This chapter will:

- Profile five examples of *research-based consultancy work* involving business discourse from around the world
- Discuss the *methodologies* used and the *implications* for either for teaching or training, or the design of more effective documents
- Show how each of the projects reflect the *developments* in business communication research now or in the future that we have discussed in Part 1.

This chapter will profile a number of research-based consultancy work in business discourse from around the world, where the intention has been to provide research-based information to improve the effectiveness of the communication that takes place in a specific context. All the studies took place in real organizational settings and as in the previous chapter, they represent a variety of different methodologies and approaches, including survey and interviews, discourse analysis and conversational analysis and the use of experimental data in the design of more effective documentation.

### 4.1 The REFLECT project

The Review of Foreign Language and Cultural Training Needs project is a large scale needs analysis based consultancy project co-funded by the European Commission, designed to generate training information for European business to support European competitiveness. It took place over a two-year period, from December 2000 to December 2002, involved four research partners, and investigated language and cultural
needs, competences and deficiencies in the UK, Ireland, Poland and Portugal. REFLECT was designed to promote and disseminate the importance of language skills in small to mid-sized companies by providing an email information service in English, Polish and Portuguese; and a reference guide in four languages (Gaelic, English, Polish and Portuguese). The objectives of the email service and guide were as follows:

- To promote the concept and use of the language audit (see Concept 4.1 on language audits);
- To promote the use of language skills for economic growth and mobility;
- To signpost companies to sources of language support and information;
- To publish the results and recommendations arising from the survey of language needs and strategies (source: www.reflectproject.com, Hagen, 2002).

The project website (www.reflectproject.com) provides a wealth of useful information on a range of different topics, from the methodology used in the REFLECT project, through the relationship with similar previous studies in the European context (e.g. the REFLECT project in France, Germany, Spain and the UK) to the findings of the project for the four countries involved. There are separate surveys for all four countries, a comparative survey of language use and cultural awareness across the four and a series of case studies profiling the language and cultural strategies pursued within individual companies within the four participating countries. Data 4.1 presents the main comparative findings of the project.

**Data 4.1 The findings of the Reflect Project**

- European languages predominate in terms of use and barriers in all four samples. English is critical in Poland and Portugal, followed by German. French and German are the two critical languages in England and Ireland.
- The availability of language skills among the workforce is markedly greater in Poland and Portugal, 20% higher than in England and 30% higher than in Ireland. The two latter countries appear to be over-dependent on English.
- In each of the samples companies declare that they have encountered language barriers, cultural barriers and have lost business by lacking language ability.