

BUILDING IDENTITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN COMMERCIAL WEBSITES: A CONTRASTIVE VIEW OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Christopher Hopkinson

Abstract

This paper addresses the construction of identities and relationships as a communication strategy in commercial websites. Based on a corpus of Czech and British sites, the study applies an approach grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis and identifies ways in which text-producers attempt to create simulated identities for themselves and their readers, manipulating the reader's mental models of the communicative situation for commercial gain. The author then addresses the texts' construction of virtual relationships between the producer and the reader, both in terms of distance or closeness (negative and positive *face*) and in terms of the equality or inequality of status of the two participants. The study also discusses the extent to which the corpus reveals contrastive differences in strategies and discourse preferences between the British and Czech websites.

Key words

media discourse, commercial websites, manipulation, mental models, Critical Discourse Analysis, interpersonal metafunction, communication strategies, positive face, negative face

1 Introduction

Recent studies of media discourse carried out within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis have emphasized the way in which this discourse creates identities for its participants (both producers and receivers) and constructs real or virtual relationships between those participants. This paper reports on a study of one specific type of media discourse – the commercial website. Such discourse is essentially manipulative, as its primary communicative intention is to influence the reader's perception of the products and companies being promoted and thus to achieve commercial gain. The producers of websites make use of a variety of communication strategies to manipulate the reader's perception; among the most powerful are strategies of building identities and relationships.

This study is based on an analysis of a corpus of texts from British and Czech commercial websites of companies operating in the food and drink industry. The aim of the analysis was to map the key communication strategies found in the corpus and, on the basis of the distribution of strategies throughout the corpus, to identify central and peripheral strategies and to determine whether any

contrastive differences exist between the British and Czech subcorpora which may reflect cross-cultural differences in discourse preferences. A comprehensive report on the research, outlining the full range of communication strategies, is contained in Hopkinson (2009). The present paper focuses more closely on one particular type of manipulative communication strategy: the construction of identities and relationships.

The corpus was compiled in 2007 and 2008, and totals approximately 250,000 words. British and Czech texts are represented in roughly equal proportions (93 UK and 98 Czech company presentations selected at random from listings in the directories uk.yahoo.com and www.firmy.cz). While being large enough to yield generalizable results, the corpus is also manageable enough in size to enable detailed manual analysis to be undertaken. The analysis was primarily qualitative. A broadly quantitative view was taken insofar as certain general trends were observable in the data; however, in view of the complexity of the analyzed parameters, any precise statistical analysis would have run up against prohibitive methodological difficulties.

2 Characteristics of the discourse and theoretical framework of the analysis

In commercial websites, the informational function (informing the reader about the product) is complemented by the strong presence of the persuasive or manipulative function. As with advertising, the ultimate communicative aim of such websites is to achieve commercial gain by promoting the company and its products; the various means and strategies used in commercial websites are all ultimately subordinated to this dominant goal. However, the manipulative strategies used in the websites are often less direct than those used in print or audiovisual advertising, with the informational function more strongly represented and the persuasive function diluted or manifested in a more covert, subtle way.

Manipulative media discourse, and the strategies it uses to achieve its aims, have been studied extensively by researchers working within the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g. Fowler 1991, Van Dijk 1991, Fairclough 1995, Reisigl & Wodak 2001, Conboy 2007, Johnson & Ensslin 2007); much of this work is grounded in a Hallidayan systemic-functional framework emphasizing the systemic and social elements of language use (e.g. Halliday 1978). Research into advertising has gradually shifted from a relatively narrow focus on language (Leech 1966 is an example of an early study of advertising in English) to a broader concern with the sociocultural aspects of advertising discourse (e.g. Cook 2001)

or its overlap with cognitive science (e.g. Forceville 1998). Outside the English-speaking world, for example, Čmejrková (2000) and Srpová et al. (2007) have investigated advertising in the Czech context. Cross-cultural contrastive studies include Tanaka (1994), focusing on differences between advertising in Japanese and English within a relevance theory framework. More recent research has also explored the impact of new electronic media on advertising; Janoschka (2004) is a study of web advertising (though focusing primarily on banners, pop-up windows and other interactive features rather than on the type of company presentations studied here).

Van Dijk (e.g. 2006) has developed a cognitive approach to manipulative discourse based around the notion of ‘mental models’ – that is, the models of the communicated reality and the communicative situation which the discourse activates (or attempts to activate) in the minds of its receivers. This approach was originally pioneered in cognitive psychology by Johnson-Laird (1983), and was adapted by Van Dijk to explain manipulation in discourse. In order to manipulate their readers, the producers of commercial websites attempt to ‘plant’ in the reader’s mind mental models both of the product (emphasizing its positive qualities) and of the communicative situation (i.e. the roles and identities of the two main participants in the discourse – the producer of the text and the reader). (For the purposes of this analysis, the producer of the product and the producer of the text can be telescoped together into a single analytical entity without significant loss of conceptual clarity.) Producers thus attempt to align the reader’s mental models with ‘target mental models’ that are compatible with the producer’s interests. In Van Dijk’s words: “Given the fundamental role of mental models in speaking and understanding, manipulation may be expected to especially target the formation, activation and uses of mental models [...] If manipulators are aiming for receivers to understand a discourse as *they* see it, it is crucial that the receivers form the mental models the manipulators want them to form [...]” (2006: 367).

The present paper focuses on the attempt by the producers of commercial websites to construct in the reader’s mind mental models of the communicative situation. Whereas mental models of the product (its features and positive qualities) involve Halliday’s ideational component of language use, mental models of the communicative situation correspond to the interpersonal component. They are termed ‘context models’ by Van Dijk, who defines them as “subjective definitions of events or situations, but in this case not of the situation we talk *about* but the situation *in which* we now participate when we engage in talk or text” (2006: 170). The manipulation of readers’ context models involves two closely related concepts which Fairclough terms ‘identities’ and ‘relationships’ (Fairclough

1995: 5). Any discourse of this type will attempt to shape the reader's perception of his or her own identity, as well as the identity of the producer. Inseparably connected with this notion of identity is that of the (virtual) producer-reader relationship which the discourse attempts to construct.

The following sections now move on to examine three main aspects of building identities and relationships as revealed by the analysis of the corpus data. Firstly, the paper discusses the producer's options for the linguistic encoding of the participants within the text, touching on the implications of this choice for the virtual relationships constructed by the discourse. Secondly, it examines the notion of identities – the 'voice' adopted by the producer and the identity assigned to the reader by the discourse. Finally, the article briefly returns to the notion of relationships and examines the notion of relative status (equality or inequality) in the producer-reader relationship and its relevance in terms of manipulative communication strategies.

3 Linguistic encodings of the participants within the discourse

When creating the text of a commercial website, the producer is faced with the choice of how to encode the two participants – the producer and the reader – in the discourse. This involves the decision which of the participants (if any) should be represented in the text, and how they should be encoded linguistically. The producer essentially has four choices of representation and encoding, which are depicted in Table 1 below. (In rare cases, neither participant is represented explicitly in the text, with even the producer backgrounded entirely while the product takes centre stage.) In terms of the virtual producer-reader relationship constructed by the text, it is possible to view these options as occupying positions on a scale expressing the relationship between the producer and the reader in terms of their mutual closeness or distance. Moving up the scale from option 1 to option 4, the virtual relationship constructed by the discourse becomes increasingly personal, inclusive and mutual.

option	producer represented as	reader represented as
1	3rd person (e.g. <i>The company produces ...</i>)	not represented
2	1st person – exclusive <i>we</i> (e.g. <i>We produce ...</i>)	not represented
3	1st person – exclusive <i>we</i>	2nd person – <i>you</i> (singular or plural) or reader's presence is implied via hortatory speech acts (e.g. imperative forms)
4	1st person – inclusive <i>we</i>	

Table 1: Options for encoding the participants in the discourse

Most of the websites involve a combination and alternation of these options, rather than a single choice which is then consistently adhered to.

In the first option, the reader is backgrounded and the producer is represented using (prototypically objective) third person forms. In the second option, though the reader is still backgrounded, the producer is personalized by being encoded via first person forms; the reader's mental model is thus less likely to depict the producer as a faceless corporate entity. In contrast to the first two options, the third option foregrounds the reader in the discourse; it involves an alternation between the exclusive *we* of the producer and the linguistic representation of the reader – either explicitly via second person forms, or implicitly via speech acts implying the reader's presence in the discourse (challenges, recommendations, rhetorical questions and the like). This option exemplifies the technique of synthetic personalization (e.g. Fairclough 2001), in which the producer addresses a mass audience, yet attempts to create the illusion that each individual reader is being addressed personally. In strategic terms, it represents an attempt to 'draw the reader in' by suggesting that he/she has a stake in the discourse:

- (1) ***We** know that clear labelling and ingredients are important to **you**. All of the ingredients listed on **our** packaging clearly show **you** that no unnecessary ingredients are used in **our** foods.* [Emphasis in bold type is added by the author (here and in all subsequent examples). URLs for the examples are given in the list of sources at the end.]

The fourth option for encoding participants takes this presupposition of mutual involvement to a more intense level by encoding the producer and the reader in a single linguistic form, the inclusive *we*. The use of this option presupposes shared

membership of an in-group, which may or may not be explicitly identified. This in-group may be based on the members' social role – in the following example, that of parenthood:

- (2) *vhodný doplněk pitného režimu i pro **naše** děti* [working translation: *also suitable for **our** children to drink*]

Alternatively, the in-group may involve the sharing of a particular lifestyle:

- (3) *There are times in **all our hectic lives** when, much as we would love a hot, home-cooked meal, there just isn't the time to prepare it.*

Another in-group to which producers appeal is that of the nation. The inclusive *we* thus positions both the producer and the reader as co-members of a national group. This is particularly used when promoting products which are viewed as culturally iconic, such as Czech beer or British tea:

- (4) *There have been many theories on how to make the best cup of tea during the 300 years that **we've been drinking tea on these shores.***

The distribution of these four encoding options throughout the corpus reveals a certain contrastive difference in discourse preferences between the British websites and their Czech counterparts. Table 2 and the accompanying graphic representation (Graph 1) show the occurrence of the four encoding choices in the corpus, expressed in percentage terms:

	1. producer as 'it'	2. exclusive 'we'	3. 'you'	4. inclusive 'we'
% of British presentations (N = 93) featuring encoding option	49	85	83	13
% of Czech presentations (N = 98) featuring encoding option	80	57	45	10

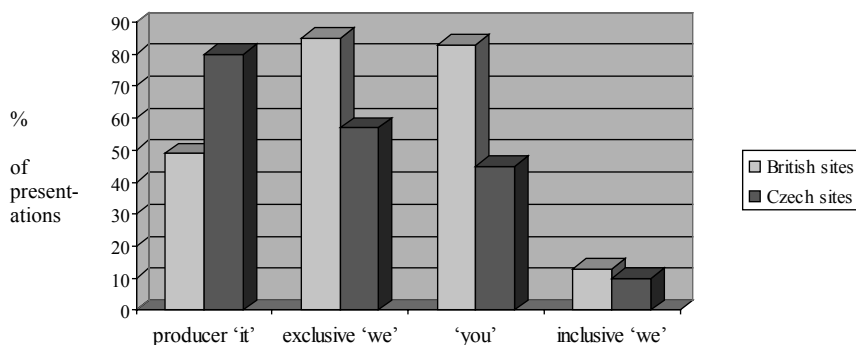


Table 2 / Graph 1: Choices of participant encoding expressed as % of the total number of presentations in the corpus (93 UK sites, 98 Czech sites) featuring the particular encoding option

In comparison with the British presentations, the Czech discourse displays a stronger preference for a more distanced, less subjective representation of the producer (using third person forms). The Czech texts also show a stronger tendency to background the reader ('you' forms), whose presence as a participant in the discourse thus remains merely implied. By contrast, the British websites generally adopt a more personal and inclusive tenor, with 'we' and 'you' forms more frequently represented in the corpus. The producers thus foreground the presence of the reader in the discourse, attempting to 'draw the reader in' and manipulate his/her mental models to simulate a relationship of familiarity, closeness and mutuality. This strategy is supported by a range of typical linguistic realizations, including the more frequent use of colloquial stylistic features (both lexical and syntactic) as well as language play – punning and other humorous devices.

This observed difference in tenor between the Czech and British websites could also be conceptualized on the basis of the notion of *face*, which has found wide application in pragmatic approaches to language (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987, Scollon & Scollon 2001). The British discourse more frequently attempts to construct a virtual relationship based on the reader's *positive face* (involving mutuality, closeness and sharing), whereas the Czech discourse more often displays a preference for *negative face* (i.e. emotionally neutral relationships based on non-intrusion into the private space of others); this distinction could also be conceptualized (as in Scollon & Scollon 2001: 48) as *involvement face* and *independence face* respectively.

4 Strategies for constructing producer and reader identities

A central process in the manipulation of the reader's mental models is the 'construction' of the participants' identities in the discourse. This section first examines the ways in which text-producers project their own identities ('voices') into the discourse, and then moves on to discuss the construction of virtual identities for the readers.

The default 'voice' (or persona) of the producer in the texts under investigation is simply that of the enthusiastic producer:

- (5) *[...] because we make nothing other than jams, marmalades and curds, all our efforts are concentrated on making them, we hope, the best in the world.*

However, text-producers frequently adopt personas that go beyond this default role. The strategic goal in doing so is to 'plant' in the reader's mind the mental model of a reader-producer relationship based on trust, confidence and good will. As part of this strategy, the producer may pose as a friend, possessing intimate knowledge of the reader's life:

- (6) *There are times in **all our hectic lives** when, much as we would love a hot, home-cooked meal, there just isn't the time to prepare it.*

Alternatively, the producer's voice may be that of a guide or teacher, as in the following extract from the website of a fruit and vegetable wholesaler:

- (7) *To prevent 'crying' while slicing onions, cut them under running tap water or completely underwater.*

The producer may also adopt the persona of an expert, giving reassuring professional advice and instructions. This is often framed as a response to a reader's question, as in the following Question/Answer pair from a website promoting baby milk:

- (8) ***Q:** "My follow-on milk packaging states that I should not add cereals to feeds given in a bottle. I'm confused and concerned as this product contains cereals and can be given in a bottle?" **A:** This product has a carefully controlled formulation, both nutritionally and in terms of its cereal to liquid ratio, so that it is perfectly safe to be given from a bottle*

if required. As HiPP Organic Good Night Milk Drink is suitable from 6 months to 3 years of age, it is possible that at 6 months a baby will still be being fed from a bottle; however we support and encourage the introduction of a beaker or feeder cup as soon as possible.

The choice of this scientific expert persona is part of a strategy to create in the reader's mind a mental model of a producer identity that stimulates trust and respect in the producer – thus making it more likely that the reader will accept the producer's claims.

As well as constructing identities for the producer, commercial websites also attempt to manipulate the reader's mental model of his/her own identity, status and self-image. In Section 3 it has been shown how the reader can be positioned as a member of an in-group (such as a fellow parent, a fellow Briton or Czech, and so on). An additional way of constructing an identity for the reader is by association with the product. This strategy is based on the transfer of positive traits and personal qualities from the product to those who consume the product. It involves an appeal to the reader's ego: the reader can acquire a desirable potential identity by associating him/herself with the product.

This transfer of positive features involves two main mechanisms, which can be termed metonymic and metaphorical. Metonymic transfer is based on a relationship of contiguity between two entities. Positive associations or intangible attributes of the product are thus symbolically transferred to its consumers; the consumer acquires qualities from the product. In the following example, the product, a type of bitter herbal spirit, is presented as transferring a desirable quality – masculinity – to the reader:

- (9) *Díky Fernetu Stock a tisícům jeho milovníků po celé zemi jsme světovými přeborníky v hořkých lihovinách. Vychutnej si tu jedinou autentickou výjimečnou hořkost i na webu. Najdeš tu vše, co **skutečný muž, který miluje Fernet Stock, potřebuje!*** [working translation: *Thanks to Fernet Stock and the thousands of people who enjoy it all over the country, we are world champions in bitter spirits. Enjoy the only authentic exceptional bitterness on the web too. You will find everything that **a real man – who loves Fernet Stock – needs!***]

The product in this case is presented as a 'masculine' drink; those who enjoy it thus metonymically acquire this quality of masculinity. The following example, taken from a website promoting a type of sparkling wine, shows the metonymic transfer of the positive quality of refinement:

- (10) *Sekt se tradičně obrací k lidem, kteří dokáží v životě ocenit kvalitu, harmonii, styl, eleganci.* [working translation: *Sekt traditionally turns to people who are capable of appreciating quality, harmony, style, elegance.*]

Here, the in-group is presented as desirably exclusive: not everybody is ‘capable’ of belonging to it. This exclusivity is subtly reinforced by the text’s reversal of real-world semantic roles; the product is encoded as the agent, seeking out only those consumers who are worthy of being associated with it.

The other type of feature transfer can be characterized as metaphorical; it is based not on contiguity but on a relationship of similarity cutting across two distinct and different domains. Thus, in example (9) above, the quality of masculinity is reinforced by the text’s metaphorical presentation of drinking as being similar to a competitive sport, in which the Czechs (the in-group encoded via the exclusive *we*) are described as world champions. The text thus co-opts the stereotypically masculine associations of sporting competitiveness. In the following example, the text metaphorically equates the discovery of a single malt Scotch whisky to the conquering of a mountain; the consumer is thereby infused with the qualities of toughness, resilience and self-confidence:

- (11) *Laphroaig 15 Year Old is the richer, more mature and succulent elder brother of the robust 10 Year Old. [...] Some have compared the moment of its discovery to the experience of climbing one of Scotland’s rugged mountains. You have braved the wilds, followed your own independent way and at last reached the very top. The view is magnificent – well worth the effort. Your first sip of Laphroaig 15 Year Old will reward you with the same sense of exhilaration. There are very few “ultimate” highs in life. But this is one of them.*

As presented in this extract, whisky-drinking becomes a heroic endeavour, worthy of admiration. By associating themselves with this product, the consumers can acquire the same admirable qualities.

With regard to strategies of constructing producer and reader identities, the corpus under investigation reveals no significant contrastive differences between the Czech and British websites. Clearly the chosen identities depend on the nature of the product being promoted, but the goals and mechanisms of identity-construction appear to be applied universally by text-producers, at least in the corpus under investigation.

5 Relative status in virtual relationships

As has been noted in Section 3 above, the construction of a virtual relationship between the producer and the reader can be analyzed in terms of the relative distance or closeness of the participants; virtual relationships may be based either on the principle of negative *face* (independence *face*) or positive *face* (involvement *face*). Another dimension of analysis with relevance to these simulated participant-relationships is that of relative status: the producer and reader may be positioned as equal in status, or as unequal (subordinate/superordinate). The issue of relative status (like the producer-reader relationship as a whole) is not always foregrounded in the discourse. However, in some cases the producer may attempt to manipulate the reader's mental models of the relative status of the participants in order to achieve certain strategic goals.

The following example positions the producer as the subordinate partner in the relationship, expressing deep respect for the reader (the potential consumer) in an attempt to gain the reader's favour:

- (12) *Vážení milovníci a ctitelé valtických vín, Dovolujeme si Vám prostřednictvím zásilkové služby nabídnout vína, z nichž některá v prodejně sítí nenaleznete.* [working translation: *Respected connoisseurs and lovers of wines from Valtice, We are taking the liberty to offer you wines by mail order, some of which you will not find in the retail network.*]

However, there are other cases in which the discourse positions the producer in a dominant role. This role is typically implied if the producer's persona is that of the expert; the dominance is based on the producer's superior expertise. Such expertise is often manifested linguistically in the use of field-specific lexical items:

- (13a) *Od úvodní **macerace** přes konečnou **filtraci** [...]* [working translation: *From the initial **maceration** to the final **filtration**]*
- (13b) *Z důvodu obsahu přírodního chlorofylu a tendenci této látky ztrácet na světle svoji **rezonanci** používáme pro naše výrobky zelené láhve [...]* [working translation: *Due to the natural chlorophyll content and the tendency of this substance to lose its **resonance** when exposed to light, we use green bottles for our products]*

The use of such technical terms subtly reinforces the reader's mental model of the producer's superior expertise-status. In strategic terms, the use of this terminology – which may not be fully understood by non-experts – performs the function of display. The aim is not necessarily that the reader should understand, but rather that he/she should be impressed, dazzled by the producer's know-how and expert credentials. This in turn helps to build the reader's trust in the producer both as an authoritative source of information and as a competent manufacturer of products.

Such foregrounding of the difference in expertise-status between the two participants is somewhat more common in the Czech websites investigated here than in their British counterparts. Where the British sites present technical or specialist information that may well be unfamiliar to the reader, the producers more often attempt to downplay the difference in expertise-status and present the producer not as a distant authority-figure but as a normal, approachable persona. In other words, the British websites manifest a stronger desire to simulate equality of status between the producer and the reader. In this way, producers are able to have the best of both worlds: they can gain the reader's trust in their authority and competence through the display of evident expertise, while also presenting themselves as ordinary, unthreatening inhabitants of the reader's own lifeworld. There is thus a tendency particularly in the British sites for passages presenting technical, complex or unfamiliar concepts to be immediately followed by a rapid 'gravitational pull' away from technical discourse to the more familiar – bringing the text down to earth, as it were, in an attempt to make the new information easier for the reader to accept and process. The following example shows the producer giving information on Japanese cuisine – a field that is particularly unfamiliar to most British readers:

- (14) *Black cod – also known as sablefish – is a silky-textured, unusually flavourful fish, rich in oils, which is caught in the waters around Alaska and the north west Pacific. [...] Served with “miso sauce” (a mysterious Japanese concoction based on soya beans, salt and mould – it's delicious), it has become the signature dish of Nobu, the world's most fashionable restaurant chain.*

By using elements of humour (making a joke out of the bizarre-sounding combination of ingredients in miso sauce), the producer makes light of and thus downplays the gap in expertise-status between the two participants. This strategy performs a useful pragmatic function. The producer's display of professional knowledge represents a potential face-threatening act (FTA), as it highlights the

reader's likely ignorance of the subject. However, by suggesting that the producer does not take himself entirely seriously, the strategy illustrated in example (14) mitigates this potential threat to the reader's *face*.

Sometimes in the British texts, this downplaying of expertise can reach a point at which producers seem almost embarrassed to present any factual information whatsoever. In the following example, the information concerns the country of origin of the chocolate:

- (15) *Everyone knows the not so secret ingredient of how we make our Cadbury Dairy Milk so creamy. However, not many people know how we get our milk chocolate so chocolatey. It's all thanks to the beautiful tropical country of Ghana in West Africa. **But we're not here to give you a geography lecture.** We just want to say a huge thank you to Ghana for making those cocoa beans that help make our Cadbury Dairy Milk taste so special.*

This text reveals a powerful desire not to intimidate the reader with new and unfamiliar information; as soon as the country of origin is mentioned, the producer retreats from the statement of fact into a discourse based on emotionality (*say a huge thank you to*) and subjective impressions (*help make our Cadbury Dairy Milk taste so special*). The text also attempts to reinforce the producer's reassuring, unthreatening persona by using stylistically marked language typically associated with informal communication (*chocolatey, say a huge thank you to*). Arguably, the discourse thus runs the risk of infantilizing the reader and underestimating his/her intelligence; such a strategy is potentially counterproductive, as it may irritate readers.

In summary, although the concept of relative status does not lend itself to reliable quantification, the analysis of the corpus suggests that there may exist a contrastive difference in discourse preferences between British and Czech commercial websites with regard to the way in which text-producers attempt to manipulate readers' mental models of the relative status of the participants. The Czech producers appear more willing to construct relationships based on inequality of status, whereas the British sites display a stronger tendency for the producer-persona to downplay any superiority in expertise. A tentative explanation may lie in cross-cultural pragmatics and differences between Czech and British societal norms of interaction, at least in the type of discourse investigated here.

6 Conclusions

Producers of commercial websites employ a variety of communication strategies to manipulate the reader's perception not only of the product being promoted, but also of the communicative situation in which the discourse takes place. Like all media discourse, commercial websites attempt to 'plant' in the reader's mind mental models influencing his/her perception of the identities of the participants (both the producer and the reader) and the relationship between the participants. The construction of identities for the participants involves the producer's adoption of a 'voice' (persona) and the construction of a reader-identity based either on membership of an in-group or on the transfer of positive attributes from the product to its consumers. The virtual relationship between the participants, as constructed by the discourse, can be conceptualized on the basis of closeness or distance, inclusiveness or exclusiveness, positive or negative *face*. Alternatively, it can be analyzed in terms of the relative status of the participants.

The comparison of the communication strategies employed by Czech and British websites reveals two main differences in discourse preferences. Firstly, the Czech websites more often background the reader in the discourse, creating a more impersonal tenor based on negative *face* (independence *face*), while the British websites more frequently foreground the reader, attempting to draw the reader into the discourse and simulate a relationship based on mutuality, shared experience, and positive *face* (involvement *face*).

The second main cross-cultural difference in discourse preferences as evident in the corpus is the tendency of the British websites to downplay any difference in expertise-status between the producer and the reader in an attempt to simulate a relationship based on equality. This tendency appears to be stronger in the British sites than in the Czech presentations.

This study opens up a number of potential avenues for future research which would verify the validity of these tentative findings using different data sets. The research outlined here focused on one industry only. However, essentially the same conceptual framework and analytical criteria could equally be applied to data from other sectors of the economy, which may reveal different discourse preferences. From a methodological viewpoint, the toughest challenge will evidently be to develop an objective and reliable way of capturing quantity data in order to enable a rigorous statistical analysis to be undertaken. Finally, it would also be instructive to expand the contrastive element of the research by carrying out a similar analysis on a data set including texts originating in a wider range of cultures. This would enable firmer conclusions to be reached as to possible cross-cultural differences in discourse preferences.

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