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THE STUDY OF DISCOURSE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Britt-Louise Gunnarsson, Stockholm University
Catrin Johansson, Stockholm University
Kristina Jämtelid, Stockholm University
Aud Solbjørg Skulstad, University of Bergen
Brigitte Norlyk, University of Southern Denmark, Kolding
Anne Marie Bülow-Møller, Copenhagen Business School

1 INTRODUCTION

(Britt-Louise Gunnarsson)

Applied and sociolinguistic research has focused on discourse in institutions, for example discourse in encounters between professionals and lay people in various contexts, such as medical, social service, legal and other bureaucratic settings (Gunnarsson 1997, Drew & Sorjonen 1997). Frequently, work of this kind has dealt with problems caused by asymmetrical relationships, for instance by differences between the interactors in terms of sex, ethnicity, status or education. Only more rarely has the analysis focused on the relationship between discourse and the particular institution involved, with its specific culture and set of norms.

Lately we have seen a growing interest in the study of discourse in organizations. There are of course many possible explanations for this trend. From the viewpoint of the business world, there is a great need for staff with new skills: the internationalization of business has led to a lack of competent interpreters and translators and of people with multicultural competence. Closer scrutiny of the business sector by the media has increased companies' own awareness of the importance of discourse. The transition from old to new technology has created a need for new procedures and new competence.

From the viewpoint of the research community, the study of discourse in organizations has added new dimensions to the field. Certainly, discourse in institutions and discourse in organizations have a great deal in common. More interesting here, however, are the differences, which also help to explain what discourse in an organization is. A study of discourse in organizations is not only concerned with the relationship between people, but also the life and culture of the organization as a social entity. I would wish to stress the following four characteristics of organizational discourse:

First, I would claim that discourse plays a different role in organizations than it does in institutions. In an organization, discourse is of crucial significance, not only for the success of the various communicative activities which occur there, but also for the actual survival of the organization. We have had hospitals, courts and government agencies for centuries, and they are likely to remain with us even if they do their job badly. A company, on the other hand, cannot take survival for granted. It has to work at it continuously, which means that language has a decisive part to play (cf. Doheny-Farina 1991). Good relations with customers and shareholders are important for the firm's survival. These people have to trust the firm and feel that they share its ideas and values.

Secondly, I would argue that discourse plays an essential role in the construction of an organization as a unique and attractive entity. Discourse builds up and maintains the organizational self. It is by means of discourse that the organization remembers its history, creates visions for the future, and upholds its goals, policies and ideas (Linde 1999, Smart 1993). It is through discourse that the organization attracts its customers and its owners. It is the written and spoken word which creates the image of the firm in the eyes and ears of those outside it. It is efficient communication that builds up good and stable external relationships (Skulstad 1997, Jacobs 1997).

For internal relations, too, discourse plays an important role. Modern management theory talks about the need for internal marketing, e.g. as a means of creating and controlling the organizational culture (Peters & Waterman 1982). Clearly, discourse is at the heart of this internal construction of the company as a unique and attractive entity. Not surprisingly, managers and employees themselves are often highly aware of the importance of discourse, not only for external relationships, but also for internal relations and the company culture (Gunnarsson 1998).

Thirdly, I would claim that the relationship between discourse and organization is a complex one. Discourse creates the organization as a unique entity. This creation of uniqueness, however, takes place within the limits set by the sector concerned, for one thing, and by the relevant national culture(s), for another. The organization is part of a wider sectoral network, not infrequently with well-established discourse traditions. Every company also operates within a national culture, or several such cultures. This makes it necessary for the company to adapt to national discourse patterns as well (Gunnarsson 1999).

There are of course still many companies where there is a simple link between the organization and the national community. In our modern internationalized business world, however, we often find a more complex picture. Most large companies have gone international in one way or another, which means that the unity of the company has to be maintained through connections with various national cultures. We find considerable variation in the way such companies deal with their multinational situation. As regards trademarks, for instance, we find that in some cases a company’s original national belonging is part of its trademark, e.g. the Americanism of McDonald’s or the Swedishness of IKEA and Volvo, while in others the original nationality is more disguised internationally, e.g. the many variants of the originally Swedish mark Electrolux (Jämtelid 1998).

Fourthly, I would claim that, within the limits set by sectoral and national cultures, companies are steered by ideas, and that discourse is part of the dissemination of those ideas, internally and externally. With regard to ideas, we find a great deal of variation between organizations in terms of their views on leadership policy, on decentralization of decisions, on branch independence etc. (Carlzon 1987, Schein 1992). However, it is through discourse that these ideas become a part of the organization’s culture (cf. Nickersen 1998, Gunnarsson 1999).

The papers of this panel present ongoing research in Sweden, Denmark and Norway[1]. The Swedish group, Gunnarsson, Johansson and Jämtelid, approach organizational discourse from a macro-theoretical and processoriented perspective. Starting from analyses of the flow of discourse within companies of various kinds, the processes and functions of organizational discourse are analysed. Gunnarsson's paper concerns the relationship between organizational culture and discourse in banks in three countries, Johansson's paper the writing process of the 'group strategy' document in a Swedish middle sized company, and Jämtelid's paper the parallel writing process at Electrolux. The Norwegian and Danish scholars, Skulstad, Norlyk and Bülow-Møller, have chosen to analyse various organizational texts and spoken discourse from a micro perspective. Skulstad discusses corporate image creation in annual reports, Norlyk compares

[1] Norman Fairclough was also part of the panel at the AFinLA symposium in Turku. His paper, however, will not be included in this volume.

Swedish, Danish and British sales brochures, and Bülow-Møller looks into strategies and conditions in negotiation discourse.

Though varied in scope, all six papers aim in one way or the other at an explanation of what discourse in organizations is. Returning to my four claims above, I would say that Johansson's study could be related to the first claim, that discourse in organizations plays a crucial role, not only for the success of their various communicative activities, but also for their actual survival. Gunnarsson's and Skulstad's papers could be related to the second claim that discourse plays an essential role in the construction of an organization as a unique and attractive entity. The third claim that the relationship between discourse and organization is a complex one, that is to say, that the creation of uniqueness takes place within limits set by the sector concerned, for one thing, and by the relevant national culture(s), for another, relates strongly to Gunnarsson's paper, where this issue is at stake, but also to the papers by Jämtelid, Norlyk and Bülow-Møller. My fourth claim, finally, was that companies are steered by ideas, and that discourse is part of the dissemination of those ideas, internally and externally. Johansson's paper surely comes in here, as does Gunnarsson's and Skulstad's.

2 DISCOURSE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE – A STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION IN THREE COUNTRIES

(Britt-Louise Gunnarsson)

The contrastive approach has been central to many studies of spoken and written discourse within the business world. Business negotiations and meetings involving participants from different national cultures have been studied, as have various types of written discourse. In these studies, the national dimension has been in focus, i.e. the aim has been to compare how Finns talk and write with the way Americans talk and write, for example. The cultural dimension, in the few cases it has been taken into consideration, has been concerned with the level of the national culture(s). In the study which I shall present here, however, the cultural dimension analysed also includes an organizational level.

The purpose of my analysis, which in full is presented in Gunnarsson 1999, is to explore the complex and multi-dimensional relationship between organization and discourse using interview data and written documents collected within banks in Sweden, Germany and Britain. I will focus on the role of the international banking sector in the formation of an organizational culture. I shall discuss to what extent our interview and text analysis data reveal organizations which form discourse units of their own, or organizations which are part of larger discourse communities. How similar are professional settings within a specific field across Europe? Does a bank in Germany produce the same kind of texts as a comparable bank in Sweden or Britain? How similar are the texts, e.g. letters and customer brochures, produced by a German bank to those produced by a Swedish or British bank?

These questions relate, for one thing, to the more general issue of the universality or specificity of genres and text patterns. They also relate to the equally general issue of the relations between discourse and organizational culture. To what extent are the discourse patterns within an organization unique, that is, created within the organization in accordance with its organizational culture, and to what extent does discourse reflect more general patterns?

2.1 Presentation of the research project

The study of banks focused on in this article is part of a larger study undertaken within a research project entitled **Texts in European Writing Communities**[2]. The project comprises analyses of communication in four settings – banks, structural engineering firms, university occupational medicine departments and university departments of history – in Sweden, Germany and Britain. One purpose of the project is contrastive, that is, our aim is to compare patterns in Swedish, German and English texts of similar kinds. Another purpose is sociolinguistic, i.e. to study the relationship between national culture, organization and texts.

As part of the research project, one bank is being studied in each of the three countries: **Handelsbanken** in Sweden, **Deutsche Bank** in Germany, and **Barclays Bank** in Britain. The choice of settings for the project as a whole was guided by a desire to study national text patterns, and the four settings are therefore mainly national in their orientation. Another criterion for our choice of settings was their importance in the local

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[2] The project, which is financed by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, was previously based at Uppsala University and involved a team consisting of myself as director, Bo Andersson, Ingegerd Bäcklund, Anna Levin, Ulf Norberg, Lena Norling and Eva Danielsson. It is now continuing at Stockholm University, with myself as director and Marie Sörlin as my assistant.

community. Banks, structural engineering firms etc. most certainly play important roles in their respective local communities. For each setting, we have focused on one local unit. Towns of a similar character were chosen in the three countries, namely **Uppsala**, **Münster** and **Cambridge**. However, in banks, writing is largely carried out at more central levels than the local branch office, which forced us also to study offices at a higher level, in Stockholm, in Frankfurt, and in London and Coventry.

The study consists of three stages. The first stage is an ethnographic study consisting of interviews with managers and with the people involved in the various types of writing. The aim of these interviews was to obtain a picture of the insiders' view of their organization. We asked about the history of the organization, the structure of the organization (formal structure, external networks, internal structure), the organization of writing activities, the organizational culture (identity and 'we' feeling, norms, attitudes, socialization/education). In all, 70 individuals were interviewed in the 12 settings. From the three banks focused on here, 31 people were interviewed: 8 at Handelsbanken, 8 at Deutsche Bank, and 15 at Barclays Bank.

The second stage is a genre investigation. An essential goal of our visits to the various offices and of our interviews was to obtain a picture of the different forms of writing and of the different texts produced. We therefore asked about and collected texts of the various types produced within the organizations concerned: **internal communication**, e.g. staff magazines/newsletters; **semi-external communication**, e.g. annual reports, press releases, letters, brochures; **external communication**, e.g. general presentations, advertisements.

The third stage is the text analysis. The texts have been subjected to various types of analysis. The main analytical approach has been a quantitative one, comprising analyses of the content at **cognitive level** (cognitive worlds, aspects and dimensions), at **pragmatic level** (illocutions, sender-receiver relationship), at **text-structural level** (super- and macro themes). The methodology used here was earlier developed for studies of scientific and popular articles (Gunnarsson 1989, 1992a, 1993). For a more detailed description of these analyses and the results, see Levin 1997. Our analyses have also focused on other levels, e.g. **argumentation**, including 'thanks to the staff' (Andersson 1998), **discourse markers** (Bäcklund 1998) and **images** (Gunnarsson 1998).

2.2 Analysis: The relationship between discourse and organizational culture

My analysis of bank discourse in this paper will concern the relationship between discourse, on the one hand, and organization and the international sectoral community, on the other. Relating what our interview data reveal about the organizational culture to some of the results of our text analysis, I shall discuss to what extent the discourse patterns within the three banks studied can be said to be unique, that is, created within the organization concerned in accordance with its organizational culture, and to what extent they reflect more general genre patterns.

As a summary of my analysis of the organizational cultures of the three banks, I will concentrate on the following three dimensions:

1) internal structure: hierarchical structure – non-hierarchical structure;
2) communicative structure: centralization – decentralization;
3) attitudes to proactive communication: belief in advertising – lack of belief in advertising.

If we first consider what the interviews revealed about the organizational culture in relation to the three dimensions studied, the following three pictures can be drawn:

	Internal structure	*Communicative structure*	*Attitude to proactive communication*
HB	non-hierarchical	decentralized	lack of belief in advertising
DB	hierarchical	decentralized	moderate belief in advertising
BB	hierarchical	centralized	strong belief in advertising

With regards to the internal and communicative structure, we find Barclays Bank at one extreme (hierarchical and centralized), Handelsbanken at the other (non-hierarchical and decentralized) and Deutsche Bank in between (hierarchical and decentralized). Our analysis of the organizational cultures further reveal a difference in attitudes to proactive communication. Interviewees at Barclays expressed a strong belief in advertising, those at Deutsche Bank a moderate belief, and their colleagues at Handelsbanken a very weak belief.

As this analysis of the organizational cultures thus reveals, the banks attach varying importance to advertising. This difference was also evident in our text corpus. The number, types and variety of advertising texts we were able to gather reflect the banks' varying attitudes to advertising. Handelsbanken's belief in networking and personal relationships and lack of belief in advertising is reflected in a fairly poor genre repertoire; the moderate belief in advertising at Deutsche Bank in a somewhat stronger repertoire; and the strong belief in advertising among Barclays staff in a large number of advertising texts, showing greater variety and a higher degree of elaboration.

Turning now to the variation in text patterns, I shall concentrate my analysis on three textual features, which in turn could be related to the cultural dimensions discussed above (in brackets below):

1) sender markings (belief/lack of belief in advertising);
2) expressive illocutions (belief/lack of belief in advertising; hierarchy/non-hierarchy);
3) thanks to the staff (centralization/decentralization, hierarchy/non-hierarchy).

2.2.1 Sender markings

One feature focused on in our pragmatic analysis was the 'sender-receiver relationship' in the texts. In our analysis schema, we made a note of each time the sender, i.e. the bank, was mentioned by name or pronoun, and on this basis we could calculate the percentage of the total number of macrosyntagms which contained a 'sender marking'.

Among other things, this analysis showed that the brochures (private and company brochures) from Barclays Bank contained a considerably higher proportion of sender markings than those produced at Handelsbanken and, with regard to brochures for companies, also compared with those produced at Deutsche Bank. A possible explanation for the difference is that it reflects a more aggressively self-assertive and selling-oriented approach on the part of Barclays Bank. The latter's strong belief in advertising is thus reflected in a difference in textual patterns. The lowest profile is found in the brochures from Handelsbanken, in line with its clear lack of belief in advertising, while Deutsche Bank occupies an intermediate position also in terms of its texts.

2.2.2 Expressive illocutions

Our pragmatic analysis included an analysis of 'illocution type'. Each macrosyntagm was classified in relation to the illocution which it entailed:

informative, explicative, expressive, argumentative or directive. 'Expressive illocutions' covered criticisms, appraisals, exclamations of enthusiasm etc.

This analysis showed that the texts produced at Barclays Bank generally contain many more expressive illocutions than those of the other banks. This could of course be attributed to the more aggressively self-assertive and selling-oriented approach of this bank, referred to above. It may be noted, for instance, that it is only among the Barclays texts that we find expressive illocutions in brochures and letters. All three banks use expressive illocutions in their advertisements, but it is worth noting that Handelsbanken, with its lack of belief in advertising, is far less expressive in this context than the other two banks.

Another interesting point is that the text type in which Handelsbanken is most expressive is staff newsletters. The Swedish bank's figure for expressive illocutions in this type of text is a little higher than that of Barclays Bank, but much higher than that of Deutsche Bank. This could be attributed to different attitudes towards staff, and seen in relation to the banks' differing internal cultures (see below).

2.2.3 Thanks to the staff

In his analysis of the argumentation used in prefaces to the three banks' annual reports, Bo Andersson (1997) looked at the 'thanks to the staff', among other things. In the prefaces written by the head of Deutsche Bank there were no thanks to the staff at all. In those written by the chairmen of Barclays Bank and Handelsbanken, on the other hand, the staff were thanked in all the prefaces analysed. The way this was done, however, points to an interesting variation, as the following examples show:

> *Extract from Barclays Bank's Annual Report*
> I am very grateful to them [the staff]
>
> *Extract from Handelsbanken's Annual Report*
> Till sist vill jag tacka medarbetarna i Handelsbanken för fina insatser under året. Det är er förtjänst att vi för tjugotredje året har lyckats nå vårt mål – bättre lönsamhet än genomsnittet för de övriga börsnoterade affärsbankerna[3].

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[3] Finally, I would like to thank all the staff of Handelsbanken for the excellent work done during the year. It is thanks to you that we have been able, for the twenty-third year running, to achieve our goal – a better level of profitability than the average for the other listed commercial banks.

As Andersson (1997: 31–33) points out, a general feature of the annual report prefaces from Barclays Bank is that the senior management of the Group are quite visible; that is, they occupy a great deal of discourse space. This is especially striking in comparison with Handelsbanken's annual reports, which highlight the collectivity. This difference can also be seen in the way the staff are thanked. In Barclays Bank's annual reports, the chairman, in the first person, thanks the staff, in the third person: 'I am very grateful to them'. The distance between the head of the company and the staff is considerable. In the annual reports from Handelsbanken, on the other hand, the chairman, when thanking the staff, tones down his own role and instead accentuates that of his staff: 'It is thanks to you that we have been able... to achieve our goal.' The texts create an impression that both the responsibility and the credit belong to the bank collectivity, not to its senior management.

These results of the text analysis could of course be related to the earlier discussed differences between the banks' internal and communicative structures. The picture of Handelsbanken produced by the interviews is that of a non-hierarchical, decentralized organization, while the corresponding picture of Barclays is one of a hierarchical and centralized organization (cf. Carlzon 1987, Schein 1992). The textual feature analysed here highlights the same difference: Handelsbanken creates a picture of a flat organization, with people symmetrically working together for the growth of the bank, while Barclays Bank creates a picture of a strong group of senior managers, acting as leaders of a centralized organization.

The lack of any thanks to the staff in the annual reports of Deutsche Bank could of course be interpreted as a sign of a strongly hierarchical internal structure. Other aspects of our text analysis also point in this direction, such as the low proportion of expressive illocutions in staff newsletters, discussed earlier.

2.3 Discussion

The analysis summarized here focused on the role of the international banking sector in the formation of an organizational culture. The aim was to investigate to what extent the discourse patterns within the three banks studied could be said to be unique, that is created within each organization in accordance with its organizational culture, and to what extent their discourse reflected more general genre patterns.

The lack of belief in advertising at **Handelsbanken** is reflected in a poor advertising repertoire, few sender markings in brochures and few expressive illocutions in advertisements. The non-hierarchical, decentralized culture, on the other hand, manifests itself in the frequent use of expressive illocutions in newsletters to the staff, and in regular and elaborate thanks to the staff in the chairman's statement in the annual report. The HB culture is also seen in the symmetrical way in which the chairman thanks the staff ('It is thanks to you that we have been able... to achieve our goal').

The moderate belief in advertising at **Deutsche Bank** makes itself felt in a somewhat richer advertising repertoire, more sender markings in brochures and more expressive illocutions in advertising than at Handelsbanken. The hierarchical, decentralized structure is reflected in a very low frequency of expressive illocutions in staff newsletters and in the absence of thanks to the staff in the chairman's annual report statements[4].

The strong belief in advertising at **Barclays Bank** is reflected in a rich advertising repertoire, a high proportion of sender markings in brochures and a high proportion of expressive illocutions in all types of text: letters, advertisements, press releases, newsletters and brochures. Our analysis of the thanks to staff also revealed a correspondence with the picture of the bank culture presented by the interviews. The strongly hierarchical and centralized structure is expressed in several ways in the annual report. The senior executives of Barclays Bank are on the whole quite visible in the report, while the ordinary employee is invisible, and when the chairman thanks the staff, he puts himself in the first person and the staff in the third person, thus marking a considerable distance between them: 'I am very grateful to them'.

These analyses thus point to clear differences between the texts produced within the three banks, differences which could be attributed to divergences in organizational culture. Although bank discourse in different countries naturally has many features in common (cf. Levin 1997), there is also considerable room for variation. The organizational culture has its effect on bank discourse.

A question of interest is of course to what extent these organizational cultural differences could be said to reflect national differences. What I would argue here is that the differences between the three banks could also be regarded as revealing national cultural patterns.

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[4] As is discussed in Gunnarsson 1999, decentralization seems to mean different things in the Federal Republic of Germany than in Sweden, and a possible explanation for the lack of thanks to the staff in the chairman's statement at Deutsche Bank could thus be this federative structure of the bank. It is up to the head of the Münster office, not the chairman in Frankfurt, to thank the staff.

In his analysis of employees of the IBM group in different countries and continents, Hofstede (1994) found it relevant to distinguish a number of culturally relevant dimensions, such as uncertainty avoidance, collectivism versus power distance, self-assertiveness versus modesty – or, as he also terms this feature, masculinity versus femininity. With regard to this latter aspect, he placed Germany and Britain among the masculine cultures, which strongly appreciate competition and fighting, while seeing Sweden as one of the feminine cultures, with a great appreciation of equality, solidarity, negotiations etc. According to Hofstede, the masculine and feminine cultures create different management hero types. The masculine boss is self-evidently self-assertive, determined and aggressive (only in masculine cultures does this word have positive connotations). He is a lone decision-maker who looks for facts, rather than a group discussion leader, and there is no harm in him being somewhat 'macho'. The boss in a feminine culture is less visible, intuitive rather than determined, and used to looking for consensus.

If the findings of the study presented here are related to these ideas about national differences, the belief in advertising and in strong leadership found in the British and German banks could be seen as signs of a masculine cultural thinking, while the lack of belief in advertising and the belief in the role of the group encountered in the Swedish bank could be regarded as reflecting a feminine cultural thinking. My conclusion would thus be that the discourse patterns within the three banks reflect their organizational cultures, which in turn reflect national cultural patterns.

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of the analysis of bank discourse summarized in this paper has been to explore the complex and multi-dimensional relationship between organization and discourse. As the analysis have shown, the organizational culture, with its unique set of management ideas, norms and values, seems to have an effect on the organizational discourse. As the analyses have also revealed, there are differences between the three banks' cultures which could be attributed to national cultural differences. We could therefore distinguish two perspectives on discourse creation within banks: an organizational culture perspective and a national perspective.

3 THE WRITING PROCESS OF THE "GROUP STRATEGY" DOCUMENT

(Catrin Johansson)

In order to get a large organization to function you need common targets. That is why the communication of strategy and targets is of great importance to steer the direction of actions. This strategic communication traditionally goes from top managers to middle managers, and then to lower levels of managers, following the hierarchical structure of the organization. In this process, strategy documents serve the important function of guideline for managers and employees. Steering processes as such have been analyzed by organizational researchers, however not from a communication perspective. Nor have linguists and communication researchers devoted much research to this area. Accordingly, a lot of questions concerning the discourse used in management processes remain to be answered.

This article focuses on the construction process of a strategy document in a Swedish company. In particular the following questions will be treated: Which discursive steps are included in the writing of the strategy document? How do oral and written discourse complement each other in the process? Which traits in the oral and written discourse, e.g. interactional and textual traits, influence the final text version? The study presented here is part of a larger project where the purpose is to study how messages concerning organizational targets, strategy and shared values are constructed, communicated and recontextualized in the company; as well as how these messages are interpreted and valued by managers and employees on different hierarchical levels. The company I study is a group with 2 400 employees, offices in Sweden, Finland and North America, and customers and sales units world wide.

3.1 Research on writing in the workplace

Writing has traditionally been regarded as an individual activity by writing researchers. However, a number of studies on writing at work or writing in organizations have clearly demonstrated that writing in organizations is a collaborative activity (Paradis, Dobrin & Miller 1985, Winsor 1989, Gunnarsson 1992b and 1997b, Jämtelid 1998). The analyses of organizational discourse also demonstrate a shift from more product oriented studies to more process oriented ones (Rogers 1976: 17). The process perspective is a prerequisite to the discourse analysis carried out by

Fairclough as well. He studies processes of production and consumption, ‘discursive practice’, in relation to their products, ‘text’, and their social contexts ‘social practice’ (Fairclough 1992).

Social aspects related to writing have been increasingly studied during the 80s and 90s. Early attempts to explore the relations between writing and social context are Faigley (1985) and Odell (1985). More recent studies are Gunnarsson (1992b) with an analysis of the writing at a local government office, MacKinnon (1993) who analyzes the writing processes in a bank, and Smart (1993) who discusses contextual influences on the production processes of texts as well as on the texts themselves. Furthermore, the awareness that oral and written discourse together contribute in discursive processes is growing. That the oral and written discourse interplay to fulfill different types of goals is demonstrated by Gunnarsson (1997b), Spilka (1993b) and Jämtelid (1998).

In order to make a study of writing possible which accounts for the process perspective, considers context, and integrates oral and written discourse, it is necessary to complement traditional linguistic methods with other qualitative research methods. This has also been done in recent writing research (cf. Spilka 1993a, Doheny-Farina 1993 and 1991, Doheny-Farina & Odell 1985). In Johansson (1997) I report a study of the communication of a manager made by participant observation. I have also discussed the use of the method in Johansson (1999).

3.2 Group management constructing strategy

The strategy document for the company is predominantly constructed and written by the Group Management, which consists of the Chief Executive Officer (the CEO), three business area managers (BA -managers) and one manager of the Research and Development department. These managers collectively create the strategy in group management meetings, using the input of texts and discussions[5]. The material consists of a tape-recorded group-management meeting, interviews with participating managers, and different types of documents: protocols, letters, previous strategy documents, and drafts of strategy documents.

The starting point for the writing process is difficult to define, because written and oral discourse always depend and build on earlier discourse (cf.

[5] The writing process is dependent on both oral and written discourse and could be compared with Flower’s three metaphors for how meaning is made: reproduction, conversation and negotiation (Flower 1994: 55ff.).

the notion of intertextuality in Fairclough 1992: 102). One point of departure is the previous strategy document. Parts of it are kept, parts are rewritten, deleted or extended. Another point of departure is the Board of Directors, who has discussed the financial status of the company. This discussion resulted in a letter from the Chairman of the Board concerning the economic target, which influences the strategy fundamentally. I also know that informal discussions have been going on between the CEO and managers on different levels before the writing of the first draft of the strategy. Other influences on the strategy document are for example the market situation, customers' needs and competitors' actions.

The CEO is the driving force in the writing process. He writes large parts of the strategy document and collects parts written by the other managers and puts them together in the first draft. The draft is then discussed in the group management meeting. The result of the discussion is that parts are rewritten and new parts created, sometimes collectively, by the managers. The second draft is then subject to discussion in the next group management meeting. Again parts are rewritten and eventually the final version of the strategy document is completed[6].

3.3 Input to the strategy writing process

I will now illustrate the model and the description of the writing process by an example, the issue of the economic target for the company. In the previous strategy document, from 1996, the economic target is formulated like this:

> Good Return on Capital Employed. [The Company] must maintain an average return of at least 17% on capital employed over a business cycle of five years.

Here the economic term *return on capital employed* is used. However the owners want the company to be more oriented towards the shareholders and use another economic measurement, economic profit. This is discussed in a board meeting, and expressed in a letter that the Chairman of the Board sends to the CEO:

> Strategy planning 1998. Gentlemen, (---) To meet the expectations of capital market we have to redirect [Parent Company] to become more shareholder ori-

[6] The Group Strategy document is in this company normally a printed brochure of about 20 pages.

> ented. (---) Operationally this means **significant increase in earnings per share**. To be in line with the above, the target for the Business Groups should be **to <u>double</u> their economic profit level during the next four years**. (---) I would remind that [Parent Company] is open to financially justified acquisitions that will make the businesses fundamentally stronger players in their respective markets. (980128)

The letter starts with the address “Gentlemen”. This address is also used frequently by the managers in the group management meetings. I interpret it as having the function of a framing device or a context marker. The gentlemen all wear suits, white shirts, ties and tie clips with the company logo. Moreover, special language is used: ”earnings per share”, ”economic profit level” and ”acquisitions”. The metaphorical expression ”stronger players in their respective markets” signifies the competition from other companies. The letter from the Chairman is a strong imperative. The target for the company should be to double the economic profit and the Group managers are obliged to work towards and try to accomplish this. Therefore the managers devote a lot of time in their meeting to find measures to reach the target. It is also important that the strategy document that is being created reflects this new strategic direction coming from the owners.

3.4 Interactional writing collaboration

The discussions in the group management meeting that I observed and taped show interesting pieces of collective writing. In order to examine how the oral discourse contributes to written text, I here use the interactional aspects **face**, **frame** and **footing**. The terms originate from Goffman (1967, 1974, 1981), face is developed by Brown and Levinson in their theory of politeness (1987). The managers are in the meeting constantly working on footing, the way they see themselves and the issue discussed. Frames are important contextual devices. Face is also worth studying since the meetings contain both collaborative and competing moments, in other word actions of both positive and negative politeness.

In the management meeting, the CEO has the leading role. He is in control of the agenda: writing and distributing it before the meeting. During the meeting he is introducing topics, formulating decisions and monitoring the discussions. The other managers behave differently according to the subject that is being discussed. When the issue concerns the business area that they are managing they participate more actively. Because of his leading role, it is mostly the CEO who frames new discussion topics. In the meeting that I have recorded, the CEO reads the letter from the Chairman aloud and at the same time comments on it[7]:

CEO	the big update now gentlemen is for me to come back a little bit on this issue about (.) more action plans (.) in our strategy writing (.) action plans aiming at supporting our dear owners' (.) request from us guys which [Chairman] (.) has formulated (.) in his letter to us" (---)[8]

He starts from his own perspective, here shown by the word ”me”, but quickly changes his footing to ”our strategy writing”, ”our dear owners'” and ”us guys”. The CEO wants to be a part of the group and he wants the business area managers to feel that they have to respond to this in collaboration. He frames the topic as ”the big update”, showing that it is important. However, the letter from the Chairman could be seen as a threat to the CEO's negative face. This might be a reason to why he frames the new economic target as a ”request from our dear owners”. This wording makes it sound more informal and perhaps not so serious, which could be a way for the CEO to cope with the face threat.

What follows in the meeting is then a ”brain-storming-session” lead by the CEO who through OH-pictures and questions to the managers tries to formulate a paragraph in the strategy document titled ”Action Program”. Here, actions that will increase the economic profit are listed. The BA - manager in the following extract is the most recent member in the management team. The CEO and the manager work closely together in this discussion:

CEO	how the hell do you eh exploit market growth there?
BA2	eh yes we first need to develop the eh complete program
CEO	develop it ourself?
BA2	develop it ourself most of it (.) and then eh eh I think we need to buy (.) the rest of it
CEO	buying
BA2	buying
CEO	/pronouncing each letter in Swedish as he writes them/ b u y i n g products (.) or companies? (---)

---

[7] Almost all discussions and texts at group management level are in English. This is due to a decision that English should be the common group language. Four of the managers are Swedish and one is Finnish. They all use English as a second language.

[8] Due to the limited space allowed for this article, the episode is not quoted in its entirety.

This question and answer episode is an example of collaborative writing although it is the CEO who dominates. He initiates with questions and then formulates the answers. The business area manager that heads area 2 has probably been preparing the discussion in advance, because he takes the initiative to introduce the topic:

BA3	[/area 2/]
CEO	[/area 2/] (.) what what what what (.) what about /area 2/?
BA3	well we have probably the strongest machine offering ever (.) so the the biggest opportunity lies in the internal organization actually (.) to develop the project implementation
CEO	eh this means (.) to exploit market growth means that develop project implementation to (.) ah to satisfy customers
BA3	yea (.) by that you can also increase market share because we have a pretty meager market share

The BA manager here speaks very positively: ”strongest machine offering ever”, ”biggest opportunity”. In fact the wording ”biggest opportunity lies in the internal organization actually, to develop the project implementation” could be another way of framing a situation that is deficient. He could have said that project implementation could be better. The CEO tries to understand what he means and formulates it as a way to ”satisfy customers”. This is reformulated by the manager with an addition: ”you can also increase market share”. By agreeing ”yea” and then making an addition he does not threaten the CEO:s face.

3.5 The product of the discussion: the final version

The discussions result in the following text in the final version of the strategy document:

> The business target over the next business cycle is to double ECONOMIC PROFIT for our group. This will be achieved through: (---)
> 1. Revenue Growth
> * Exploit Market Growth. Within /area 1/ and /area 2/ we see today the biggest future market growth. To exploit this growth opportunity we will focus on the following actions for these two businesses:
> /area 1/
> - Develop specific products still lacking
> - Acquire complementary products
> - Develop system knowledge (---)
> /area 2/
> - Develop further our project implementation skills

- Develop own /machine/ or form partnership with /machine/ supplier (---)

The lengthy discussions, that I have given only brief examples of here, are finally concentrated in a couple of short, general points in the final version of the strategy document.

3.6 Conclusions

To conclude, the examples show that the writing process of constructing a strategy for the group is complex. The final text is influenced both by interactional and textual traits which are knit together and interdependent in the process. Previous text is reproduced and discussed, new text is collectively written and negotiated. During the Group management meetings the managers are constantly occupied with face work, frame work and footing. They share a common detailed understanding of the group strategy. However, this knowledge is hypothetically not shared by managers in lower hierarchical levels in the company. Therefore it will be interesting to compare their interpretations of and comments on the Group strategy document with other managers', and also to compare the text with strategy documents and strategy discussions on division and department level.

4 PARALLEL WRITING AT ELECTROLUX – SOME EXAMPLES

(Kristina Jämtelid)

At an international company such as Electrolux, which is located in every part of the world, a large number of texts are written in different languages, both in national languages and in the company language English. Some texts are aimed at a small, local audience while others are aimed at people in the company in different parts of the world. The process of producing these texts varies according to the aim, receiver and function of the texts. What characterises all writing processes, as recent research on writing in different kinds of organisations has shown, is first that writing is a collective activity (Gunnarsson 1992b, 1997b) carried out in a number of stages. Second, written and spoken discourse are intertwined. And third, the texts are a part of a social context (Faigley 1985; Gunnarsson 1992b, 1997b; Odell 1985) where the organisation's culture, history and goals affect the writing processes as well as the texts. These facts provide the theoretical background for my study of the multilingual text production at the Swedish international household appliances company Electrolux (Jämtelid 1998). How are texts in different languages produced within an international company? How does it work when texts are produced freely, but with different degrees of faithfulness towards a common raw material, in different languages within different national cultures?

In this article I will give examples of one type of text, a customer brochure about a vacuum cleaner, which is produced within Electrolux. The examples show how texts in different languages produced from one and the same textual base vary in form, focus and style, even though they derive from the same source. Some of the brochures contain sentences that have been translated literally (faithful to the source), while others are freer to the same source and have become completely new texts.

4.1 Parallel writing

There is variation in how texts in different languages are produced. Of the texts that I collect and study at Electrolux, i.e. the annual report, staff magazines and texts concerning a specific product, it is only the annual report that is translated completely, and is supposed to be translated. It is written in Swedish first and is adapted to facilitate a faithful translation to English. Other texts, such as a staff magazine article or a customer brochure, derive from something different, for example spoken discourse, an event or a textual base. In these texts the relation to the source varies, from translations of the source sentences, or raw material sentences, to being much freer and more independent from the source. This process, when a text is written with the base in something other than a source text and where parts of a raw material's content is reproduced, we call parallel writing. The concept of parallel writing, introduced by Britt-Louise Gunnarsson (1996), is comprehensive and describes the linguistic and text production situation within an international company. It describes the reality within a company. Figure 1, taken from Gunnarsson & Jämtelid 1998, illustrates the fundamental idea with the parallel writing process.

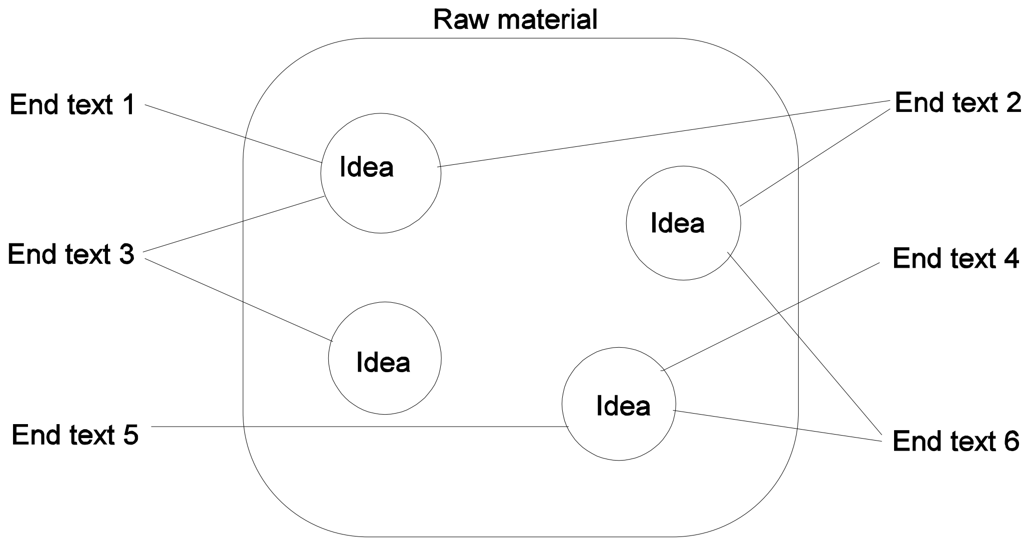

FIGURE 1. Parallel writing. The relation between raw material and different end texts.

Unlike the more traditional concept of translation, which in most cases and simply explained means that a given content in a spoken or written discourse is rendered in a different language, parallel writing means that the source, or the raw material varies. As I mentioned, the raw material can consist of a spoken discourse, an event or a textual base. The relation between the raw material and the end texts is not given, it depends on the content, function and receivers of the end texts. Another important difference is that in the parallel writing process, which I will give examples of later, the end texts in different languages can be based on different parts of the raw material and therefore the relation between the end texts is not given either. The end texts deal with the same main subject, however they use different aspects of the textual base, event or spoken discourse, depending on the function and receivers of the new end texts (cf. Gunnarsson & Jämtelid 1998).

4.2 The textual base and the customer brochures

The examples show a textual base, produced centrally within the studied company, which forms the base for a number of texts in different languages. Textual base is a text whose function is to serve as a base for other texts. It is the source for a number of new texts in different languages. The purpose of the textual base in the examples is to serve as internal advertising material for a vacuum cleaner. The text is written centrally by a number of people with different functions in different departments. The contents of the textual base provide facts and information about the product, which can work as the base for and create new texts. When the sales companies in the different countries launch the product, they can decide, with the textual base as a starting point, which parts are relevant and choose the content that best suits the aim of the particular sales company and its campaign. The sales company in one country may choose to focus on technical details in their brochure, while a sales company in another country, on the other hand, may choose to write a more sales argumentative text with slogans taken from the textual base.

I have divided the textual base into nine parts according to its content. Figure 2 illustrates this and shows how the sales companies have used the textual base, i.e. what parts of the textual base that they have used when producing the brochure in their own language. The brochures are from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France, Switzerland and Austria.

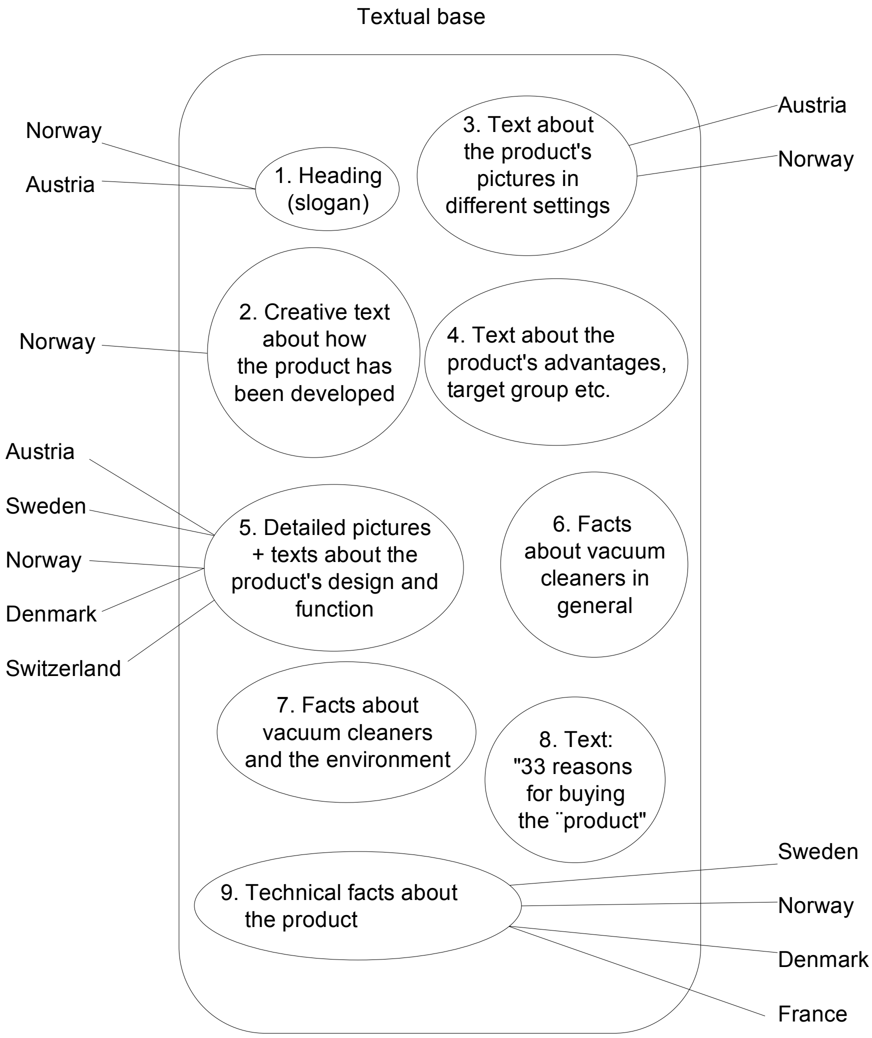

FIGURE 2. The contents of the textual base and what parts the sales companies have used.

Part five and nine of the textual base are more consumer oriented and contain more relevant information for customer brochures than the other parts do. As the figure shows these are the parts that most brochures originate from. Other parts, such as six and seven which might be more relevant for retailers, are not rendered in any of the customer brochures.

The brochures in the examples are about a product, a vacuum cleaner, which has been launched in a number of European countries. They are all aimed at consumers and have used the textual base as their starting point. What distinguishes the texts from each other is first what languages they are written in. The textual base is written in English while the end texts are in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, German and French.

Second, the texts' style varies. Although all brochures are aimed at consumers, some of them are more technical and fact oriented while other texts contain more creative sales arguments and more coherent text. Some end texts are primarily informative while others are more sales oriented (or a combination of both). Third, the way the sales companies have used the textual base differs. The degree of faithfulness towards the textual base varies on a scale from being relatively faithful both textually and visually, to being freer and more independent, if not visually then at least textually. The Austrian brochure is the least independent text and is closest to the textual base on the scale of faithfulness. But even the Austrian brochure contains only parts of the contents of the textual base. The other brochures are further away from the textual base and more independent. They have picked out certain ideas more freely and created completely new texts.

4.3 Examples

These examples show the relation between the textual base and some of the customer brochures. They show how the sales companies have used the textual base when producing the brochure in their own language. The examples also illustrate some differences between the brochures.

The first example, taken from the textual base's part three, is about the vacuum cleaner's (which is called Clario) powerful suction, which is so efficient that it even cleans up after ”your most loved pets”. The examples contrasting each other are taken from the Austrian and the Norwegian brochures.

EXAMPLE 1. Text about the vacuum cleaner's powerful suction.

Textual base	Clario takes on tough jobs such as cleaning up after your most loved pets.
Austria	Der Clario kümmert sich um die härtesten Jobs – und räumt auch hinter Ihrem liebsten Haustier gründlich auf.
Norway	Hund er ingen hindring for et godt samarbeid med Electrolux Clario!

The German sentence from the Austrian brochure, which means something like ”Clario takes on the toughest jobs, and also cleans up thoroughly after your most loved pets”, is equivalent to the English sentence, apart from the emphasis on ”gründlich”/”thoroughly” and some other linguistic adjustments. The Norwegian sentence to the same picture means something like ”A dog is no obstacle to a good co-operation with Electrolux Clario!”. The Norwegian sales company has created its own theme and based its text on the dog on the picture. The sentence ”is no obstacle to a good co-operation with Electrolux Clario” is repeated in other places in the Norwegian brochure. This is a theme which does not occur in any of the other brochures.

The second example is taken from part five in the textual base where the product’s function and design is described with pictures and texts. Here are examples from the Austrian, Norwegian and Swedish brochures.

EXAMPLE 2. Picture of and text about changing the filter.

Textual base	Efficient, easy-to-change micro exhaust filter is sealed tightly around the edges.
Austria	Ein effizienter, leicht zu wechselnder Micro-Abluftfilter ist um die Ecken herum dicht versiegelt.
Norway	Enkelt å skifte filter og pose.
Sweden	Effektivt mikrofilter! Det elektrostatiska mikrofiltret ger ett partikelutsläpp på mycket låga 0,02 mg/m^3 luft, vilket betyder att Clario också fungerar som en luftrenare! Filtret byter du lätt på några sekunder.

The sentence in German is once again equivalently translated from English. It means ”An efficient filter which is easy to change is tightly sealed around the corners”. The Norwegian sentence is much more concentrated and only brings out the most necessary information from the picture: ”Easy to change filter and dustbag”. It has also combined two captions into one and so writes about both filters and dustbags in one sentence. The Swedish text means ”Efficient micro filter! The electrostatic microfilter lets out a particle discharge of very low 0,02 milligram per cubic metre air, which means that Clario works as an air cleaner! The filter is easily changed within seconds”. The sentence contains more information with both technical details about dust exhaustion, and more personally aimed information about how easy it is to change filters. There is also a rhetorical argument about the environmentally friendly character of the vacuum cleaner – it works as an air cleaner too. Here information is added which does not exist in the textual base version of the corresponding caption.

4.4 Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to explain and exemplify the text production processes at Electrolux. The examples, taken from a textual base produced centrally within the company and some customer brochures produced at different sales companies, have shown that texts produced in different languages with their base in one and the same raw material can look quite different. The differences that I have pointed out have been the degree of faithfulness to a textual base, the brochures' form and focus, and to some extent also function. The production processes also vary according to different contextual factors.

The texts are quite different even though they are aimed at the same receivers, are about the same product and derive from the same textual base. By considering interviews made within the frame of my study and by studying other texts produced within the company that I have collected, I am able to depict the reasons for these differences. First, the brand name Electrolux has different status in different countries, i.e. high or mid-status. Therefore the sales campaigns are shaped differently depending on what conditions are present. Second, the customer brochures are of course not the only aspect of the sales campaigns. In France, for example, where the brochure is very technical and contains few convincing sales arguments, more work has been done on magazine- and television advertising. The customer brochure takes up where the advertisements leave off. In Austria, on the other hand, the customer brochure is the prime sales material instead of other advertisements.

It has also been my aim to point to some facts that show that many texts in different languages produced within Electrolux are not translated according to the more traditional view on translation processes. It is more common that texts are produced through parallel writing processes or written directly in a different language.

5 CORPORATE IMAGE CREATION IN VERBAL AND VISUAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

(Aud Solbjørg Skulstad)

5.1 Introduction

A number of corporate documents such as annual reports and environmental reports reflect the overall communicative purpose of image creation. Important objects are to maintain shareholder confidence, to build goodwill with various community groups and to challenge images constructed outside the company. This analysis is based on annual reports issued by British companies, particularly the section called 'Chairman's statement' and environmental documents issued by the same British companies (Skulstad 1996, 1997 and 1998).

Previous studies of corporate image creation focus primarily on written and spoken language (e.g. Gunnarsson 1998). My paper discusses both visual and verbal strategies which are used to create or to reinforce specific corporate images. The first part of my paper discusses some verbal strategies in corporate environmental reports which realize the overall communicative purpose of image creation. The second part of my paper looks at some visual strategies in the 'Chairman's statement' section of corporate annual reports in terms of image creation.

5.2 Verbal communication

What kind of image does a company generally want to create or to reinforce? When it comes to environmental aspects of the business, the company wants to indicate that its products are environmentally friendly and the company wants to show its environmental awareness and commitment in its broadest sense. The realization of the aim to create the image of a 'green' company may result in the issuing of separate documents on environmental issues.

I collected environmental documents from 19 British companies in 1993. These 20 documents are referred to as corporate environmental reports. These documents are rather heterogenous in terms of rhetorical organization, layout and design. This variation with respect to physical layout and content may be taken as evidence of a non-established genre.

Despite this heterogeneity I split these documents into two subgenres on the basis of emerging genre conventions and communicative purposes.

I will take one of the specific communicative purposes as an example and discuss the realization of this purpose in relation to image creation. Both subgenres reflect the communicative purpose of signalling good business practices (business ethics). I categorize 14 of the 20 documents as **environmental performance reports** (EPRs). This is a term used in some of the documents. As Swales (1990) points out, it is very important to observe the labels members of the discourse community use themselves to refer to texts or members of a genre. These documents aim to create or to reinforce the image that the company's environmental performance has improved. The main strategy used to realize this aim is to give 'evidence' which indicates an improved performance.

The most frequent type of 'evidence' the EPRs give is related to recycling. This is a type of environmental action which everybody understands because every household is expected to recycle parts of its domestic waste. Typically, the EPRs in my corpus give concrete examples of recycling, ranging from the recycling of office paper and plastic cups to the recovering of waste energy from process plants. Companies sometimes give evidence of their good environmental performance from many years back.

The other subgenre I refer to as **environmental awareness booklets** (EABs). In the six EABs in my corpus, reports or reviews of company performance are given very little space. These documents have a less well-defined form than do EPRs. EABs often realize the communicative purpose of signalling good business practices by various rhetorical strategies which are aimed at challenging public opinion.

According to Gunnarsson (1998), three kinds of images exist within a company. Internal images refer to the perception of corporate identity, a corporate self. These images appear in discourses addressed to present and potential employees such as staff magazines, course materials, letters and notes to staff, etc. The second type is called externally addressed images and refer to the outward presentation of corporate culture. These images appear in discourses aimed at customers, stakeholders, and the general public. Examples of documents are annual reports, environmental reports, advertisements, company brochures, press releases, etc. There are also externally constructed images which are created outside the company.

Gunnarsson (1998: 625) says that "one of the essential aims of conscious image construction within a company is to change ... negative, externally created images". An important communicative purpose of the corporate documents on environmental issues in my study is to show good business ethics in relation to environmental issues. In the central group of EABs in my corpus, the realization of this aim is seen in the various strategies used to characterize opposition and in denials of claims made in antecedent texts (see example 1 below).

Some companies issue special documents which aim at challenging or changing such externally constructed images when it comes to environmental issues. Such documents belong to the subgenre of EABs. A good example of this is a document issued by Donald Murray Paper ltd. Already the title indicates this challenging of externally constructed images: *Papermaking Is Not Killing the Forests*. In this document we find several examples of the type of negation which Pagano (1994) calls **denials of background information** (Skulstad 1998). This label implies that the writer denies misconceptions which he or she assumes the imagined reader to have prior to reading the present text:

EXAMPLE 1.

Pulp and paper production does *not* involve the destruction of wild, unspoilt forests because the trees from these forests are unsuited to the manufacture of wood pulp. *NO* PAPER IS PRODUCED FROM UNSUSTAINABLE TROPICAL HARDWOOD (Donald Murray Paper ltd, *Papermaking Is Not Killing the Forests*: 4 (not paginated), EAB).

Thus, this strategy may be used to contest opinions suggested in antecedent texts by various pressure groups and environmental campaigners.

In my corpus of EABs there is a marginal group of documents addressed mainly to customers. These documents contain a mixture of environmental and promotional discourses. In other words, some companies show their commitment towards improving the environment by means of the company's products. These are hybrid texts which are a mixture of sales brochures and EABs.

EPRs typically select examples which illustrate the company's positive environmental performance instead of providing a comprehensive report of the overall environmental effects of the company's activities. These documents may be seen to concentrate on the construction of internal images as well as externally addressed images. In the heterogeneous group of EABs in my corpus, as we have seen, there are examples of documents which challenge images created outside the company.

5.3 Visual communication

Both corporate environmental reports and corporate annual reports are multisemiotic texts which typically contain a relatively large number of visuals, particularly colour photographs in addition to verbal text. All the chairmen's statements in my primary corpus, except three, include photographs of the chairman. (My material consists of a primary corpus of 19 annual reports and a secondary corpus of 55 reports.) The majority of these photographs are 'traditional' portraits of the chairman in the setting of his office, sitting at a polished table, or in less frequent cases, standing inside or outside one of the company buildings. In the majority of these portraits the chairman has eye contact with the reader of the report.

In one of the chairmen's statements there is a full-page photograph of the chairman together with two miners down in the Whitemoor mine (British Coal Corporation plc, *Report and Accounts 1992/93*: 7). Their clothes are dirty and the miners have black faces. All three are smiling and look like they have been interrupted in the middle of a conversation. This photograph suggests that the chairman is regularly in close contact with the workers, and he is even going down into the mines to inspect the work going on.

In one of the annual reports in my secondary corpus the traditional type of portrait is replaced by a photograph of the two chairmen of the company each unscrewing the cap of a jar of mayonnaise (Unilever plc, *Annual Review and Summary Financial Statement 1991*: 2, secondary corpus). The setting is a supermarket. This photograph suggests that the chairmen are in close contact with the company's food products, perhaps even personally inspecting the quality of these products. The latter aspect is projected even more in the report which was issued the following year where the chairmen are photographed while tasting some of the company's food products in the demonstration kitchen at the new Unilever House in Rotterdam (Unilever plc, *Annual Review and Summary Financial Statement 1992*: 2, secondary corpus).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) see close parallels between the information structure of the clause and the layout structure of a page in a text which combines visual and verbal means of communication. The information unit of verbal communication typically consists of a Given element accompanied by a New element. The Given element refers to what is (assumed to be) already known or familiar to the reader or listener, and it typically precedes the New (Halliday 1994). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 186–187) claim that this is also a typical pattern of visual communication: the left is the side of the ‘already given’, in the sense that it represents something the reader is assumed to know already. The New, on the other hand, is presented as something which is not yet known, or perhaps not even agreed upon by the viewer, hence as something to which the viewer must pay special attention. They add, however, that this Given-New structure is ideological in the sense that the information is presented as **though** it had that status or value for the viewer/reader. This specific valuation may be rejected by a particular reader, but he or she still has to read it within that structure.

The Given-New (left-right) structure also applies to two-page layouts. The photograph of the chairman interacting with employees (see above) appears on the right-hand page. Within Kress and van Leeuwen’s framework, this photograph could be seen as depicting a specific event which is not taken for granted. A chairman in a mine is not a well-established image depicting what a chairman usually does. The photographs in the Unilever reports, on the other hand, appear at the top of the left-hand page. Hence, the image of the chairmen as being in close contact with the company’s products is treated as well-established, or Given, and the verbal text on the right-hand page as New. In other words, these photographs may be seen to reaffirm an already well-established image of the chairmen and of the norms of the management team.

5.4 Conclusion

One of the ‘Chairman’s statement’ sections in my secondary corpus states that the company’s “high reputation as a socially responsible, ethical and caring company has existed for over 100 years and we are determined that it should be upheld” (The Boots Company plc, *Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 1992*: 4). As we have seen, companies use a number of visual and verbal strategies to uphold their reputation, or their corporate image. To achieve this goal some companies issue special documents which aim to challenge externally created images. Other companies simply select examples which indicate improved performance in their externally addressed reports. We have also seen how the image of a ‘caring company’ may be realized by ‘untraditional’ portraits of the chairman, who after all may be seen to represent the ‘face’ which the company presents to the world.

6 STANDARDIZING SALES BROCHURES: COST CUTTING OR MISCOMMUNICATION? – CAST IRON STOVES IN SWEDISH, DANISH AND BRITISH CONTEXTS

(Birgitte Norlyk)

The interaction of culture, communication and marketing has been analysed in a number of studies on international marketing communication. While some defend the view point that certain categories of products may be considered culture-free (Usunier 1996), others disagree. Products as argued by de Mooij (1998) are not culture-free, nor are the motivations of the people who buy them.

This paper argues that businesses need to consider the influence of national cultures in international marketing communication. To motivate potential buyers, the communication surrounding the coding and decoding of product settings needs to consider both the interaction between sender and receiver (Christensen 1994) and the cultural differences between markets. Using a framework of textual analysis and communication theory, the paper compares the communication value of a standardized sales brochure for all markets to two culturally adapted sales brochures targeted at individual markets, i.e. Britain and Sweden.

From the perspective of general business economics, the concept of large scale operations and standardization is considered attractive and cost-cutting. In international marketing communication, standardization of sales material and sales brochures further secures the producer a high degree of image control in all markets as the influence of subsidiaries and agents on product presentation is limited.

The concept of standardization, however, may fail to recognize the ethnocentric influence of the sender's cultural context. In the context of communication, an ethnocentric sender takes for granted that message coding and decoding take place in identical cultural contexts (Dahl & Habert 1994). Ethnocentrism poses a problem in terms of the communicative quality of standardized sales messages and product presentations as cultural differences between markets may influence the way in which products are perceived and presented.

The present case deals with a standardized sales brochure produced in Denmark for all international markets. While product presentation and lay-out remain unchanged in the standardized brochures, adaptations consist in translations from the Danish source text into relevant language versions. Since the standardized sales brochure is produced in Denmark, it inevitably reflects Danish preferences in product representation and

Danish preferences as concerns the choice of selling points, language and style. The standardized sales brochure pays no attention to the influence of cross-cultural differences in message coding and decoding.

In 1998, critical feedback from the British subsidiary concerning the communication value of the standard brochure let the Danish producer of cast iron stoves to reconsider its communication strategy in international markets. The British subsidiary was allowed to produce a sales brochure targeted specifically at the British market. Products were presented in a British context and set in British-style attractive homes. Further, product descriptions were redrafted to suit the language and style preferred by British customers.

A Swedish version of the sales brochure appeared later in 1998. Inspired by the culturally adapted British sales brochure, the Swedish agent likewise felt the need to target product presentations to suit a specific segment of the Swedish market. Once again, product presentation and product setting underwent a cultural transformation to appear in Swedish holiday homes set in the Skärgård or in the vast Swedish forests – recognized national icons in tourist presentations of Sweden and the Swedish image.

The aim of the present comparative analysis is to highlight the cultural communication barriers surrounding the aesthetics of product presentation. While the standard sales brochure presents the product, high-quality cast iron stoves, set in Danish-style attractive private homes, the targeted version of the sales brochures clearly illustrates that the concept of attractive homes does not translate across cultures (Djursaa & Kragh 1998). The concept of 'home' needs to undergo a cultural transformation to suit individual markets.

Text excerpts from the brochures further illustrate how communication barriers are related to different preferences in language and style across cultures. Contrasting the standard version of the sales brochure with the targeted versions for the British and Swedish markets, the paper argues that the persuasive value of sales texts do not translate effortlessly from one cultural context to another (Norlyk 1997, Winsor 1993). In practical terms, this indicates that part of a sales text needs to be redrafted to suit individual cultural contexts.

6.1 Product settings in Denmark, Britain and Sweden

Product settings vary dramatically in the Danish, British and Swedish representations of attractive homes.

The culturally adapted British brochure places the stove in homes which British customers instantly identify as attractive British homes. These homes reflect an aesthetical tradition favoured in British interior decorating. Different styles, colours and patterns in curtains, carpets and furniture dominate the British living rooms in which dried flowers, family photos, and other objects d'art create a sense of home in a British context.

The Danish concept of an attractive home is carried through in all language versions of the standard brochure. In this cultural setting, minimalism is the key word. As opposed to the carpeted floors of the adapted British version, the Danish standard favours natural materials. Wooden floor boards and tiles are considered attractive and easy to clean as opposed to dusty carpets. The Danish version features a range of Danish quality products such as Bang and Olufsen products, Danish designer furniture etc. In a Danish context, the presentation of the stove surrounded by other quality products firmly places the stove in a context of established quality products (Buhl 1993).

The Danish version of an attractive product setting, i.e. Danish-style living rooms, is carried through in all international language versions of the standardized sales brochure. While the need for translations of texts was never questioned, the concept of attractive homes was ethnocentrically assumed to be culture-free.

The adapted Swedish brochure strikes a different note in the representations of appropriate product settings. To link the product to the concept of holiday homes, the Swedish version has Nature play an important part in the cultural adaptation from the Danish standard version which has no direct references to Nature and natural scenery in its product presentation. Pictures of Swedish scenery and pictures of Swedish families enjoying themselves in holiday homes create a mind scape that links the product to Nature and to idyllic presentations of family life as represented by the popular Swedish painter Carl Larsson.

The culturally adapted versions of the brochure clearly illustrate that the concept of attractive homes does not easily translate across cultures. The staging of an attractive home needs to be reinterpreted in cross-cultural communication, as the concept of home "– the central consumption context – carries the central message of the inhabitant's identity and culture, and poses the strongest cultural barriers against other forms of expression" (Djursaa & Kragh 1998: 28). The appropriate setting for cast iron stoves reveals itself as strongly culture bound. Pictures and representations that work in one setting might offend or backfire in other settings – sometimes even within the same culture (Kostelnick 1993).

6.2 Culture and stylistics

The semantic translation of the standard brochure ethnocentrically transfers the tone of voice and the selling points that work in a Danish context. To transfer the appeal value of the standard text, the British subsidiary redrafted the text in the version targeted at the British market.

The standardized brochure, made in Denmark, is dominated by a neutral, nominal style giving factual descriptions of product materials, product construction and product efficiency. The style is low key and understated as in the description of the convected stove heat – a prime selling point – as 'even and comfortable'.

In a Danish context, the controlled, technical description of the product may lend the seller a high degree of credibility. Judging from the rewrite made by the British subsidiary, this does not seem to be the case in a British context. Text examples 1 and 2 illustrate the stylistic differences between the low-key translated version of the Danish original as opposed to the version preferred by the British text writer.

> EXAMPLE 1: Standard brochure, produced in Denmark.
>
> Solid cast iron has a unique ability to store heat and release it into the surroundings long after the fire has gone out. ... The heavy dimensions and special alloy of cast iron store the heat and give even, comfortable heat release...
>
> EXAMPLE 2: Adapted version, produced in Britain.
>
> The appeal of cast iron lies not only in its ability to absorb the heat of the fire - wafting it slowly into the room long after the fuel is spent – but also in the ease with which it can be shaped. No other material can be moulded into such a variety of finishes – from softly rounded edges to crispy detailed ornamentation. ... Cast iron stoves give the most luxurious warmth. The radiated heat from the body of the stove gently warms whilst the convected heat searches into every corner of the room.

Example 1 offers the semantic translation of a selling point that works in a Danish context. References to facts and common sense carry high persuasive value in this cultural context.

Example 2 illustrates the adaptation of example 1 to suit a different cultural context in which persuasion and credibility make other demands on language and style (Horton 1998, Norlyk 1996). In the British-made version, heat and fire are personified and active. Stove heat is described as 'luxurious' rather than 'even and comfortable'. Stove heat 'gently warms' whilst it 'searches into every corner of the room' as opposed to the low-key statement in the translation from the Danish standard text 'Solid cast iron has a unique ability to store heat and release it into the surroundings long after the fire has gone out.'

The text in the adapted version for the Swedish market largely mirrors the Danish preference for factual information and a low-key tone of voice. However, the adapted version consistently includes references to a product context that is not considered relevant neither in the Danish standard text, nor in the adapted British version. Thus the Swedish version constantly stresses that, in case of power-cuts, the stove provides an extra heating and cooking facility as illustrated in example 3.

> EXAMPLE 3: Adapted version, produced in Sweden.
>
> Ansluter du kaminen bakåt får du dessutom en praktisk kokplatta att använda vid ett eventuellt strömavbrott. ...Vid ett eventuellt strömavbrott kan det kännas tryggt att ha en extra värmekälla i huset. Dessutom kan du använda översidan som kokplatta.

These selling points would hardly occur to a Danish text writer as power cuts rarely happen in Denmark. However, in a Swedish context, frequent power failures are part of the reality surrounding isolated holiday homes served by small, local generators. As illustrated in example 3, an ethnocentric standard text would fail to recognize the existence of important selling points in cultural contexts different from the sender's.

In a practical, business context the differences in language and style across markets and cultures are difficult to pinpoint beforehand. As pointed out by Frandsen et al. (1997) traditional communication models offer little assistance in terms of the visual and linguistic aspects of market communication. Referring to the influential works by Kotler (1967), Frandsen et al. (1997) point out that although Kotler highlights the importance of staging the message emotionally, rationally or morally, he pays little attention to the specific linguistic and stylistic requirements needed in different cultural contexts.

6.3 Conclusions

As illustrated in the comparison of standardized and targeted sales brochures, the standardized, ethnocentric approach to communication may result in unexpected communication barriers across cultures – even in markets which are regarded as fairly homogeneous. Given an ethnocentric starting point, the sender expects his message to produce the same effect on all receivers irrespective of national and cultural contexts.

In standardization, communication is viewed as a linear process focussing on the transmission of data while cultural discrepancies surrounding the processes of coding and decoding are largely disregarded. The influence of important factors such as culture, aesthetics, and context are left underexposed.

7 ORAL ORGANIZATIONAL DISCOURSE: STRATEGIES AND CONDITIONS

(Anne Marie Bülow-Møller)

Organizations, companies and institutions exist, and confirm their identity, through the texts they produce. This is true for the field that has been most extensively studied, i.e. the texts that the organizations write about themselves to the world (annual reports, promotion material) and internal top-down communication (instructions, memos); but it is also true for the **oral** discourse produced by members when they talk about the organization (known as the 'corporate narrative'), and when they talk on behalf of the organization in the course of their daily dealings with clients or customers.

Many of the insights that have been produced, both from sociology and from linguistic studies of discourse, can be collected in one dichotomy, which we can heuristically call **cool** concerns vs. **warm** concerns. Under the 'cool' heading comes rationality, rules and regulations, efficiency and control; under the 'warm' heading, correspondingly, we find emotion, concerns for people, fairness and solidarity. For example, in studies of organizing metaphors in decision making, Sapienza (1987) found that cut-back discussions in a profit-oriented hospital centred on a metaphor of **mechanical restraint** ('We're in a box'), whereas in a religious and humanitarian hospital cut-backs produced a metaphor centred on **pain** ('This is going to hurt'). Studies of people's experience of the court system show a comparable pattern: some produce narratives building on their **rights**, citing relevant rules, while others come to get **fairness** and tell the story of their lives (O'Barr and Conley 1988).

In oral organizational discourse, the representative of the organization has the same choice to make, or the same balance to strike: he or she needs to attend to the long-term goal of efficiency (concern for the case in hand) while also paying attention to local goals of cooperation (concern for the interlocutor's face) (cf. Wilson 1992). It is noticeable that studies of impression formation have a tendency to show that ratings for ’competence’ and ’intelligence’ vary opposite ratings for ’sense of humour’ and ’trustworthiness’ (Ng and Bradac 1993); the moral for speakers is thus that pleasantness is bought at the expense of respect and vice versa.

This observation has direct repercussions for the kind of discourse that can be defined as **negotiation**: the process whereby two parties seek to align themselves on an issue where neither has the power to dictate. It is equally important to keep the channels open and think along with the opponent, and to come over as knowing the options and holding a strong bargaining position. For analysis of lexico-grammatical choices, two areas are particularly helpful: that of **footing** and that of **face.**

Footing is versatile; when Goffman distinguishes several kinds of relations a speaker can hold to his or her message, he also acknowledges that it can change within a single sentence (Goffman 1981). In the classical negotiation arrangement, with two sides sitting on opposite sides of a table, the most evident kind of footing is that of representation: these people speak not their own point of view, but that of a principal (’I’m afraid the Board can’t agree to your proposal as it stands’). This kind of footing I shall call **organizational**.

But if the talks are going well, one or both sides may well subdivide in **individuals**, now speaking as the authors of their own contributions (’I don’t see why we can’t agree to that, do you, John?’). One of the hallmarks of the sowing-up phase of negotiations is the occurrence of the collective use of **we**: ’OK, so if we say 2 per cent…’), meaning ’all of us round this table’. Psychologically speaking, it seems that groups tend to stick to organizational footing much longer than two single individuals, possibly because they do not feel the presence of their constituency to the same extent as the panel, for whom the rest of the side is also part of the constituency (Stephenson 1981).

Organizational footing has a tendency to go together with precision of reference and a high level of formality. Diez (1986) shows that precision serves to rehearse well-known information in a form that excludes chummy sharing: organizational sides tend to say ’When we met on May 12’ rather than ’last time you were here’.

In my own data, an example of this sort of precision comes from a negotiation of the ’grievance’ type, where B is trying to extract insurance cover from A; despite the (telephone) presence of two men only, A’s footing is clearly organizational:

B: They didn't ask for a contribution towards that bridge in any case, they didn't ask Smith's and when we were being summoned Mr Jones he put an offer forward for them to do something about it which they didn't take.

A, rep. Council's insurer: Yes, but the fact that Mr Jones may or may not have made an offer to the council wouldn't place them under any obligation. They said and if **I refer precisely to the agreement which you have mentioned yourself** that they would proceed with the work **quote** "Once started [3 syllables inaudible] strengthening or reconstructing the bridge with all expedition" – that's all they agreed to do with [company], they said that if they did do this job, because it was never positive and certain that they would do it, if they once started this job they would complete it with all speed. That's the only obligation they committed themselves to. (Bridge 1)

The cool legal concern is evident, and pleasantness is not really an issue. However, that does not mean that **face** is not an issue.

There is an unfortunate tendency to treat matters of face and politeness as the same thing. Politeness is by no means absent in organizational footing negotiations, but semantic mitigation is merely part of the formality level: according to Diez, sides tend to say 'Would you like to give us your figures now' (with normal statement intonation), where caucus groups may go for semantically more direct forms like 'Well, what are your figures, then?' The norm for directives is not the imperative, but rather this modalized request ('Can you/Will you/Would you' etc); 'need statement' counts as aggravation ('We need your figures now'), whereas mitigation is created with interpersonal additions ('Please') or other-directed questions ('Have you any figures ready for us?').

The well-known model of face threats from Brown and Levinson (1987), which was geared to requests, is now often supplemented with further subdivisions. I follow Scollon and Scollon (1995) and Lim and Bowers (1991) in distinguishing negative face (respect for territory) and positive face, with a subdivision into **competence face** and **fellowship face**, i.e. conveying admiration for (cool) skills, and conveying sympathy for (warm) person.

It is equally important to go back to the original meaning of 'face' in Goffman (1967) where the term was used about the speaker's own need to protect and glamourize his or her face. It is obvious in negotiation discourse that the speakers' lexico-grammatical choices reflect their need to present a particular image in consonance with their local and global goals. In the example above, the speakers project competence when they stick to paragraphs, information, and logical deduction; in some of the examples below they can be heard projecting fellowship when they seek immediacy (e.g. use of address), show responsiveness (feedback, acknowledgement), and use common ground.

It follows that fellowship face may run counter to classical mitigation: two negotiators that say 'Oh, come off it' well be getting along much better than a pair that say 'The Board must point out that your figures may be in error here'.

However, **unilateral** informality is likely to be a symptom of trouble. If solidarity forms do not reflect equality, they are likely to reflect power differentials or contempt; in the following example, the caller is really in a weak bargaining position, but she chooses to adopt a tone with falling intonation; she can be heard as projecting competence face in claiming a position where she is within her rights. Mrs C casts herself as a side in using the plural: no-one says *I want* in negotiations.

Mrs C: [...] but they also made a very good suggestion: Why don't we get in touch with "That's Life" programme. Now **we would like** Mr Black and the solicitor, what's the solicitor.
Council's ins. A 2: Well, the firm are called Brown, Grey and White-
Mrs C: -Henry Green.
A 2: That's right.
Mrs C: **Would you ask** them if they could come on the programme because they will be asked to come on the programme.
A 2: Well I'm sorry, if there's an approach from the BBC then we can answer that.
Mrs C: Ah that will take too long, **we want** a yes or a no.
A 2: Well, I'm sorry, I can't give you that. (Bridge 2)

It takes a great deal of pragmatic competence to administer these options. It is my experience from studies of native/non-native discourse data that non-natives use a much smaller range, and thus cut themselves off from a number of possible strategies. For illustration, here follows a severely truncated survey of the functions of **conditionals** in negotiation discourse.

The interesting kinds of conditionals are used to set out shared background (or more precisely, set up a mental space where this background is shared). This space lends itself to several uses, which for the present purpose I shall assume follow a **cline** from competence to fellowship. Thus the imposing of conditions is a strong move, whereas presenting a state of affairs as hypothetical and in need of confirmation is considerate; in Ford and Thompson (1986), the hypothesis is treated as a hedge, i.e. as polite mitigation.

At the fellowship end of the cline is the pure politeness formula that functions mostly as a discourse marker, on a par with *sort of* or *you know*:

Buyer 1: No it was just that we're obviously **if you like**, if we can come back to the pricing issue, because now is most probably the appropriate time, that we see for example another company, a major supplier, very good reputation [cont] (Rockley).

The second conditional above, *if we can come back to the pricing issue*, serves a different purpose: this is a **shepherding move** (Bülow-Møller 1996) that directs the agenda. It is still presented as a hedge, in need of confirmation, but since it occurs in mid-utterance, no confirmation is sought.

In the middle of the cline we find the use of conditionals that signal common ground. In the following example the American seller uses another typical shepherding move in gathering up and presenting his proposal as already accepted:

US seller: So, **if we can go for something like I said**, we'll supply the 'chairs and . for the chairs marketing strategy, we can supply one or two chairs, however many you may need, and . then you'll supply their retail (Dental).

Again, the hedging condition is found in the marked-theme position of the sentence: as old information it is not really up for discussion.

Moving more towards the powerful competence end of the cline we find conditionals that display reasoning:

US seller: How d- how do- how will you break the 'cost of that exhibition down, **if we're only supplying one.. aspect** (US: the chair) just the 'chair, versus - I do not understand - we 'could not split the exhibition cost fifty-fifty in a process like 'that, cause we're not sponsoring fifty per cent.. I'm sure **if we WERE** (DK: umhum) we could negotiate .. 'doing that. (Dental)

The seller is referring back to something the Danes said earlier. He uses the quotation to show that their position is untenable, and thus the common ground is only common if (against expectation) it can be substantiated; he then adds his own suggestion, with a new conditional. Reasoning on the opponent's own turf is a relatively strong move, and the added suggestion can (just) be seen as mitigation as well as a way forward.

The Danes, the non-natives in this negotiation, use very few conditionals compared to the Americans, and, interestingly, they use them very largely as strong moves, to lay down take-it-or-leave-it conditions:

DK buyer: I can see a point in having your erh unit . lying here in Denmark so we can . erh demonstrate it **if if dentists seem interested**. Erh but as we mentioned, we erh we would be glad to erh to present this unit **IF it doesn't provide us with some . some [erh**
US seller: [so we take all the risk (Dental)

Typically, the Danes use the conditionals to object; they do not so much act as *re*act. The conclusion is that although they use the strong competence form, they are not demonstrating negotiating strength. If they had had access to the other variants like the hedging conditionals, they might not only have been able to set more of the agenda and have their own concerns discussed, they might also have demonstrated more willingness to find a solution rather than the back-against-the-wall kind of defensiveness that in this case led to a not very good deal.

This can be taught – both as a foreign language gambit, and as a problem-solution strategy. It is not a question of teaching negotiators to be polite; it is much rather to teach them to use the marked-theme position to gather up common ground, and to be cognizant of the possibilities of signalling that the channels are open.

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