business plan. Did you have one? If you didn't, how would you write one?

Munene: I certainly had to have a business plan. I think there's that adage “Fail to plan, you plan to fail.” I think it rings very, very true in the space of entrepreneurship.

There were two major things I did in terms of just trying to understand how to do this business plan. The first [is] really simple and old school but I just read a lot. I read a lot of books on the topic of starting a business, writing a business plan. Obviously, there's a huge amount of information online. So, that was one.

The second piece of advice I'd give, and the second thing that was hugely helpful in putting that plan together, is speaking to other entrepreneurs. Speaking to those who'd succeeded. It's also really important to speak to those who have not necessarily succeeded. I hate to use the word 'failed', but moved on to other things. Because it's those insights that will help you in refining your offering and in refining your business plan.

Again, for me, two things. Read, read, read. And the second is just talk to people. Entrepreneurship can be a lonely journey.

Often, I believe media portrays it as around personalities, rather than priorities and pointers, that will help you in actually executing practically to be very iterative. But that would be my advice around how to get around that as a linguist and not necessarily having organically grown in the business space.

Veronika: When you actually then sat down to write your business plan, did you find yourself drawing on your linguistic background? Really in detail, just how do I formulate this now to sound more persuasive?

Munene: Oh, definitely. Without a doubt. I've spoken about the financials and the challenges there and I think it's important, if you don't have that skill, to draw on colleagues, friends, family etc. who can help you with that. Because that's a key part of the plan.

But specifically to your question, I certainly drew on linguistic principles that I picked up at university. Most significantly—and I think this is a huge trend, even in corporate—plain language. There's just no... I don't think it makes you sound smarter to be verbose. I don't think it makes the plan more effective.

I found the simpler the business plan was... And this actually applied across all the material. Even my sales documents etc. The more I drew on principles of plain language, the more impactful and the more I saw a return on the inputs that I was making from a linguistic point of view. I hope that makes sense.

Veronika: Oh, totally. It's really interesting because we just talked about plain language in the previous episode when we talked about change management and what comes under that.

Munene: Yeah.

Veronika: So, it's good to hear you echo that. It's very interesting.

Bernard: Normally, we round off with, "What is the single piece of advice you would give to people who want to start up a business?" But I think that reference you have to plain language is the best one you could give us, I think. It's also time, if I'm not mistaken, to round off, unfortunately.

Veronika: Yeah. Afraid so. Yes.

Munene: Well, thank you so much for letting me rattle on. (Laughter)

Veronika: No. Pleasure, Munene. Really. (Laughter)

Munene: But yes, I would certainly say use plain language. But again, just to reiterate that it's a challenging journey and you will have to wear many different hats. So, just go in with both eyes open.

Veronika: I think that's a very good final note on which to end. Thank you so much, Munene. It was a pleasure having you on the podcast.

Erika: Thank you.

Veronika: Thank you.

Bernard: Thank you very much. Bye.

[Music 0:35:38 - 0:35:45]

Veronika: Good. It was good to hear from Munene, our interview guest, about how she went about putting her business plan together because we thought we could look at the text type or genre that is the business plan.

It's a bit hybrid. You're meant, obviously, to inform investors. But you also, crucially, want to persuade them with it. You need information about the team, the company, the market. But you also need a lot of persuasive power behind it, right? You need to have a particular structure to it.

You do need your executive summary, an inventory of the company and team; industry and finance, not least. But you have a bit of leeway within the elements. How you actually use language, then. Erika, very thankfully, found us a really good example of a real, actual business plan.

Erika: Yeah. It's not an easy task to do because business plans are not generally public. For those people who want to learn how to write business plans, I guess those few examples that you can find online are really important.

What is important, though, is to learn what to do with them. The way to look at any type of text through the lens of a genre is a very useful way of learning about texts because it allows you to look at various parts and consider what their function is.

Veronika: Right. What have we got, then? What's our example of the genre that is business plans?

Erika: Okay. The one we found is a smart technology company. I will read out the name of the company and then their tagline. I'll ask you to comment on what you think about this. Their name is Culina. The tagline says, "Smart technology for the most popular room in the house."

Bernard: That's interesting. In a way, that's providing information but it's also promotional. Because they obviously thought about the name for the company. Culina might not be a coincidence.

It reminds me of episode 3 [on branding and advertising] that we had. We talked about sound symbolism, there. We had the opposition... Well, we won't spoil it for the listeners who haven't heard that episode yet. Well, (laughter) here's a bit of promo from my side. Culina conjures up ideas of warmth and cosiness but also exclusivity because it's a three-syllable word. That is not a coincidence. Creativity, yeah?

Veronika: Yeah, and it's Latin. It's Latin for 'kitchen'.

Bernard: Yeah.

Veronika: It perhaps, then, speaks to an audience who might pick up on that. That's really interesting. So, the way it sounds but also where it comes from. So, to communicate cosiness and exclusivity at the same time, which is not a mean feat.

Erika: Right. Then the tagline is playing on this because they say, "Smart technology for the most popular room in the house." They don't say which one. It's a kind of gap-filling exercise for the listener or the reader, which forces the reader to engage with the text even deeper because they have to provide that information in their minds.

You know, when we think, "Which one is the most popular room in the house?", in your head you are providing that answer. You are filling the gap.

Veronika: That's right. You are immediately cognitively drawn into the text. It's a very smart move, really.

Erika: Exactly. Okay. In the executive summary, they do reveal which room they're talking about. I'll read out the first two sentences. They say: "The kitchen is the heart of the home. It's a quintessential gathering place where families and friends come together to break bread, be merry and make memories."

Veronika: Right. Alliteration is the first thing, of course. 'Merry', 'make memories', 'break bread'. That really stands out, doesn't it?

Bernard: But also—and I'm not sure what's going on today—but what is it with the religious language? (Laughter)

Veronika: Yeah.

Erika: We go back to visionaries and sharing wisdom.

Veronika: But we also have a metaphor, of course. The kitchen as the heart of the home. The home is a living organism and the kitchen is the heart. It's the central part of it, the most important part, to make the organism run. But it's also symbolically the emotional centre of the home, right?

Bernard: Uh huh.

Erika: That's brilliant.

Veronika: The kitchen is given some sort of emotional meaning, really.

Erika: Okay. Let's ride that emotion and listen to how they follow.

"But the kitchen is also where tragedy often strikes due to the misuse of appliances. The founder, Kent, and his team set out to make the kitchen a safer and more energy-efficient place for the family after a tragic fire struck in his own kitchen in late 2012. Thankfully, no lives were lost and everyone in his family made it out safe and sound. But Kent couldn't help but wonder, 'What if?'"

Bernard: Okay. Interesting. First, we have this image of a warm and cosy place. A safe place, as well, if you like. Then, all of a sudden, we get this drama. We have a tragedy. A tragedy. Because of that tragedy, Kent McClure and his team also create a need, right? Because they're saying, "You're not safe and you need our products." Correct.

Veronika: We have a little small story here. A little narrative that is just perhaps hinted at, at what happened. We have this sudden thing. So, the tragedy "strikes" all of a sudden into this cosiness.

Then also, what I noticed there, is that the founder is the central actor in this story. He's first mentioned with his first and family name. Very quickly, they change to first-name terms only, which makes it more personal then.

Erika: Yes. Later on, he's referred to as Kent throughout. But if you look at the document, there is more intro about all the members of the team.

But it's very interesting that you picked up on the story element. I think it's one of the key mantras all entrepreneurs hear at one point or another. Hopefully we will hear about this next month when we talk about pitching. Entrepreneurs are repeatedly told to include a story.

What I often find when I look at this advice in research is that the story is not really specified. Does it have to be a story about your product being born? Something about yourself?

Here, clearly, they chose a story which led to the development of the product and they did it really, really well. Of course, it continues with the story of Kent.

Here it goes: "With decades in the industrial design space, Kent knew he had the knowledge and the industry contacts to set out to improve up on home automation devices. In early 2013, Culina was born. Since that time, Kent and the Culina team have made it their mission to completely revolutionise the home automation and IoT space with innovative, AI-powered technology."

Veronika: That's interesting. That's really very different from the heart of the kitchen, right?

Bernard: Yeah.

Veronika: And the cosiness and the emotional overtones. I mean, yeah, a metaphor, "Culina was born" so the company is a person, but that's fairly conventional. But then you have a lot of tech language. 'AI-powered', 'innovative', 'home automation device', that phrase. So, a very different feel to it because it's much more technical jargon and much less emotional language, really.

Bernard: Yeah. It's kind of building credentials and credibility. "He had the knowledge and industry contacts," for instance, "With decades of experience in the industrial design space." They go from the promotional, let's say, the aspect where you want to lure people into your story, to talking business. "Okay, now let's talk about the technical aspects."

Erika: I guess this is a very good example of navigating different audiences and different functions.

That's where genre knowledge comes in handy. Because if you know which parts of a document are supposed to, I don't know, sell the idea or play on people's emotions, and then which parts are supposed to really talk business, numbers and sellability, then it will help you to write a good document. Because you know which parts were supposed to achieve what purpose.

Veronika: Yes, indeed. Of course, this is only the business plan that we've done a bit of analysis on. It's only the first in a whole chain of genres, if you will, because you also then have the investor pitch when you need to find the money for your start-up.

That is actually what we'll be talking about next [month]. Again, with interview guests, with a bit of analysis and our introduction. So, selling the business idea and pitching it to possible investors.

Bernard: Yeah. So, see you all next episode then.

Veronika: Yes. Okay. We continue with our mini-series on entrepreneurship. But for now, it's bye-bye from us and see you, as it were, next month. Bye.

Erika: Bye.

Bernard: Bye, everyone. Bye.

[Music 0:44:22 - 0:44:46]

END OF AUDIO