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Assessing Knowledge Management Services through Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper presents a case study in which discourse analysis was used to suggest process improvements in two knowledge management services (KMS). It employs linguistic analysis as the means for assessing the degree to which each KMS is aligned to the users’ needs. Areas requiring improvement are identified linguistically based on the differences between users’ experience of the services and the perspectives of the information technology professionals. The case study was carried out in a large, global corporation operating in the property services sector. We studied two user communities and the group of IT professionals who developed and managed the services. Discourse analysis using Systemic Functional Linguistics forms the basis for the assessment of the extent to which language enacts or restricts such alignment.

Keywords

Knowledge Management, Discourse Analysis, Systemic Functional Linguistics

1. Introduction

Knowledge is transmitted in social contexts, through relationships...that are defined in the value systems and ideology of the culture. And the words that are exchanged in these
contexts get their meaning from activities in which they are embedded, which again are social activities with social agencies and goals.

(Halliday, Hasan et al. 1985:5)

That understanding social processes in organisations is an important issue for developing IT-based Knowledge Management (KM) solutions is increasingly recognised in the literature (Davenport, De Long et al. 1998; Davenport and Prusak 1998). There has been a recent trend toward a social constructivist approach to studying the success or failure of information technologies in organisations (e.g., Cecez-Kecmanovic 2000, among others). These studies recognise that creating effective KM solutions call for an in-depth understanding of how organisational participants interact. However, many organisations adopt KM technologies without adequate consideration for the critical social factors (Grover and Davenport 2001). As Halliday and Hasan (1985) suggest, language carries social meaning and is a fundamental way by which people communicate knowledge. Conceiving of knowledge in terms of the ways in which meaning is negotiated and created by participants in can provide insights into KM processes in organisations. This study seeks to investigate such meaning creation in the context of the use of two KM services using discourse analysis in a large global corporation. The term ‘KM service’ rather than ‘KM system’ is adopted to emphasise the view that technological solutions to an organisation’s KM needs should be holistic in nature and account for the social processes of organisational participants. The following section introduces discourse analysis.

1.1 Introducing Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary area of inquiry which focuses on the analysis of meaning in texts. These texts may be of many different kinds such as written, spoken, written to be spoken and spoken to be written! Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a useful tool for such analysis as its methods provide both rigour and richness in analysis. It is rigorous by providing a systematic way of studying how people choose to structure language to create meaning. It is rich in approaching this meaning in terms of the ways speakers makes these choices in the functional contexts in which they use language. Systemic Functional Linguistics provides discourse analysis with a systematic way of relating the interpretations of texts to linguistic data. This is because it involves a coherent and comprehensive theory of grammar, that is, a theory of how language may be organised to make meanings. Halliday (1994) suggests the futility of analysis in the absence of a theory of grammar, otherwise known as a grammatics:

A discourse analysis that is not based on a grammar is not an analysis at all, but simply a running commentary on a text: either an appeal has to be made to some set of non-linguistic conventions, or to some linguistic features that are trivial enough to be accessible without a grammar, like the number of words per sentence (and even the objectivity of these is often illusory); or else the exercise remains a private one in which one explanation is as good or as bad as another. (Halliday 1994:xvi)
The systematic way of evaluating linguistic evidence which SFL provides has particular implication for instance, to a consultant attempting to understand and interpret interview data gathered from organisational participants. Without a theory of grammar, the conclusions of the consultant may be, as Halliday argues, merely a “running commentary” rather than a rigorous attempt at analysis. Halliday’s (1994) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* provides a systematic overview of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

**2. Case Study Background and Method**

This study was undertaken over approximately three months in a multinational organization operating in the property services industry. For reasons of confidentiality, this organization will be referred to as Organisation X. There is evidence of a knowledge program in existence within the organisation for more than twenty years, publishing and sharing defect patterns in construction. This study deals with the current Knowledge Management program initiated more recently in the organisation. The organisation has recently been restructured and is currently comprised of two divisions: Property Solutions and Property Investment Services. This study focused on the Property Solutions side of the business and specifically on the Development sector and Construction sectors of this area. These two sectors represent two different communities which are serviced by two different Knowledge Management Services: Service A and Service B. Users from these communities as well as Knowledge Managers and sharers were participants in this study. In addition, the Chief Information Officer and Business Analysts in the Strategic Global Services group based in Sydney which provide IT services to the company both locally and globally were part of the study. Table 1 gives further details of the demography of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service A</th>
<th>Service B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Information Officer, Global Services</td>
<td>3 Business Analysts, Global Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Knowledge Managers</td>
<td>2 Knowledge Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Sharer</td>
<td>3 Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community of Practice Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community of Practice member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Users</td>
<td>5 Users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 Participants in the study*

Service A is targeted at the Development community. It incorporates a phone-based service called a Help Point, face-to-face knowledge sharing sessions known as Technical Skilling and a knowledge base which utilises a taxonomy as an organisational knowledge map. This service focuses on activities surrounding the construction, development and management of retail properties.
As a Knowledge Management initiative, Service A, arose out of Knowledge Management needs which became apparent in the wake of a large and successful development in the United Kingdom. Upon the completion of this project it was desired that the substantial ‘lessons learnt’ should be retained in the corporate memory. A major need expressed by the community involved in this project was that there was a place to store documents and retrieve people who were in possession of particular information. The Knowledge Managers translated this need in terms of entities and relationships. A topic-based ‘Knowledge Map’ was created to reflect their analysis of the community’s requirements. The Knowledge Managers created an initial categorisation of content and asked users where they would expect to find information in these categories in a knowledge base. The decision on how to name the categories was similarly based on user feedback. Each region has its own instantiation of the knowledge map and corresponding database. The knowledge maps currently consist of simple entities with no sub-entities. The IT professionals wish to integrate these knowledge maps and databases but are faced with the problem of seeking to integrate different representations.

Service B is used by the Construction Services community. The designers of this service aimed at the Construction side of the business felt that as the organisation currently did not have a culture in which best practice was collected, the next best thing was to create a ‘just-in-time’ service. Instead of investing time and money in cataloguing knowledge as it was acquired, a ‘demand-side’ system was created which centered upon establishing a process to quickly find answers to questions without any precategorisation or preprocessing. Thus, Service B applies a very different model to Service A. The aim of Service B is to facilitate expertise location and it involves three participant roles: seeker, facilitator and sharer. A seeker is an employee looking for an appropriate expert to offer advice on a query. Seekers do not interact directly with a computer system and instead rely on the mediating capacity of a facilitator who utilises the range of knowledge resources in the company to find an appropriate sharer for the seeker. This process is referred to as conducting a seek. Sharers are individuals who have specialist knowledge in particular areas.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the participants outlined in Table 1. Twenty-four interviews of approximately one hour each were conducted in total. The goal of these interviews was to encourage the participants to talk freely about their work and experiences surrounding Service A and Service B in Organisation X. They were only directed to the extent that the participants’ responses were taken as the basis for each subsequent question. This was part of an attempt to minimise the impact of the interviewer's speech upon the participants' responses while ensuring that the interviews involved relevant issues. An example of the style of questioning is "Tell me about Knowledge Management in Organisation X". This form was adopted to discourage participants adopting the process type used in the question itself. However, despite this measure it is acknowledged that the influence of the researcher is an unavoidable confounding variable in case study research. The interviews with the Business Analysts were conducted in person. However, as most other participants were located outside Sydney these interviews were conducted via conference call. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for later analysis.
The present study used the analytical methods of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to undertake discourse analysis on the speech of participants. SFL is a theory interested in describing language in terms of its semantic function in the social and cultural contexts within which it is put to use by speakers. The analysis undertaken included transitivity and ergativity analyses which will be briefly described below. The reader is directed to Halliday’s (1994) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* for a detailed account of systemic functional theory. The transitivity and ergativity analyses were hand-applied to the transcribed interviews using XML mark-up applying Document Type Declarations developed by the researcher.

Transitivity analysis decomposes discourse into processes, participants and circumstances at the level of the clause. Halliday (1994:106) suggests the centrality of the clause in construing experience, claiming that “it embodies a general principle for modelling experience – namely, the principle that reality is made up of PROCESSES”. Processes are ‘happenings’ or goings-on. They are associated with participants and circumstances; participants are things involved in the happening and circumstance are the contexts in which the happening occurs. Processes may be divided into processes of doing, sensing and being. For example, Table 2 is an example of transitivity analysis for a clause containing a type of process of doing, a material process. A material process involves and entity which performs a concrete action. Other kinds of processes include mental, behavioural, existential, relational and verbal processes:

- Mental Processes are processes of sensing, that is, processes in which an entity perceives something.
- Halliday suggests that Behavioural Processes, that is, processes in which a conscious entity performs an action, are in-between Material and Mental Processes. This is because they involve an aspect of psychological and physiological action performed by the entity with consciousness.
- Existential Processes are processes in which an entity is stated as existing.
- Relational Processes are processes of being, that is, of processes in which entities are assigned relations to other entities in terms of attributes or identity.
- Verbal processes are processes of saying.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The construction community</th>
<th>use</th>
<th>Service B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Process: Material</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 Transitivity analysis of a clause containing a material process*

Ergativity analysis adds another layer to this analysis by looking at the locus of agency as it relates the process occurring. For example, the actor in Table 2 is the participant which causes the process to occur and is thus referred to as the Agent (see Table 3). The other participant which is involved in the process but which does not play a role in its causation is referred to as the Medium.
The construction community use Service B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: Material</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 Ergativity analysis of a clause containing a material process*

The following section details the findings of discourse analysis performed upon the speech of participants in Service A and Service B.

### 3. Findings from Organisation X

#### 3.1 Knowledge Management Service A

##### 3.1.1 Users’ experience of Service A’s taxonomy

As outlined in Section 2, Service A utilises a taxonomy as a map of the organisational knowledge in the Knowledge Base. This section investigates the alignment of the taxonomy with the users’ experience. Analysis of the taxonomy and interviews with users and knowledge managers form the basis of this assessment of alignment.

When talking about the taxonomy, the users interviewed consistently referred to problems understanding the logic underlying the distribution of categories. A high degree of negative polarity was apparent in their discourse as they referred to difficulties understanding the meaning of categories. This polarity is presented in Figure 1. Polarity is part of an interpersonal view of processes and represents the choice between positive and negative. The negative polarity in the users’ discourse on the categories suggests a lack of alignment between the taxonomic model and actual usage amongst users.

![Figure 1 Polarity of users referring to categories in System](image-url)
The users’ difficulty in negotiating the taxonomic structure to find the concepts they require arises from problems in semantic and structural representation. These difficulties resulted from problems in the following areas

(i) nominalisation
(ii) identifying primary semantic concepts
(iii) indexation

An example of (i) is the term ‘Appointment of Consultants’ in the Business Processes category which is catalogued under ‘A’. In this categorisation the Behavioural Process, ‘to appoint’, has been nominalised. Nominalisation makes a process into a noun. This classification has been chosen instead of ‘Consultants, appointment of’. There is no corresponding term ‘Consultants’ in the other areas of the knowledge base. While the process of appointment may be semantically significant, it is too generalised to exist at this level of the schema alongside more specific concepts such as ‘Public Service Agreements’. In addition, as will be discussed below, the knowledge base has not been structured to center upon processes as the locus of meaning. Another example of this problem is ‘Dealing with Authorities’ which occurs under ‘D’ in the ‘Topics’ category.

The nominalisation ‘Business Processes’ was the locus of much confusion. One user commented that this could mean “almost anything”. Business Processes included ‘terms’ ranging from ‘Appointment of Consultants’, ‘Professional Service Agreements’, ‘Taxation’ to ‘Y2K’. The diversity of the concepts contained within the category would seem to indicate over-generalisation. This appears to be an issue of the level of ‘delicacy’ with which concepts are represented within the taxonomy. Halliday and Matthiessen (1999:84) conceive of delicacy as “a uniform ordering from most general to most delicate”.

The level of delicacy is further problematised by the semantic shift between products and processes in the categorisation. For example ‘Business Process’ and ‘Documents’ exist at the same level. The problems with nominalisation appear to arrive from the need to abstract process. A user approaching the knowledge base will be attempting to carry out a task so structuring the knowledge base conceptually around activity is a legitimate goal. However, the knowledge base is currently structured in a way which does not hold process as an organising principle.

3.1.2 Misaligning Agency in Service A

This section investigates differences in the construction of agency by the users and knowledge managers in this study as they referred to Service A. Discourse in which the service was discussed was drawn from interviews with these participants and forms the data for such investigation. Ergativity deals with the concept of agency, that is, determining whether a process happens without aid or is caused to happen by something. We performed Ergativity analysis on this discourse to uncover the location of agency by the speakers.
All the users interviewed indicated that they found it difficult to locate other individuals who were using Service A in their departments. Ergativity analysis of the knowledge manager and business users’ individually talking about Service A reveals a marked difference in the construal of Service A in the role of agent or medium. Halliday (1994:163) defines the Medium as the element “through which the process is actualized, and without which there would be no process at all”. The agent, on the other hand is the participant which is the external cause of the process, should one exist. As the Figure 2 suggests, Service A is construed predominately as agent in the knowledge manager’s discourse. By way of contrast, as Figure 3 suggests, Service A is more frequently construed as medium in the users’ discourse. The users’ frequent choice to use this participant role suggests a view of the service as a passive entity. This contrasts to the knowledge manager’s choice to use

Figure 2 Construal of Service A as Agent or Medium in Knowledge Manager's discourse.

the active participant role of Agent. This difference in agency points to a difference in alignment of the users’ and knowledge manager’s experience of the service. The decision of the knowledge manager to develop a supply-driven service may be questioned in terms of the extent to which it is in accord with the users’ characterisation of the service as passive.
The frequency with which Service A appears in the medium role in the discourse of the users in turn suggests that they perceive it as a passive tool rather than an active, holistic service. One user suggested that it would be useful if they could receive notification when knowledge that was relevant to their requirements appeared in the knowledge base. Promoting the demand-driven Help Point aspect of Service A may aid in remedying this problem of perceived passivity.

3.2 Knowledge Management Service B

This section details the finding of analysis undertaken on the discourse of participants in Service B. This included business analysts, knowledge managers, facilitators, seekers and sharers.

3.2.1 Agency in Service B

This section investigates the locus of agency in the discourse of users and the Knowledge Managers who designed Service B. As Figure 4 reveals, ‘users’ is the semantic category which occurs as Agent with the most frequency in the discourse of the knowledge managers who designed System B. This is in accord with the Service’s demand-based logic. This logic was echoed in the users’ discourse in the extent to which they placed themselves in the role of agent as they talked about Service B. Figure 5 shows the users’ construal of agency as they spoke about Service B. The ascription of this high degree of agency to the users by the knowledge managers has important implications. It makes a culture conducive to asking questions a factor for the success of service. Many of the users and knowledge managers interviewed referred to a ‘can-do’ ideology within the
Construction community, arising from the dominant belief in the domain of engineering that an engineer should be able to solve a problem with the resources that are immediately to hand. One Facilitator put it as follows:

I think there are a lot of engineers working in this company and engineers love to solve problems…our culture is to just figure it out on our own…[Service B] is a service that forces people out of that norm.

This culture appears to view asking a question as inability to ‘craft’ a solution. In this way, while Service B initially appears aligned with the Construction community’s tendency to ascribe agency to the engineer, this alignment is only at the level of the individual and needs to be extended to the group context in which users ask questions in a public domain.

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3.2.2 Facilitators

Ergativity and transitivity analysis were performed on the discourse from individual interview of the facilitators talking about their work role. Figure 6 presents the results of transitivity analysis of the facilitators talking about their role in Service B. There is little uniformity in process selection across the three facilitators in this discourse. Similarly, the attribution of semantic categories to the role of agent is not uniform. Figure 7 shows this distribution of agency in the facilitators’ discourse. The differences in alignment in terms of transitivity and ergativity in the facilitators’ discourse suggests that they have different experiences of their role.

![Figure 6 Process selection in facilitators’ discourse on their role in Service B](image)

![Figure 7 Agent participants in facilitators’ discourse on their role in Service B](image)

Such difference was also apparent on the semantic stratum in the diversity of issues which the facilitators suggested were fundamental to their role. The difference in
construal reflects different ways of approaching the facilitation role. Facilitator B used the highest degree of verbal processes. This facilitator claimed that it was important to have discussions with both parties about the question being asked. This facilitator added that the major challenge of their role was having the time to interact with Seekers and Sharers on a face-to-face basis. They located this problem within the wider issue of inadequate communication of the availability of Service B to users in their region. Ineffective communication has meant that users in this region are confused as to the nature of the service.

A lot of people are confused by Service B. They think it is a website...they can’t find the website. They can’t find where to ask a question.

The other facilitators saw answering the question with a high quality sharer as a significant challenge. Again, there was a diverse response as to what constituted a quality sharer. One Facilitator located quality in terms of willingness to share rather than extent of expertise:

I will find multiple people who have that experience and there is no way of knowing who has the best experience to other than [it being] the person who was most willing to share their experience. So it’s...measured more on the willingness to share than the actual knowledge that they have.

While the diversity with which the facilitators construe their work role may reflect individual differences, it nevertheless suggests that they may require further training so that they are operating from a common strategic position.

3.2.3 Nature of Seeks

Systemic functional linguistics provides a way of looking at both how language in structured for usage as a ‘system’ and how it is used by speakers as it is instantiated in their discourse (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999:323). Knowledge management is interested in looking at a domain from both ends: from the system end in order to ‘manage’; from the instance end in order to account for the experience of organisational participants.

A ‘seek’ is a question which a user, referred to as a seeker, asks a facilitator who in turn attempts to locate an appropriate expert, known as a sharer. The facilitators emphasised the diversity of the questions which they received. Examples include a seeker:

- assisting a client with the purchase of vacant land for a large distribution center and looking for some kind of checklist for ‘doing due diligence’ on the land.
• asking about the nature of Organisation X’s past experience with a particular client, architect or subcontractor
• who had just received an RFQ (request for quote) for a project and who wished to know whether Organisation X had experience with this company.
• trying to find out whether anyone in Organisation X had experience in installing superflat concrete

All the Seekers interviewed spent time talking about the content of the questions (Seeks) they had asked facilitators. Figure 8 shows the averages of the frequencies at which various semantic categories were placed in the role of subject by the Seekers in this discourse. The Subject is part of an interpersonal view of processes. Halliday defines the Subject as the entity “responsible for the functioning of the clause as a interactive event”. It is the participant which holds responsibility for the validity of what is proposed and is thus often the speaker themselves. Analysis of this nature could be used in a more widespread study of a larger cross-section of users to create a map of the kind of subjects which they chose to exchange with the facilitators of the service.

As Figure 9 indicates, 0.37% of processes were relational in the discourse of the Seekers talking about their questions. In general discourse relational processes would be expected to occur with a probability of approximately 0.25 (Mattheissen 1998:49). Relational processes have three modes: intensive, circumstantial and possessive. In addition they may be attributive or identifying. The participant roles in a Attributive Relational Process are that of Carrier and Value. The Carrier is the entity to which a quality is assigned, namely the Attribute. For a Identifying Relational Process, the participant roles are the
Token and Value. A Token is an entity which is being defined and a Value is that which is giving the Token this definition. The relational processes were typically in the Seekers’ discourse was typically possessive or intensive, as seen in Figure 11. The high degree of relational processes in the Seekers talking about their questions is consistent with the concept that the complexity and specificity of the construction industry necessitates detailed explanations about the qualities of things.

| (1) intensive | (i) attributive | The granite is thick |
| (2) circumstantial | The delivery is on Friday |
| (3) possessive | The company has two divisions |
| (i) identifying | The engineer is the leader |
| | Tomorrow is the delivery day |
| | The concept is the CIO’s |

Figure 10 Relational process types. Adapted from (Halliday 1994: 119)

Figure 9 Transitivity of Seekers discussing Seeks

Figure 11 Mode of relational processes
On the semantic stratum, the elements which pervade this aspect of the Seekers’ discourse can be summarised as follows:

(1) processes: having (= have possession), being made up of (= to be comprised of), having attribute

(2) participants: aspects of design, aspects of structure, services

(3) circumstances: locations in buildings, geographical locations

According to systemic functional theory, “the semantic correlate of contextual field is a domain” (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999:323). Based on this view, Seeks fall into domains by virtue of their semantic profile. Determining what is systemic about the Seeks will allow them to be categorised in terms of how they fit into the overall meaning potential of the organisation. In this way, discourse analysis of the Seeks may form the basis of metadata by which they are categorised. The benefit, despite the time required for such analysis, is the development of what is effectively a ‘map’ of the nature of the knowledge required by users and a lens on the process of knowledge exchange. Unlike traditional models this map is drawn from the discourse of users themselves rather than an apriori schema. There is debate amongst the facilitators and knowledge managers as to whether such categorisation of Seeks warrants the substantial investment of time which would be required to develop and implement classification. However, without such categorisation the Service is missing out on the opportunity to more fully understand the processes which it is applying. As one of the facilitators spoke about the Seeks which they receive it became apparent that they were in fact already applying a high-level taxonomy. This taxonomy divided Seeks into the stage of engineering construction at which they occurred: marketing, pre-construction, construction, and close-out.

The concept that there were a variety of meanings in the questions that were asked by users depending upon the context from which they arose was introduced by one Facilitator:

Sometimes the question was misinterpreted so the results that were given to the person who asked the question are not relevant…and it really has never been a fault of either one. It’s just somebody interpreting words one way versus the other and that’s why I do try to get in touch and have a conversation and try to fully understand the question but that conversation doesn’t always happen.

The Facilitator’s description of the way in which differences in meaning impact upon the seek process suggests the importance of looking at the process of dealing with a seek as in part a discursive activity. The size and global distribution of this community has resulted in a proliferation of standards and associated ways of approaching building and
design. This is further problematised by regional variation in terminology for materials and equipment. The Service B facilitators must, as Figure 12 suggests, traverse this variation in meaning as they seek to understand the questions which come from different areas of the Construction community. While the Facilitator does not have to answer the question, this understanding must be delicate enough for them to match the question to the knowledge-sets of potential Sharers. Hence, in addition to a volume bottle-neck, the ‘meaning bottleneck’ which Figure 12 illustrates is also a potential problem. The issue for Service B is how to manage such meaning variation not with a view to altering and standardising meaning in terms of organisational hegemony, but with a view to effectively dealing with diversity.

![Figure 12 Facilitators as a ‘meaning bottleneck’](image-url)
4. Conclusion

A significant challenge for practitioners is to design knowledge management activities and systems that fit the practice they are intended to support. Organisation X is an example of a company which has implemented two Knowledge Management services and now must focus on ways to further align these services with user requirements.

The analysis undertaken in this study has suggested various areas in which process improvement should occur. For example in Service A account should be taken of the users’ desire to reduce the passivity of the knowledge base. This may be addressed by marketing the service more completely as a human service rather than a technology, emphasising the important role of the phone-based Help Point. This will involve drawing together conceptually the Help Point, Technical Skilling sessions and knowledge base and marketing them to users as part of the one goal of facilitating knowledge sharing. In addition, the users’ resistance to the schema structuring the Knowledge Base should be addressed through discourse analysis of their requirements with a view to creating a schema that more closely reflects their experience.

Discourse analysis of participants in Service B revealed the need for metadata to be collected on the process of conducting Seeks in order to gain a more complete understanding of the nature of the questions being asked. In addition, the diverse construal of experience by facilitators in section 3.2.2 suggests that further investment in terms of training may be required. This training should be aimed at ensuring that fundamental skills such as listening are being applied consistently across the facilitators.

An important issue for researchers is to develop methods which are able to assist practitioners in designing well-adapted knowledge management systems. This paper demonstrates the application of linguistic analysis as a methodological approach for investigating the alignment Knowledge Management services in organisations with their users’ needs. The premise is that an understanding of how meaning is negotiated and created by participants can provide insights into areas in which such alignment is not optimum. Identification of these areas can, in turn, suggest directions for enhancing the knowledge management services.
References


