

Product Promotion and Institutional Advertising: A Linguistic Analysis of Product sections on Websites by European Companies in the Renewable Energy Sector

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Abstract

Nowadays, global websites in English are well established instruments for web-mediated corporate communication, and their investigation can provide deep insights into the kind of image that companies intend to project, based on the rhetorical strategies they implement to reach out to their culturally and linguistically diverse audiences. Companies trading with renewable energy sources represent a good case in point, given the high stakes of the sector. In particular, the texts published in their online portfolios can illustrate how organisations seek to position themselves and their activities within their professional field. Relying on the multidisciplinary approach of International Business Communication (IBC) and on the concept of Global Communicative Competence (GCC) (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011), this paper examines linguistic choices on companies' global websites in English, and it seeks to provide an answer to the following question: what are the most frequent strategies that international companies deploy to express their business know-how while pursuing their promotional purposes? To answer this question, this paper explores the lexico-grammatical patterns characterising the product sections of 30 global websites owned by European companies operating in the renewable energy sector, headquartered in countries where English is not a native language. On a quantitative plane, the data will be processed by means of the *AntConc* 3.5.8 concordance tool (Anthony 2019) in order to pin down frequently occurring linguistic patterns, while on a qualitative plane the use of terminology will be given special attention, since it indexes the message-sender's expertise and therefore contributes to its positive image. Furthermore, the analysis of stance and engagement markers (Hyland 2005, 2008; Suau-Jiménez 2016, 2019) will shed light on the ways in which the companies establish their credibility in their business domain while involving their audience of potential partners in the conversation.

Keywords: corporate websites; corporate communication; promotional discourse; ESP; renewable energy.

1. Introduction

In today's business landscape, trading within and across countries has become especially challenging, not only because competition is much fiercer than in the past, but also because companies feel more responsible for their activities towards their stakeholders and the general public. One of the reasons behind this is the prominence that concepts such as sustainability and sustainable development (Axelsson et al. 2011; D'Amato et al. 2017; Lindow, Kaluza, and Stark 2018) have gained in the economic, political, and social arenas. This has affected the manner in which for-profit organisations try to establish and maintain their positive reputation while communicating with their multiple and sometimes unpredictable audiences.

The widespread use of the Web is a further factor which has influenced companies' communication in the last few decades. On the one hand, companies' practices are constantly under public scrutiny due to the pervasiveness of this medium; on the other, the Web has afforded tools by means of which companies directly manage and control the kind of information they intend to spread among their internal and external stakeholders. This is the case of corporate websites. Indeed, despite the growing popularity of social media, corporate websites still play a fundamental role in fulfilling companies' communication agenda: they offer a wide range of functionalities (e.g. presenting the company, describing its products, providing contact details, to name a few) which are suitable for every kind of business (Handler 2017), but they are technically simple while still collecting vast amounts of information in the same locus; a further advantage is that they are directly owned and controlled by the companies (Bowen 2017). Moreover, they can be effectively harnessed to disseminate information about corporate social responsibility, especially when targeting important stakeholder groups such as journalists and customers (Bowen 2019).

In order to reach out to their international and multilingual audiences, companies publish a version in English of their website. As a matter of fact, English is employed in the official textual forms which fall under the rubric of corporate communication, which is

a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent. (Cornelissen 2011, 5)

Considering that English is appropriated by multilingual communicators and international profit-making organisations to fulfil the diverse functions which the business domain entails, this paper examines linguistic choices in online corporate communication, and it attempts to provide an answer to the following question: what are the most frequent linguistic strategies that international companies in the same industry sector deploy to verbalise their business know-how while pursuing their promotional purposes?

This study draws on the multidisciplinary approach of International Business Communication (IBC), and it banks on the concept of Global Communicative Competence (GCC) introduced by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011); in order to answer my research question, I will analyse the recurring lexico-grammatical patterns which emerge from a small-scale corpus of product sections included on the websites by companies active in the renewable energy sector, based in EU member states where English is not a native language. On a quantitative plane, frequently occurring linguistic patterns will be uncovered by processing the data using the tools included in *AntConc* 3.5.8 (Anthony 2019), a freeware application for conducting textual analysis. On a qualitative plane, emphasis will be placed on the use of terminology, on the assumption that it verbalises the companies' expertise and provides a common ground between a company and its stakeholders, where business can be successfully conducted. The qualitative analysis will be supported by the examination of stance and engagement markers (Hyland 2005, 2008; Suau-Jiménez 2016, 2019) with a view to pinpointing how the companies establish their credibility in their professional domain and reach out to their potential and returning partners.

Renewable energy is here regarded as a well-defined business domain, although it implies a certain degree of variation: organisations in this area might deal with one (or more than one) of the renewable energy sources available nowadays (e.g. hydropower,

bioenergy, and geothermal power), they might manufacture varying products or deliver a range of services, and their participation framework comprises several stakeholder groups, such as customers, suppliers, national and local authorities, the press, non-governmental organisations, and the general public. However, all the companies sampled are mainly involved in business-to-business (B2B) transactions during which they communicate and trade with other experts in their industry. These organisations share similar business practices, pursue similar purposes and adopt English to meet the needs of their multilingual stakeholders. Therefore, the renewable energy industry sector is here framed as a discourse community (Bhatia 1993; 2004; Swales 1990; Widdowson 2007).

The notion of discourse community is borrowed from genre theory, and it is understood as a group of professionals who “construct, interpret and use [...] genres to achieve their community goals” (Bhatia 2004, 10). The theoretical underpinnings of genre theory are instrumental to the present analysis, since they offer an understanding of how discourse is used in specific contexts as a way to acquire professional expertise (Bhatia 2004). In particular, the approach designed by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993; 1996; 2004) in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) well accounts for the ever-changing essence of today’s professional genres: thanks to their flexibility, genres can adapt to new conditions in the communicative context, e.g. those produced by technological developments and by increasing rivalry among businesses (Bhatia 1996).

This paper continues as follows: Section 2 categorises the use of English in the context of IBC and illustrates the notion of GCC; Section 3 discusses corporate websites within genre theory; Section 4 presents the materials and methods used; Section 5 is dedicated to the analysis of frequent lexico-grammatical patterns in the small-scale corpus, while Section 6 is a discussion of the main findings; finally, Section 7 closes with some concluding remarks, it underlines limitations of the study and avenues for further research, and it indicates some pedagogical implications and suggestions for the ESP classroom.

2. International Business Communication (IBC) and Global Communicative Competence (GCC)

According to the disciplinary framework of IBC (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011), global professional communication can be explored at two levels. The micro-level encompasses daily exchanges between and among professionals, in both written and spoken mode, and both within and outside an organisation. The macro-level refers to companies’ institutional communication practices which are designed to project a favourable image and foster positive opinions among stakeholders; therefore these practices can be categorised as corporate communication.

English plays a fundamental role at both levels of IBC, but its functions vary, and the way it is perceived is also different. At the micro-level, the use of English by professional speakers from different lingua-cultures during international encounters is designated with the acronym BELF, which was introduced by Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta (2005) to indicate Business English as a Lingua Franca, and which was later redefined as English as a Business Lingua Franca (Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen 2013; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011) to give more prominence to the domain of use (i.e. business) in which English is employed as a shared code of communication. BELF is context-specific and goal-oriented, it focuses on the content rather than on the form of communication and requires extensive knowledge of a

given professional domain to function appropriately (Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey 2011; Kankaanranta and Planken 2010; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2011).

Hence, at the micro-level of IBC, employees' ability to shape language according to the purpose at hand is given higher priority than conformity to Standard English (StE): professional competence in English does not equate with strict adherence to StE but with "pragmatic attitude" (Ehrenreich 2010, 417). In other words, what is crucial for BELF users is to make themselves understood and convey information effectively rather than achieve a native-like proficiency in English.

As for the macro-level of IBC, English is employed in official textual forms such as exchanges between managers and the company's internal and external stakeholders, activities promoting brands and supporting sales (i.e. advertising), along with messages targeted at shareholders, journalists, analysts, and legislators (Breeze 2013; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu 2006; Poppi 2012; Van Riel and Fombrun 2007). At this level, English tends to comply with the norms of StE, on the assumption that by doing so "the company demonstrates its professionalism and its global leadership" (Ehrenreich 2010, 418). In this sense, the use of English by professionals who oversee organisations' institutional communication is perceived as more demanding than its use in day-to-day business exchanges (Kankaanranta and Planken 2010).

Despite the differences between the two levels of IBC, it has to be borne in mind that BELF interpersonal exchanges and international corporate communication are not separate entities, but they represent the two ends along the continuum of IBC:

the two levels together constitute the entire communicative environment of a globally communicating (business) unit and are heavily intertwined. For example, daily encounters between internationally operating business professionals and their business partners from all over the world are continuously constructing the corporate image of the organization. (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaaranta 2011, 245)

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The concept of Global Communicative Competence GCC (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaaranta 2011) illustrates well the interdependence which exists between these phenomena. GCC includes the three components which are required for communicating effectively in the global business environment, namely multicultural competence, BELF competence, and business-know. Multicultural competence originates from "the acknowledgement of factors related to national, corporate, and/or professional cultures as fundamentals of any communicative event, and enables the flexibility and tolerance needed for GCC to succeed" (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaaranta 2011, 259). BELF competence is the ability of communicators to adapt to a given situation and use English accordingly:

this may mean very basic English with plenty of "language errors." In other situations, BELF competence refers to language use which can be characterized as "standard English," possibly affected by the discourse competences of the particular communicators in other languages. (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaaranta 2011, 259)

Finally, business know-how is a sine qua non for successful communication, and it permeates multicultural and BELF competence; it depends on communicators' shared knowledge of the business field, but it also includes sociolinguistic and discourse competences.

In sum, GCC is undoubtedly fundamental not only during daily interactions in the international workplace but also in organisations' web-mediated official communication.

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In particular, business know-how is relevant for the present analysis, as it is assumed that it is encapsulated in texts published on corporate websites, and it emerges from the linguistic choices made to present companies' products and services.

3. Corporate websites and genre analysis

In the last few decades, the analysis of discourse has been the starting point for extensive investigation of the strategies deployed in the field of corporate communication, and the concept of genre has been relied upon to explain how companies spread their message via corporate websites (see, among others, Askehave and Ellerup Nielsen 2005; Breeze 2013; Garzone 2007; Salvi 2015; Salvi, Turnbull, and Pontesilli 2007; Turnbull 2011; 2013). Hence, it has been possible to develop greater awareness of the linguistic level of texts and of the ways in which these are organised in complex structures "according to genre expectations and conventions rooted in the socio-cultural context" (Gotti, Berkenkotter, and Bhatia 2012, 10). As a matter of fact,

There is a close link between each type of specialised text and its organisation, which in turn implies correlations between the conceptual, rhetorical and linguistic features that characterise the text itself. Genre not only provides a conventional framework but also affects textual features and their conceptual and rhetorical development. (Gotti, Berkenkotter, and Bhatia. 2012, 9-10)

Ellerup Nielsen (2002) conducted one of the first studies to tackle corporate websites from the point of view of genre. The author examined the functional and compositional features of corporate websites and defined their communicative uses along with their corresponding intentional communicative acts:

- 1) Promoting a company, brand or product overlaps with the *act of recommending*
- 2) Selling products or advertising space can be defined as an *act of persuading into purchase*
- 3) Providing customer support and offering information services support the *act of informing*. (Ellerup Nielsen 2002, 8, author's emphasis)

The author underscored that information on websites is divided and condensed into several units connected by hyperlinks, and the ways in which these are accessed and processed are usually "characterized by high speed and fragmentation" (Ellerup Nielsen 2002, 12). Since users read web-mediated texts in a non-linear way, information on websites tends to be dense, and the predominance of factual information over persuasive strategies might limit their promotional function (Ellerup Nielsen 2002).

The genre-based study of corporate websites by Salvi and Turnbull (2007) looks at the impact of the medium in online corporate communication by highlighting that on the Web companies compete for stakeholders' attention. In order to stand out, organisations design their websites so that they give their unique presentation based on "the brand image, the corporate identity and the charismatic presence of the founder of the company" (Salvi and Turnbull 2007, 244). These elements, in turn, guide linguistic choices and discursive organisation. The authors bank on Hyland's (2001) categorisation of authoritative language, and they indicate that it is employed by companies to establish their credibility, based on professional expertise and accountability.

In the end, the language of corporate websites covers three domains:

innovation (portrayal of the company as an original and innovative business enterprise; in this field language includes “technicality”); management and leadership (corporate culture as a model for the discourse community); environment (exploitation of the medium and its sociolinguistic elements to establish a new engaging relationship with readers). (Salvi and Turnbull 2007, 262)

A further contribution which attempts to define corporate websites in the context of genre theory is the one by Catenaccio (2012). Similarly to Ellerup Nielsen (2002), Catenaccio (2012) observes that communication via websites depends on the interrelations established via hyperlinks among the range of texts it collects. Owing to the generic variability characterising these texts, websites are polymorphic, and it is therefore difficult to explain their status from a genre theory perspective.

Nonetheless, two notions can be drawn upon to take into account genre-medium relationships. Firstly, a website can be regarded as a rhetorical interface which “mediates between the affordances of the medium and the rhetorical function(s) of the genre, providing the structural features required to deploy them” (Catenaccio 2012, 35). Secondly, a website can be explained in terms of genre network, a construct originally theorised by Swales (2004) which “seem[s] sufficiently supple to capture both the interconnectedness among different genres accessible from a website and the multiple ways in which these [...] combine to generate meanings” (Catenaccio 2012, 47).

Overall, the author demonstrates how corporate websites gather a plethora of documents, which can stand on their own, thus fulfilling their specific aims, but which are also integrated into a complex whole, marked by the overarching aim of presenting and promoting the organisation (Catenaccio 2012).

The studies surveyed above show that the role of the medium is paramount when researching companies’ institutional communication online. The hypertextual nature of the Web determines how texts are organised and combined on corporate websites, keeping in mind how information is processed when reading online. At sentence level, linguistic strategies are meant to verbalise the company’s distinctive identity with a view to adding value to its communication. In fact, while for-profit organisations compete for market share in the ‘real’ world, they seek to beat their competitors in the ‘digitised’ world as well, by applying communicative techniques aimed at building up their favourable reputation.

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4. Data and methods

For the present study, I used a small-scale corpus consisting of texts which I downloaded manually from the product pages of 30 corporate websites between November 2014 and December 2014. An overview of the corpus is provided in the Annexes, which includes the URL of the websites, the countries where the companies are based, the renewable energy sources with which they deal, along with the number of word tokens and types for each portfolio sampled. The small-scale corpus totals 194,109 word tokens and 11,529 word types, counted by means of the word list tool included in *AntConc* (Anthony 2019).

To select my materials, I applied the following criteria. Firstly, I decided to single out websites by companies headquartered in non-English speaking European countries according to Cramer’s model (2007) of the diffusion of English in the European Union,

which views Europe as a single and unified socio-linguistic entity.¹ Then, I looked for organisations operating in the renewable energy sector given its high stakes. Every human action is based on the supply of energy, and the costs of energy production not only have an impact on global economic growth but can also have adverse social and environmental consequences (Anderson 2000). In particular, the current environmental issues linked to traditional fossil fuel energy resources are giving way to higher demand for green energy, to the extent that soon “clean energy resources will take up a higher share in the primary energy mix” (Zou et al. 2016, 2).

As a matter of fact, according to the Renewables 2020 Global Status Report² the capacity of renewable power has kept increasing in the last years hitting a record high in 2019, its prices continue to fall, and more investments are being made in technological advancements. Unfortunately, the largest share of global total final energy consumption (TFEC) is still represented by fossil fuels, as attested by the 2019 World Energy Balances published by the International Energy Agency (IEA).³ Nevertheless, hydropower, bioenergy, and geothermal power are now well developed sources of renewable energy, while solar photovoltaics (PV) and wind power are becoming more widespread and more competitive compared to fossil fuels and nuclear energy. Furthermore, these five sources have contributed the most to the renewable energy mix in Europe between 2013 and 2018.⁴ In the light of this, I sampled websites by companies which manufacture products or deliver services connected with at least one of these energy sources (see Annexes).

Next, I decided to analyse one section of the websites, namely the product portfolio. The investigation is limited to this section as it has represented one of most the relevant constituents of corporate websites since the inception of the Web medium (see Esrock and Leichty 2000; Perry and Bodkin 2001). Moreover, it can be assumed that the effective description of the products and services offered is correlated with the organisations’ ability to verbalise their business know-how. This can be done by integrating several strategies, as pointed out by Samson (2009) in her investigation of product pages in the domains of communication devices, vehicles, and surgical tools: “description can be provided in a very technical form, as for instance in a simple grid, or can be developed into a discursive text involving interdependence between rhetorical acts – description, explanation and evaluation” (p. 158). On the one hand, the language used to present the products in Samson’s (2009) corpus is reminiscent of promotional genres such as printed advertisements and brochures: “the repetition of nominalization, stative verbs and adjectives have the function of accentuating the unique value of companies and promoting their products” (Samson 2009, 159). On the other, “the accumulation of strata of information about a described product helps build up a final positive effect on the browser” (Samson 2009, 159).

This remark is at variance with Ellerup Nielsen’s (2002) statement (see Section 3), according to which factual information downplays the promotional message spread by the companies via their websites. As a matter of fact, in business communication, what is presented as factual information can be “used to convince the listener to invest in the company or buy its products” (Bamford 2007, 139), while numerical data can be exhibited to support the writer’s claims (see also Halmari 2005; Virtanen 2005).

¹ The model accounts for the spread of English in the 27 countries which have been part of the EU since 1 January 2007, but it does not consider the status of English in Croatia, which entered the EU on 1 July 2013.

² https://www.ren21.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/gsr_2020_full_report_en.pdf (accessed 27 July 2020).

³ <https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-balances-2019#overview> (accessed 27 July 2020).

⁴ <https://www.eurobserv-er.org/pdf/19th-annual-overview-barometer/> (accessed 27 July 2020).

In this context, technical terminology is paramount: not only does it testify to the organisations' ability in appropriating English, but it also serves to project their image as expert business partners. Indeed, companies often use technical expressions in their official textual forms in order to display their disciplinary competence and substantiate their professional identity (Bhatia and Lung 2006; Cheng 2011). In this sense, terminology, which *per se* is non-promotional, is used for promotional purposes, that is, to foster positive perceptions about a company among its stakeholders (Shaw 2006).

The data I collected were then analysed by adopting a mixed-method approach. At a quantitative level, I generated a frequency word list by using the tool included in *AntConc* 3.5.8 (Anthony 2019), and I identified the three top-ranking content words in the corpus, on the assumption that they index prominent information items in the portfolios and exemplify the technical terminology of the sector. Secondly, I used the collocates function to disclose recurrent word combinations including these words. Next, I ran concordance lines to investigate the co-text in which these patterns occur: this guided me in the qualitative analysis of the communicative choices used by the companies to substantiate their business know-how and to relate to their audiences by means of engagement and stance markers (Hyland 2005, 2008; Suau-Jiménez 2016, 2019).

5. Analysis

From a quantitative point of view, the three most frequently occurring content words in the small-scale corpus are shown in Table 1 below. As they clearly belong to an area of meaning linked to renewable energy, they offer a springboard for the present research.

Rank	Frequency	Noun
11	1,429	power
13	1,123	kw
25	694	high

Table 1. The three top-ranking content words in the small-scale corpus.

In the following sections, the three words will be explored by focusing on recurrent combinations in which the companies use them. These combinations and their surrounding co-text will be closely investigated by looking at selected concordance lines.

5.1. Power and kw

The content word with the highest incidence in the corpus is the noun *power*. As revealed by the concordance plot tool integrated in *AntConc* (Anthony 2019), the hits of *power* are located in the product portfolios of 25 companies (Table 2). Information about the raw frequency and frequency normalised per 10,000 words of *power* across the 25 sections is also provided. Although the word is predictably related to the sector in which the organisations operate, its distribution across the corpus varies considerably. This might depend on each company's particular activities, which in turn affect their communicative choices.

Company name	Raw freq	Norm freq
Acciona Energía Solar SL	70	92

A. Silva Matos Energia SA	3	49
Avanti Wind Systems AS	7	15
Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA	211	53
CHO-Power – Europlasma Group	31	203
Cryostar SAS	15	18
EnBW AG	2	35
enso hydro GmbH	21	205
Fröling GmbH	5	10
Geotermica AB	8	168
GOLIATH Wind OÜ	13	138
ib vogt GmbH	11	58
IREM SpA	60	92
JL MAG Rare-Earth Co. Europe b.v.	1	6
juwi AG	83	91
Luvata Pori Oy	32	15
Mervento Oy	5	69
Micron – Cappello Alluminio srl	4	56
Palazzetti SpA	425	101
PCC SE	44	33
Profish Technology SA	1	7
Silcio SA	2	57
Smart Hydro Power GmbH	40	151
Turboden srl	328	280
Vapo Oy	7	46

Table 2. Raw frequency and frequency per 10,000 words of *power*.

In order to disclose meaningful rhetorical strategies in which *power* is used, a list of the five words which most frequently occur in its co-text were generated by means of the *AntConc* collocates tool. The tool was set to identify one word on the left and one on the right of *power*. Details on the frequency and position of the collocates relative to the search term are summarised in Table 3.

	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Collocate
1	626	1	625	kw
2	410	410	0	thermal
3	75	69	6	the
4	67	0	67	plant
5	60	59	1	solar

Table 3. Collocates of *power*.

Table 3 indicates that the term *kw*,⁵ which is also the second top-ranking content word in the small-scale corpus (see Table 2 above), is the most frequent right collocate of *power*. Table 4 indicates the 12 companies which employ *kw* on their product pages, as testified to by the *AntConc* plot tool, along with its raw frequency and frequency normalised per 10,000 words in each portfolio.

⁵ *Kw* (short for ‘kilowatt’) is the unit to measure power.

Company name	Raw freq	Norm freq
Acciona Energía Solar SL	2	3
Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA	101	25
Cryostar SAS	17	21
Fröling GmbH	22	44
IREM SpA	4	6
juwi AG	9	10
Luvata Pori Oy	34	15
Palazzetti SpA	632	150
PCC SE	1	1
Silcio SA	11	312
Smart Hydro Power GmbH	7	27
Turboden srl	283	241

Table 4. Raw frequency and frequency per 10,000 words of *kw*.

In order to shed further light on the co-text surrounding patterns including *power* and *kw*, the former was searched for in the *AntConc* concordance tool by sorting the results on the right. This revealed that *power* and *kw* mainly co-occur in the product portfolios of the Italian companies Turboden srl and Palazzetti Lelio SpA. In the case of Turboden srl, *power* and *kw* co-occur 259 times. A selection of the concordance lines containing this pattern is presented below.

- (1) model: TURBODEN 6 CHP Split *power: 600 kW* water temperature (in/out): 75
model: TURBODEN 10 CHP Split *power: 999 kW* water temperature (in/out): 80
ion: Sawmill model: T1100 *power: 1100 kW* water temperature (in/out): 60
istrict heating model: T800 *power: 800 kW* water temperature (in/out):
model: Turboden 1200 HRS *power: 999 kW* water temperature (in/out):
model: TURBODEN 10 CHP Split *power: 999 kW* water temperature (in/out):

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Power and *kw* are employed together with technical specifications and numerical information regarding plants built by the company; other details such as the location of the plant, the date on which the project started, and the name of the client are also offered, as in the following example.

- (2) *LOCATION*: Altheim, Austria
started: 01-03-2001

application: geothermal
client: Marktgemeinde Altheim GmbH
description: Heat & Power
model: Custom made
power: 1000 kW
water temperature (in/out): 106\xB0C (Turboden srl)

The excerpt in (2) exemplifies how the data regarding plants in Turboden Srl's portfolios are presented concisely and organised in lists. This layout helps users easily scan the description. From a linguistic point of view, the information relies on nominalisation, i.e. *location*, *application*, *client*, *description*, *model*, *power* and *water temperature*.

As for Palazzetti Lelio SpA, in the product section of this company, *power* co-occurs with both *kw* and *thermal*, which is its second most frequent collocate (see Table

3). More precisely, the *AntConc* concordance tool shows 363 hits of the noun phrase *total thermal power*, which is followed by numerical information and *kw*. A selection of the concordance lines including this pattern is displayed below.

- (3) 55.0x107.0x44.0 cm Weight: 150 Kg *Total thermal power: 10.2 Kw, 8772 Kcal/h*
- 55.0x107.0x53.0 cm Weight: 150 Kg *Total thermal power: 10.2 Kw, 8772 Kcal/h*
- 56.0x104.0x50.0 cm Weight: 150 Kg *Total thermal power: 10.1 Kw, 8686 Kcal/h*
- 56.0x104.0x50.0 cm Weight: 175 Kg *Total thermal power: 10.1 Kw, 8686 Kcal/h*
- 56.0x104.0x60.0 cm Weight: 150 Kg *Total thermal power: 10.1 Kw, 8686 Kcal/h*
- 56.0x104.0x60.0 cm Weight: 175 Kg *Total thermal power: 10.1 Kw, 8686 Kcal/h*

The high occurrence of *total thermal power* in Palazzetti Lelio SpA's portfolio might be due to the fact that it is the only company sampled which manufactures fireplaces and stoves, and this type of information is conventionally required to adequately describe the products. By expanding on the co-text surrounding the pattern, technical details about the dimensions of the products and a short textual description are provided, as in (4).

- (4) Dimensions: 74.0x142.0x55.0 cm
Weight: 184 Kg
Total thermal power: 13.1 Kw, 11266 Kcal/h
Average efficiency: 75.2 %
Fumes outlet: 20 cm

Cast iron firebox with Dual Combustion system. Pyroceram door with square shaped and minimalist frame to set off the view of the fire plus a new, more ergonomic, handle. (Palazzetti Lelio SpA)

Interestingly, further investigation of Palazzetti Lelio SpA's product descriptions including the *total thermal power* pattern reveals a consistent use of Italian expressions to designate the materials it employs, as in the excerpt below, where *Rosso Verona* pre-modifies the components of the product presented (*top and panels*).

- (5) Made of natural tool-worked white stone, shaped walnut-stained veneered wooden mantelshelf, *Rosso Verona top and panels*. (Palazzetti Lelio SpA)

Rosso Verona stands for 'Verona stone' or 'Verona marble', a variety of red-pink limestone originating from an area in the north of Italy near Verona (Jones 2016), and it can be regarded as an instance of code-mixing, i.e. the presence of terms from different languages, joined together to give rise to new hybrid forms (Christiansen 2016; McArthur, Lam-McArthur, and Fontaine 2018; Poppi 2012, 2014). Instances of code-mixing are correlated with the so-called territorial imperative, which marks a communicator's social identity and group membership (Widdowson 1983; Seidlhofer 2009).

Another occurrence of the term can be retrieved, this time followed by the English word *marble*, to pre-modify an element of the product described (*top*).

- (6) Also available in the version with a *Rosso Verona marble top* without a surcharge. (Palazzetti Lelio Spa)

In this excerpt, the inclusion of *marble* makes the term more transparent to an international audience, as the type of material is made explicit, but in general the use of expressions in the company's first language implies that the intended message-receiver needs a certain

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level of knowledge and expertise to understand their meaning. The terms deployed by Palazzetti Lelio SpA might be ambiguous to lay people, especially if they have little or no knowledge of Italian. Other expressions indicating the colour and/or area of origin of the materials in Palazzetti Lelio Spa's product pages are: *Bianco Mediterraneo*, *Giallo d'Istria*, *Giallo Reale*, *Giallo Egizio*, *Nero Marquina*, *Noce delle Alpi*, *Rosa Corallo*, *Rosa Portogallo*, *Rosso Alhambra*, and *Rosso Asiago*.

Another word that is often employed in combination with *power* is *plant*. The *AntConc* plot tool reveals that the 67 instances of the noun phrase *power plant* indicated in Table 3 above are to be found on the product pages of eight companies, namely Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA, CHO-Power – Europlasma Group, enso hydro GmbH, ib vogt GmbH, IREM SpA, juwi AG, PCC Deg Renewables GmbH, and Turboden srl. By exploring the concordance lines in depth, it can be seen that the compound *power plant* is used 54 times in the small-scale corpus, *power plant projects* 11 times and *power plant supplies* twice. Again, the three terms thus identified belong to the area of meaning of renewable energy: as attested by the examples below, they are employed in contexts where information about the companies' activities and performance is disseminated.

- (7) We are therefore able to design a specific *power plant* exactly to *your* needs. (juwi AG)

In (7), the message-sender (i.e. the company) is referred to by means of the receiver-excluding pronoun *we*. The use of this stance marker shows the company's commitment to the claim made, while the audience's presence is acknowledged by the possessive adjective *your*. Overall, these rhetorical strategies verbalise the company's competence and aim at convincing returning and prospective clients to do business with the company.

- (8) *For its first environmental conservation project*, PCC brought the Mujada *micro-hydro power plant* online on 2 February 2009. (PCC SE)

By contrast, in (8), reference to the message-sender is conveyed in a more formal and indirect way by adopting the third person singular pronoun. Additionally, factual information is encapsulated in the date mentioned, while *micro-hydro* is a pre-modifier further characterising the type of power plant described. This pre-modifier, which is the abbreviated form of *micro-hydroelectric*,⁶ is *de facto* an instance of terminology which implies a degree of shared knowledge between the message-sender and the message-receiver. Hence, the company assumes that its audience is composed of experts and adopts the terminology of the sector accordingly.

Example (8) is worth noticing also for the presence of the phrase *for its first environmental conservation project* in a thematic position. Even if this phrase is not evaluative in itself, it "is used evaluatively with reference to certain values that are assumed to be shared" (Garzone 2018, 38). As a matter of fact, the focus is on the company's engagement in environmental conservation, and this helps to project its image as a responsible organisation.

Observation of the concordance lines including *power plant* also revealed that this compound is often pre-modified by adjectives designating the type of energy source exploited by the companies. These adjectives are *solar*, *hydroelectric*, and *geothermal*. To start with, *solar power plant* occurs 12 times, and it is to be found in the product sections of two German companies, i.e. ib vogt GmbH and juwi AG. The incidence of this pattern

⁶ Micro-hydroelectric power plants generate power between 5 kw and 100 kw (Pasalli and Rehiara 2014). Product Promotion and Institutional Advertising: A Linguistic Analysis of Product sections on Websites by European Companies in the Renewable Energy Sector
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in the small-scale corpus is related to the fact that *solar* is a frequent left collocate of *power*, as shown in Table 3. *Hydroelectric power plant* occurs 10 times, and it is employed by the Austrian company enso hydro GmbH, the Italian company IREM SpA, and the German company PCC Deg Renewables GmbH. *Geothermal power plant* occurs only twice in Turboden srl's product section. The next three examples illustrate the co-text around these patterns.

- (9) We have implemented *solar power plants* with a total output of 140 MW and developed projects with over 300 MW worldwide. (ib vogt GmbH)

Similarly to example (7) above, the receiver-excluding pronoun *we* is employed in (9) to refer to the company. Factual information on the company's performance is represented by numerical data, followed by the unit of measurement (*MW*).⁷ This data contributes to the promotional function of the company's product pages.

- (10) The *hydroelectric power plant* at Lindåna, located in the south of Norway in the Aust-Agder province, has been operating since April 2011. (enso GmbH)

Factual information is supplied in (10) as well. In this case, the power plant is foregrounded and described by indicating where it is located and since when it has been operating.

- (11) They are *environmentally more acceptable* than any other kind of *geothermal power plant* because the geothermal fluid can be segregated throughout the whole process. (Turboden srl)

Along similar lines, the power plants built by the company are thematised in (11), where they are referred to by means of the third person plural pronoun *they*. Instead of numerical data or time and place indication, reference is made to how the plants function using the phrase *environmentally more acceptable* as a booster.

Additionally, there is one occurrence of the pattern *photovoltaic plant* in juwi AG's product section. In this case, the adjective *photovoltaic*, which means 'solar', is employed in the heading "Energy from a Photovoltaic Power Plant". This heading introduces a short block of text articulating the company's performance, as in (12).

- (12) As supplier of *efficient solar power plants* we can make *attractive* offers to *municipalities and farmers* to use large free-fields – former air fields, former military areas, former garbage dumps can be used for the production of *clean, economic* energy. We are *your competent partner* for the realization of *turnkey PV plants* worldwide. (juwi AG)

In (12), the company is personified by means of the receiver-excluding pronoun *we*, as in the excerpts in (7) and (9) above. Reference to its stakeholders, i.e. *municipalities and farmers*, is also made. Moreover, the message-receivers are directly addressed by means of the possessive adjective *your*, used in conjunction with *competent partner* to connote the sender in a positive way. The positive adjectives *efficient, attractive, clean, and economic* are further examples of boosters, "which are applied to enhance [the company's] products or services" (Suau-Jiménez 2016, 202).

⁷ MW is short for 'megawatt', and it equals one million watts.

Communication in (12) generally relies on persuasive language rather than numerical or factual information. However, the terminology of the renewable energy sector is used as well, as shown not only by the compounds *solar power plant* but also by *turnkey PV plants*. As for the latter compound, the acronym *PV*, which stands for ‘photovoltaic’, is an intratextual reference to the adjective in the heading introducing the block of text.

As pointed out above, the adjective *solar* is employed to pre-modify the compound *power plant*, but it is also a frequent left collocate of the noun *power* when reference is made to energy obtained from sunlight, as in the following examples.

- (13) juwi developed *an innovative* technology that *integrates solar power* in new or existing *diesel generator grids* without the need of batteries. It *consists of a smart* controller, a solar plant and a *sophisticated* monitoring system. The produced *solar power reduces* the load on the generator and thus *decreases fuel consumption*. (juwi AG)

First of all, in (13) it can be noted that the company is thematised and referred to indirectly, by means of the third person singular pronoun. This linguistic choice is different from the one characterising examples (7) and (12), where the message-sender is the same company, and it refers to itself in a more straightforward way, by means of the pronoun *we*. Indeed, in (13) the tone is more formal, in order to convey the company’s professionalism.

The excerpt in (13) describes the benefits of technology introduced by juwi AG, by using positively connoted adjectives such as *innovative*, *smart*, and *sophisticated*. The use of the present simple tense (*integrates*, *consists of*, *reduces*, *decreases*) adds to the authoritativeness of the message, which is correlated with the company’s expertise in the field. The technology is then contrasted with the *fuel consumption* characterising *diesel generator grids*: in this way, the technology is promoted by stressing the aspects related to the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar power.

- (14) ACCIONA created and patented the concept of *huerta solar* (solar garden) i.e. photovoltaic installations under shared ownership, enabling individuals to invest in *solar power*. ACCIONA leads the way in this formula, which has been taken up by a number of *industry rivals*. (Acciona Energía Solar SL)

The excerpt in (14) is similar to the one in (13) for two reasons. Firstly, the company refers to itself in the third person, and its name is in a thematic position in both the sentences in the excerpt. Secondly, the information given regards technology developed (and patented) by the company, the *huerta solar*. The original name in Spanish has been kept, but a version translated into English and a brief explanation of its benefits are also given. In contrast with Palazzetti Lelio SpA, where words in Italian are not translated into English (see example 5 and 6 above), the English rendition of the original Spanish name of one of the company’s patented technological devices seems to better respond to the needs of the international and multilingual audience they intend to address, while still maintaining their social identity.

5.2. High

The third most frequently occurring content word in the small-scale corpus is *high*. The adjective is to be found in the portfolios of 27 companies, as illustrated in Table 5. The raw frequency and frequency normalised per 10,000 words of the adjective is also given.

Company name	Raw freq	Norm freq
Acciona Energía Solar SL	11	8
Avanti Wind Systems AS	3	1
Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA	205	814
CHO-Power – Europlasma Group	4	0.6
Cryostar SAS	46	37
Deep Drill Supply Group	1	0.1
dnpSolar	15	2
enso hydro GmbH	1	0.1
Fröling GmbH	41	20
GA Drilling as	6	1
Geotermica AB	1	0.5
GOLIATH Wind OÜ	2	1.2
ib vogt GmbH	4	0.8
IREM SpA	53	35
JL MAG Rare-Earth Co. Europe b.v.	17	3
juwi AG	15	14
Luvata Pori Oy	142	313
Mabanaft GmbH	8	3
Mervento Oy	5	0.4
Micron – Cappello Alluminio Srl	6	0.4
Palazzetti SpA	69	291
PCC SE	8	11
Profish Technology SA	2	0.3
Silcio SA	6	0.4
Smart Hydro Power GmbH	3	2
Turboden srl	17	20
Vapo Oy	3	0.5

Table 5. Raw frequency and frequency per 10,000 words of *high*.

In order to identify the words more closely associated with *high*, and therefore pin down meaningful patterns in which the adjective occurs, the *AntConc* collocates function was used. The tool was set to retrieve one word on the left and one on the right of *high*, and the five most frequent collocates thus obtained are presented in Table 6 below.

	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Collocate
1	61	2	59	performance
2	60	2	58	quality
3	52	52	0	a
4	47	0	47	efficiency
5	46	39	7	and

Table 6. Collocates of *high*.

Table 6 hints at three combinations where *high* is used as a pre-modifier. As indicated by the *AntConc* plot tool, the pattern *high performance* is attested in the portfolios of eight companies (Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA, Fröling GmbH, ib vogt GmbH, Luvata Pori Oy, Micron – Cappello Alluminio srl, Palazzetti Lelio SpA, Profish Technology SA, and Turboden srl), *high quality* in those of 16 companies (Avanti Wind Systems AS,

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Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA, Cryostar SAS, dnpSolar, Fröling GmbH, IREM SpA, JL MAG Rare-Earth Co. Europe b.v., juwi AG, Luvata Pori Oy, Mabanaft GmbH, Micron – Cappello Alluminio srl, Palazzetti Lelio SpA, PCC Deg Renewables GmbH, Silcio SA, Turboden srl, and Vapo Oy), and *high efficiency* in those of eight companies (Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA, Cryostar SAS, dnpSolar, Fröling GmbH, IREM SpA, Luvata Pori Oy, Silcio SA, and Turboden srl).

Close observation of the concordance lines including the adjective as a search term reveals that *high* is mainly used for product promotion and consequently for institutional advertising, as in the examples below.

- (15) *Why choose a Turboden ORC?*
Experience: Turboden projects and manufactures ORC units since 1980
References: Turboden has in operation about 200 ORC units all over the world (year 2013)
Performance: high performance at top level, due to in-house designed turbines and specifically selected fluids
Reliability: 98% average functioning time
Cutting-edge technology: Turboden has an internal R&D centre in Milan focusing on fluid dynamics research
High-quality: due to careful production and testing at the internal production facility in Brescia
[...]
(Turboden srl)

The excerpt in (15) exemplifies the use of two word combinations including *high* as a lexical booster, namely *high performance* and *high quality*, to express the company's certainty in what is said. The excerpt is introduced by a question (*Why choose a Turboden ORC?*), which is “a strategy of dialogic involvement *par excellence*” (Hyland 2005, 185, author's emphasis), and it promotes technology developed by the company based on the so-called Organic Rankine Cycle⁸. The reasons for choosing this technology are organised in a list, and they are verbalised by means of positively connoted noun phrases (*experience, references, performance, reliability, cutting-edge technology, careful production and testing*), which are supported by numerical data (*200 ORC units, 98% average functioning time*) and factual information (*since 1980, year 2013, internal R&D centre in Milan, internal production facility in Brescia*). Overall, the excerpt is based on nominalisation.

Repeated reference to the message-sender also contributes to the promotional message. *ORC* is pre-modified by *Turboden* in the first line, thus establishing a strong link between the technology and the company; moreover, the company is the subject of the statements expanding on the ideas of *experience, references* and *cutting-edge technology*. These rhetorical strategies project a positive image based on the business know-how which the company claims to have developed since 1980.

- (16) Standing tubular heat exchanger with efficiency optimisation system (WOS)
High efficiency
Easy cleaning from outside
Low energy consumption
(Fröling GmbH)

⁸ This technology is employed to convert heat into electricity (Tartière and Astolfi 2017).
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In example (16), the collocation *high efficiency* is embedded in a short description of a component (the standing tubular heat exchanger) in one of the company's products (the Fröling wood chip and pellet boiler TX 150). Similarly to (15), information is arranged in a list, it is verbalised using the nominal style, and it relies on boosters such as *easy* and *low*, but neither factual nor numerical information is provided. In the end, the description is rather vague.

By expanding on the co-text around (16), it can be noted that the excerpt is part of an account of the advantages of the Fröling wood chip and pellet boiler TX 150. Figure 1 below gives an idea of how the advantages were presented in the company's product portfolio when the materials for this study were collected between November and December 2014.






<p>Ventilated step grate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ optimum combustion ▪ pre-drying of materials 		<p>Smart grate technique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ combustion grate 90° ▪ optimum combustion
<p>Ash removal screw</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clean combustion ▪ self-cleaning installation 		<p>High-temperature firebrick-lined combustion chamber</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ optimal combustion ▪ for a minimum of emissions ▪ high efficiency
<p>Standing tubular heat exchanger with efficiency optimisation system (WOS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High efficiency ▪ Easy cleaning from outside ▪ Low energy consumption 		<p>Lambdatronic H 3200 controller</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The lambda control supplied as a standard part, gives precise combustion control ▪ Large, easy-to-read control unit with graphic display ▪ Menu-based operation with online help ▪ Boiler operation from the living room made possible through the use of the RBG 3200
<p>RBG 3200 room console (optional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The heating system is conveniently controlled from your living room ▪ It is extremely easy to read off all key values, status messages, and with a touch of a button to change settings 		
<p>Further information and Downloads</p>		
<p> Brochure Fröling TX 150</p>		

Figure 1. Advantages of the Fröling wood chip and pellet boiler TX 150.

In line with example (16), the textual items presented in Figure 1 describe other components of the product, and they do so by combining positively charged language with technical terms with a view to engaging readers and establishing credibility. This is the case of the following patterns: *optimum combustion*, *clean combustion*, *optimum burnout*, *precise combustion control*, *easy-to-read control unit*, *conveniently controlled*, and *extremely easy to read off*. There are also word combinations which are not intrinsically evaluative but acquire a positive value in this context: *self-cleaning installation*, *very low emissions*, and *online help*. Overall, this product description rests mainly on persuasion rather than technical information, and it differs from the product descriptions given by Palazzetti Lelio SpA examined in (3) and (4) above, where technical specifications were disclosed along with a positively connoted presentation of the product.

However, as displayed in Figure 1, the lower section of the web page features a link under the heading *Further information and Downloads*. The link gives access to a

downloadable brochure in pdf format, which illustrates the product more in-depth.⁹ This document expands on the advantages reported above and lists a number of technical specifications, e.g. dimensions and fuel requirements. It needs to be remembered that pdf documents do not have the characteristics of hypertexts: indeed, they are usually meant to be printed out “for efficient reading” (Garzone 2007, 24), while they are distributed via the web to reduce costs and to make them immediately accessible to users (Redish 2012). Thus, it can be concluded that the message-sender meets the expectations of all those interested in reading a detailed account of the product by offering them a text to be processed sequentially rather than in the fragmented manner that is typical of web-mediated communication.

Finally, further observation of the concordance strings revealed that the three patterns including *high* as a pre-modifier are also employed to construct longer noun phrases.

- (17) Two *high performance solar elements* guarantee *efficient* solar integration. (Fröling GmbH)
- (18) In *our* Technology center in The Netherlands *we* produce *high quality prototypes* and small series. (JL MAG Rare-Earth Co. Europe b.v.)
- (19) Cogeneration plants with Turboden ORC can produce heat and electrical power from biomass with *high efficiency and user friendly operation*. (Turboden srl)

The noun phrases *high performance solar elements*, *high quality prototypes* and *high efficiency and user friendly operation* combine positively charged evaluative language with the technical terminology of the industry sector. Examples (18) and (19) also contain reference to the message-sender: in the former, the company is mentioned by means of the possessive adjective *our* and the personal pronoun *we*, while in the latter the organisation’s name accompanies the acronym *OCR*, as in excerpt (15) above.

6. Discussion

The present analysis focused upon the co-text surrounding the three most frequently occurring content words in the small-scale corpus, namely *power*, *kw*, and *high*. A number of linguistic patterns where these words are employed was investigated, which help position the products and services offered in the renewable energy sector. Recurring rhetorical strategies were disclosed by locating frequent collocates of the three content words, and by closely reading the concordance strings in which the word combinations appear. The qualitative analysis offered evidence of the ways in which the companies sampled utilise the terminology of the renewable energy sector and combine it with positively charged lexis and factual details regarding the organisations and their activities.

For instance, it was observed in (3) and (4) that the portfolio of Palazzetti Lelio SpA is marked by the pattern *total thermal power*, which is specific to the business area where the company is active. Nonetheless, the company’s linguistic choices also demonstrate its communicative competence and business know-how in taking advantage of the terminology of the sector with the aim of presenting itself as a qualified and reliable partner.

⁹ The current version of the brochure is available at https://www.froeling.com/fileadmin/content/produkte/Prospekte_Flyer/EN/EN_Prospekt_TX.pdf (Accessed 27 July 2020).

However, the presence of code-mixing in (5) and (6), implied in the use of Italian expressions indicating the materials used to manufacture Palazzetti Lelio SpA's products, does not always seem to represent an effective strategy to be applied for international corporate communication, as also claimed by Poppi (2014). The information disseminated using Italian terms, in compliance with the territorial imperative, might be opaque to all those stakeholders with little or no knowledge of the Italian language, even though it is meant to index social identity and group membership (Widdowson 1993, Seidlhofer 2009). A more effective strategy is the one applied by Acciona Energía Solar SL in (14), where the expression conveyed in the language of the company's country of origin is followed by its English translation.

More generally, while investigating technical terms, it was noticed that these tend to co-occur with numerical data and factual information, as in (8), (9), (10), and (15). The information thus disseminated also serves a covert promotional function, since it conveys the companies' message in a way that cannot be contested. This is a strategy deployed by the companies in order to gain credibility in the eyes of their stakeholders.

As mentioned above, terminology and numerical, factual information items are paramount in the product and service portfolios analysed. Nevertheless, the companies also tap into the typical communicative resources of promotional discourse, as shown by the presence of boosters, positively connoted nouns, and other expressions which are not inherently evaluative but take on a favourable meaning in the context in which they occur, as is the case in (8), (11), (12), (13), (15), (16), (17), (18), and (19). It follows that the companies seek to diversify their rhetorical strategies by striking a balance among terminology, factual language, and positively connoted lexis: these choices complement each other so as to shape their stakeholders' positive perceptions. These findings seem to be in line with those of Samson (2009). A further similarity which could be observed is the use of nominalisation and the presence of lists to organise information,

In addition to the rhetorical strategies discussed above, which emphasise the positive aspects of the products and services offered, it was observed that the companies employ personal pronouns and possessives to convey their message in an interactive and appealing way. In fact, the message-sender is sometimes personified by means of the receiver-excluding pronoun *we*, for instance in (7), (9), (12), and (18). Additionally, in (7) and (12), browsers are addressed in a straightforward manner, as shown by the use of the possessive adjective *your*. Further instances of self-mentions are in (8), (13), (14), and (15), where the company is referred to by means of the third person singular pronoun: this linguistic choice gives a more formal, objective, and authoritative tone to the message. All in all, the range of self-mentions employed is instrumental to expressing the companies' reliability and expertise, in relation to the quality and competitiveness of their products and services.

In sum, these results demonstrate how the product and service portfolios contribute to fulfilling the functions of companies' websites outlined by Ellerup Nielsen (2002): they recommend the companies as qualified and accountable partners, they try to persuade potential and returning customers into doing business with them, and they inform about the products and services offered. Moreover, the language used is taken from the three domains identified by Salvi and Turnbull (2007), namely innovation, management and leadership, and environment. Therefore, although web-mediated communication has evolved dramatically in the last two decades, the application of websites to corporate communication has stayed the same.

However, it is important to stress that according to my findings, and in line with Bamford (2007) and Samson (2009), the product sections I investigated do not indicate

that factual information prevails over persuasive strategies, considering that texts on the Web are accessed in a non-sequential and fragmented way, and therefore they need to be extremely direct and dense. On the contrary, the companies' positive image is built thanks to a combination of factual information items, numerical data, and technical specifications, while pdf documents to be downloaded and printed out can also be made available for browsers looking for more details, as in the case of the product description of Fröling GmbH examined in Sub-section 5.2.

7. Final remarks and pedagogical implications

The present study demonstrates that product and service portfolios on companies' global websites are not restricted to mere descriptions and lists of specifications. In contrast, the companies aptly disseminate information on their performance, in keeping with the image of competent and reliable business partners which they intend to project; while doing so, they also acknowledge the presence of an audience of peers, who they seek to bring into the discourse by means of engagement markers. In this sense, product promotion is closely connected with image building techniques.

From a generic point of view, product sections can be regarded as constellations of official web documents which in theory can stand on their own, since they succeed in fulfilling the aims of corporate communication, but which *de facto* exist as fundamental components of companies' websites, thus confirming Catenaccio's (2012) conceptualisation.

At the level of language choices, the technical terms which I investigated attest to the companies' professional and disciplinary expertise, in line with the fact that terminology is taken on board by companies in their official communication to establish their identity (Bhatia, Lung 2006; Cheng 2011). Indeed, the presence of terminology contributes to fulfilling the companies' hidden agenda by carrying out a covert promotional function.

The use of terminology also demonstrates the companies' competence in English for the purposes of international corporate communication, as positively charged lexis and the dissemination of information borrowed from the technical domain are skilfully balanced. By integrating different rhetorical strategies, the companies' role within their international discourse community is validated.

In sum, my findings prove that companies' global websites in English are part and parcel of IBC as theorised by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), and more precisely they well exemplify its macro-level: they are designed according to the expectations created by the professional context in which they are rooted, and they accomplish the specific goal of shaping stakeholders' positive perceptions and convince them to participate in the companies' business. This is of paramount importance in the renewable energy sector, given its far-reaching consequences on the environment and on society.

Furthermore, the discursive features mapped in this research tangibly express the concept of GCC as applied to web-mediated corporate communication. Firstly, organisations trading internationally need to possess both multicultural and linguistic competence in English as a shared language for international communication, in order to get their message across to their diverse audiences. As for business know-how, the use of technical language on websites is instrumental in verbalising organisations'

professionalism, and it is crucial to adequately cater for their stakeholders' communicative needs.

The results of this study are not intended to be exhaustive. In this respect, a number of limitations are to be pointed out, and further research is needed to fully grasp the multiple implications of international corporate communication via global websites in English. Firstly, it is advisable to build a larger corpus to lend validity to or refute the claims put forward in this paper. Secondly, contrastive research could be carried out to compare global websites in English with their counterparts in the language spoken at the companies' headquarters, and thus thoroughly estimate the influence of the companies' first language and cultural background on their corporate communication. Next, the analysis might be extended to other countries where English is not a native language. For example, companies based in Brazil, Russia, India, and China could be chosen as an object of enquiry, in order to explore how companies in these emerging economies appropriate English to address their international audiences.

The analysis could also be carried out on other sections of the companies' websites (e.g. about us sections and media sections), and other semiotic resources such as visuals, layout and hyperlinks could be explored by adopting the approach of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Bhatia et al. 2008; Iedema 2003; Jewitt 2014, 2016; Lemke 1998; O'Halloran 2004, 2011), as these are instrumental to the meaning making process. Finally, it is recommended to gather insider knowledge, by means of tools for ethnographic analysis, such as online surveys, focus groups and interviews, in order to complement the findings of linguistic investigation and carry out research that is relevant to professionals.

7.2 Applications in the ESP classroom

The present study might bear pedagogical implications in the ESP classroom, as it can help (future) professionals familiarise themselves with corporate communication practices and develop their abilities in adopting and adapting English to cope with the challenges of globalised business. Indeed, websites are rich collections of authentic material that can be sourced by teachers in multiple ways (Trinder 2017): for example, they can be used to build corpora of specialised texts, and "language learners can examine concordance material to work out features of language use on their own" (Gavioli 2005, 28). The role of the medium in shaping communication also needs to be accounted for in order to guide students in becoming aware of how information is organised and processed in the hypertextual and multimodal Web environment, and thus help them to meet the demands of specialised language online (Crawford Camiciottoli and Bonsignori 2015), especially as regards the development of their writing skills.

In this sense, Noguchi's (2003) OCHA approach for teaching ESP writing could be employed. OCHA stands for Observe, Classify, Hypothesise, and Apply, and it integrates the kinds of activities students should complete to deepen their understanding of the linguistic patterns in professional texts (Noguchi 2003). By adopting this approach, students would be guided in observing how information is organised in the product portfolios of a selection of companies in the same sector, based in different countries and using English to meet the needs of their international stakeholders. While observing the authentic texts sampled, communicative patterns motivated by the message-senders' lingua-cultural background could also be explored and discussed in terms of their appropriateness.

After having pinned down textual as well as hypertextual and multimodal contents in the portfolios, students would be invited to classify them accordingly and then to

analyse their formal characteristics: this would allow them to formulate hypotheses about their communicative functions and effectiveness, especially as regards possible multicultural features. In order to examine linguistic strategies, learners could collect a small-scale corpus of texts and then use a concordancer to obtain frequency lists and concordance lines. This quantitative investigation could be followed by a qualitative analysis, so that students would be able to concentrate on just one or few texts, and thus delve deeper into the rhetorical strategies characterising online corporate communication.

Finally, the students would be required to apply their knowledge in drafting texts for product sections in English targeting multicultural and multilingual audiences. This tasks could involve the students cooperating in groups so that the product portfolio is structured as an organic whole.

These tasks aim at presenting students with the type of hypertexts which they might have to design during their future career, and with the challenges that these pose also at the level of multicultural competence. As a matter of fact, it is crucial that the development of sociolinguistic and discursive abilities goes hand in hand with that of digital skills and with increased sensitivity towards the differences across national, corporate, and professional cultures, in order to help learners successfully join their prospective discourse community.

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Annexes

Overview of the small scale corpus.

Company name and URL	Country of origin	Source of renewable energy	Tokens	Types
Acciona Energía Solar SL http://www.acciona-energia.com	Spain	Solar photovoltaics	7,568	1,430
A. Silva Matos Energia SA http://www.asilvamatos.pt/?lang=en	Portugal	Wind energy	607	310
Avanti Wind Systems AS http://www.avanti-online.com	Denmark	Wind energy	4,570	887
Bonfiglioli Riduttori SpA http://www.bonfiglioli.com/en/	Italy	Wind energy	39,719	3,803
CHO-Power – Europlasma Group http://www.cho-power.com/?lang=en	France	Bioenergy	1,525	572
Cryostar SAS http://www.cryostar.com	France	Geothermal power	8,028	1,489
Deep Drill Supply Group http://www.deepdrill.nl	The Netherlands	Geothermal power	928	312
dnpSolar http://www.dnpsolar.eu	Denmark	Solar photovoltaics	1,341	347
EnBW AG https://www.enbw.com/index_en.html	Germany	Geothermal power	579	228
enso hydro GmbH http://www.enso.at/en/about-us/	Austria	Hydropower	1,026	281
Fröling GmbH http://www.froeling.com/ww/	Austria	Bioenergy	4,974	832
GA Drilling as http://www.gadrilling.com	Slovakia	Geothermal power	2,221	722
Geotermica AB http://www.geotermica.se/index_en_g.html	Sweden	Geothermal power	477	235
GOLIATH Wind OÜ http://www.goliath.ee/?lang=en	Estonia	Wind energy	939	396
ib vogt GmbH https://www.ibvogt.com/home.html	Germany	Solar photovoltaics	1,899	631
IREM SpA https://www.irem.it/en/	Italy	Hydropower	6,510	1,247
JL MAG Rare-Earth Co. Europe b.v. http://www.a-m-g.com/English-1-t.html	The Netherlands	Wind energy	1,642	555
juwi AG http://www.juwi.com	Germany	Hydropower	9,124	1,822
Luvata Pori Oy http://www.luvata.com	Finland	Solar photovoltaics	22,048	2,638

Mabanaft GmbH https://www.mabanaft.com/en/home.html	Germany	Bioenergy	3,537	931
Mervento Oy http://mervento.com/	Finland	Wind energy	723	282
Micron – Cappello Alluminio srl http://www.micronsun.it/2275?lang=EN#.VJI_914AJ	Italy	Solar photovoltaics	716	262
Palazzetti SpA http://www.palazzetti.it/en/	Italy	Bioenergy	42,186	3,570
PCC SE https://www.pcc.eu/?lang=en	Germany	Hydropower	13,332	2,316
Profish Technology SA http://www.profish-technology.be/en/	Belgium	Hydropower	1,443	609
Silcio SA http://www.silcio.gr/en/index.html	Greece	Solar photovoltaics	353	204
Smart Hydro Power GmbH http://www.smart-hydro.de/en/home.html	Germany	Hydropower	2,641	846
Sveaskog Förvaltning AB http://www.sveaskog.se/en/	Sweden	Bioenergy	210	120
Turboden srl http://www.turboden.com	Italy	Geothermal power	11,725	1,972
Vapo Oy https://www.vapo.com/en	Finland	Bioenergy	1,518	508
Tot.			194,109	11,529
Type/Token Ratio			5.94	