



Ibérica

ISSN: 1139-7241

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Asociación Europea de Lenguas para

Fines Específicos

España

Palmer Silveira, Juan Carlos
Corporate Discourse Ruth Breeze.
Ibérica, núm. 29, 2015, pp. 234-236
Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos
Cádiz, España

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Corporate Discourse

Ruth Breeze.

London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. 216 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4411-2718-1.

Corporate discourse is a fascinating field of study within business communication, due to the increasing interest in examining corporate practices from a discourse perspective. Its main aim is to observe the way international firms communicate with individuals (being them customers or possible investors), or with other companies. To do so, *Corporate Discourse* focuses on language, analysing the way it works in business-related settings, and trying to understand how it is used in order to create a corporate identity. RUTH BREEZE, the author of this book, knows well this area of study and tries to offer a thorough examination of the pieces of discourse used by a number of companies operating in different sectors, aiming at pointing out current developments in corporate discourse in a globalized world.

This volume can be defined as an interesting and relevant attempt at analysing corporate communication, letting us know what is in the mind of those involved in the development of the different types of discourse introduced by the author. In the seven chapters of the volume, BREEZE tries to offer her readers a clear image of corporate discourse nowadays, paying special attention to Western cultures and mainly focusing on Europe and the United States. She observes how language is used to develop business relationships on an international scope. Accordingly, in her initial chapter she explains some basic concepts that will help the reader to clarify her understanding of general topics that will be developed throughout the volume. Namely, some previous knowledge on corporations, cultural values, corporate image and shareholding is necessary to understand the reconfiguration of society nowadays and how this can affect the vision of corporate discourse in everyone's lives. Then, in the second chapter, BREEZE offers her view on the different roles of discourse and the need to work on specific corporate discourse studies. These analyses can be, in the author's opinion, divided into two broad categories: those which start from a close analysis of the texts (often grouped under the heading of applied linguistics) and those developed from the context, placing a greater emphasis on the

social role of the texts. These two initial chapters are used to establish the general framework of the volume, whereas specific genres of corporate discourse are analysed in detail in the following chapters, particularly regarding form and participants.

Chapter 3 is mainly devoted to the communication relationship that any corporation tends to have with its employees, observing how to shape those discourse interactions. The author analyses job ads, which, in turn, will take candidates to complete recruitment processes. Then, she moves on to studying all the different processes implemented by firms to train new employees (induction seminars, guides/videos for recently hired candidates, testimonies in websites), closing with an analysis of in-house communication (newsletters or different socialization tactics). Chapter 4 analyses how companies communicate with investors, mainly dealing with Annual Reports. She tries to dig into these documents, observing how information is offered to current and prospective shareholders, analysing how positivity and optimism take a leading role while introducing both past results and future prospects. This chapter, relevant as it is, deserves a much more detailed study, due to its interest, and the increasing amount of literature devoted to the topic in recent years clearly points out so. In any case, BREEZE remarks are accurate and attractive for the reader.

Advertising discourse is analysed in chapter 5. After introducing what the author defines as advertising discourse, BREEZE assesses whether this is a new, creative genre, or rather, whether it takes bits and pieces from other more traditional genres, in what she defines as a parasite discourse. She then analyses product advertising, paying attention to specific examples taken from two areas (cars and perfume), examining some tendencies of advertising discourse out from a sample gathered for this purpose. In my view, her analysis on how local connotations can help to introduce specific products in some markets helps to understand how global advertising can be easily improved just by adapting the message to specific groups of customers. This need to communicate on a global basis is also observed in chapter 6, in which the author analyses websites and, more specifically, the “about us” section of large corporations, analysing how this is organised, the use of personality and impersonality, how the corporation tends to offer a positive image of itself and how multimodality is used to endorse that corporate image. Corporate mission statements, social responsibility reports and interactive reviews are also analysed in this chapter. Finally, the seventh chapter, based on an overview of the findings set out in the four prior

chapters, interprets corporate discourse from a critical discourse analysis perspective. She pays attention to discourse hybridisation, based on the continuous mixture of genres, which often blend and interact, generating new ones.

As a conclusion, *Corporate Discourse* offers a motivating introduction of different areas of business communication in today's world, and can be used as a starting point to explore some areas introduced by the author. As it is the case in this type of volumes, and depending on the reader's interests, some areas could have been studied with further detail, but I clearly understand that this was not the author's purpose. On the contrary, as she clearly points out in her introduction, she has accomplished her aim: offering us a snapshot of corporate discourse nowadays. It is, no doubt, a comprehensive account of some discursive interactions in today's firms and it can be used in many business communication classes.

Received 19 January 2015

Accepted 23 January 2015

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