# GENRES AND GENRE THEORY IN TRANSITION

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## Specialized Discourses across Media and Modes

*Edited by*

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*Genres and Genre Theory in Transition:*
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# Contents

# 1 Genres and Genre Theory in Transition. An Introduction

GIULIANA GARZONE / CORNELIA ILIE

## 1. Adapting analytical tools to new developments

The current proliferation and diversification of genres do not only reflect new ways of thinking, they are actually bringing about changes in the ways we understand the world and ourselves. Meaning is after all context-dependent and is socially constructed by configurations of individual contributions and multi-party encounters within particular contexts. In a world tied together through sophisticated networks of communication, multilayered relationships and ever more versatile technologies, we are witnessing an ongoing metamorphosis whereby genre conventions are being observed and broken, as a result of the intricate dialectics between stability and dynamism (Miller 1984: 74). Paradoxically, emerging context-specific genres generate and reinforce recipients' expectations, establishing a conceptual and cognitive framework that builds on norms and conventions shared by senders and receivers, while at the same time they subvert and undermine these very norms and conventions responding to and inducing new expectations and visions.

If we conceive of genres as sites of tension between stability and change (Berkenkotter/Huckin 1995), their role as dynamic and interactive patterns of meaningful expression is aimed at both capturing and highlighting patterns of innovative thinking at the intersection between the expected and the unexpected. New hybrid genres acquire new functions and modes of expression since they are meant to serve redefined purposes associated with novel and changing contexts (Bhatia 1997). In many communities of practice there is a proliferation of genres that are no longer exclusively spoken or exclusively written, neither exclusively monologic or exclusively dialogic, nor exclusively author-centred or exclusively audience-oriented. In a multitude of ways, genres contribute to construct and re-construct the social, cultural, political and professional realities in which we live. This new situation gives rise to a number of challenging questions: to what extent does hybrid genre creation involve multiple au-

thors' re-acting, inter-acting and co-acting? Is genre specificity undergoing a new metamorphosis in a search for greater creative flexibility and easier changeability? In what ways are the social status, professional positions and power balance between interacting participants in various communication situations genre-constituted and/or genre-constituting?

This volume collects a series of studies – several of which authored by some of the most distinguished scholars in genre analysis – focusing on the evolution of text genres in corporate and professional communication, exploring genre change in various contexts under the pressure of the increasing importance of new media and the profound social changes that have occurred in the last few decades. The studies presented in the various chapters have their starting point in the awareness of the need to reconsider the repertoires of conventions traditionally identified in each specific genre, and to reassess and update the analytical tools used to investigate them, about three decades after the emergence of genre analysis.

During that span of time, work on genre has left behind the idea of genres as fixed and distinct entities that can be described in stable taxonomies, to lay ever more emphasis on the role of social factors and context both in genre production and in genre interpretation, on the open-endedness of generic frames, and on the view of genres as forming complex networks and as subject to hybridization and contamination (e.g. Bhatia 2004; Devitt 2004; Swales 2004; Frow 2006). It can be hypothesized that these developments, which have affected all the main traditions in genre studies (cf. Hyon 1996) leading to a degree of convergence among them, are partly a natural form of evolution in a relatively young disciplinary area (at least in its modern version), but partly have been prompted by profound changes in society, as is pointed out in some of the chapters of this book, first and foremost in that authored by Garzone (Chapter 3). The ever more intense process of generification set into motion by the increasing interconnectedness of the contemporary world, where most meaningful and productive activities are carried out through communication, and by the pervasiveness of new media (computer, tablet, smart phone, etc.) have led to a situation where genres – in spite of the element of stability that the definition of genre itself incorporates – are in a state of flux, undergoing various degrees of variation, taking new forms as a consequence of audience enlargement, of wider and more capillary distribution, of migration to new media, or simply of newly emerging communicative exigencies. This has also motivated re-

searchers to engage in the description of new, or previously uninvestigated genres, some of which make the object of several case studies in this book.

In light of these considerations, this volume has been structured in two parts, the first featuring five chapters that have an essentially methodological focus, while the second part consists of chapters that discuss significant issues related to representative case studies. All the chapters have undergone a process of double blind peer reviewing.


## 2. Contents of the book

The five chapters included in the first part of the book are theoretically oriented, although some of them use case studies as a starting point, and contribute new insights to the debate on the need to update genre theory and on the actual advances made so far in this domain.

The section opens with a chapter authored by INGER ASKEHAVE, one of the scholars that have most actively argued in favour of an update of genre analysis to accommodate the complexities of the contemporary world. She focuses on the complexities of professional genres and their contexts of production and consumption, and argues in favour of an approach that moves beyond the level of categorization and description of communicative purpose, schematic structure or rhetorical strategies, to give emphasis to the values and beliefs that genres embody and convey. To this end, the adoption of ethnographic techniques is recommended to investigate how these values and beliefs are received by people who are a potential target group of the genre in question. Using the job advertisement as a case in point and ethnographic studies of respondents' reactions to the job ad, she demonstrates how a consideration of the ideological assumptions embodied and produced in genres, coupled with ethnographic studies focusing on genre production and reception, offers an interesting contribution to genre research. This approach allows the reseacher not only to capture the way we use genres to achieve socially accepted purposes but also to explore and challenge some of the hidden or more subtle social and cultural values and norms which constitute and constrain our language use.

Chapter 3, authored by GIULIANA GARZONE, focuses on exogenous genre change, i.e. genre change that does not originate within the relevant discourse communities, but rather results from the im-

pact of broader developments in society, and in particular from evo-
lutions in predominant ethical and societal values, attitudes and be-
liefs, which not only bring with them new ideas and new contents,
but often also involve profound alterations in discursive practices
and the need to rely on discourse formats that suit new exigencies.
These issues are discussed in light of case studies in the area of cor-
porate social responsibility and sustainability discourse, considering
in particular Corporate Social Responsibility Reports, and green ad-
vertisements. Both genres are set within the context of the social-
and environmental-responsibility turn that has taken place in the
corporate world and in society at large since the 1990s. What emerg-
es  is that in the area of CSR communication  a contamination has
occurred between discourses typical of external corporate communi-
cation – and in particular those of corporate reporting and of prod-
uct advertising – with those of social responsibility, cooperation and
environment conservation. The findings of this study confirm that
societal values, attitudes and shared beliefs are certainly elements that
have to be considered in the study of genre change in all of its forms.
They also contribute to emphasizing the role of interdiscursivity in
genre change.

    The purpose of the chapter authored by CORNELIA ILIE is to
problematize the impact of the hybridization of web-generated aca-
demic genres in connection with current competition-driven institu-
tional branding practices. Focusing on the hybridization mechanism
of a well-established, though under-researched, educational literacy
genre, i.e. the online course syllabus, the study accounts for the in-
terplay between two interrelated and complementary genre practices
– the competition-driven branding of educational institutions and the
promotion of new market-shaped academic training programmes.
The combined use of a discourse-analytical and rhetorical approach
allows the author to carry out a micro- and macro-analysis in order
to uncover the strategies by means of which corporate-specific
branding implicitly affects the higher or lower emphasis laid on tradi-
tional educational principles when applied to the design of new web-
site versions of academic genres; as a result, through branding hy-
bridization, an academic genre such as the course syllabus becomes a
marketing instrument. The examination of the data points to the di-
lemma facing many educational institutions when promoting web-
generated academic genres, i.e. how to pursue the goal of projecting
a market-oriented corporate identity while showcasing the ethos of

institutional commitment to leadership efficiency and professional excellence.

Chapter 5, authored by BRIAN PALTRIDGE with SUE STARFIELD, LOUISE RAVELLI, KATHRYN TUCKWELL, and SARAH NICHOLSON, deals with problems of genre categorization in cases where a huge variation in actual realization makes it problematic to assign a text to a given genre. The study has its starting point in the analysis of a specific genre, practice-based doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts, and demonstrates that these texts are subject to so huge a variation as to put into question their genre membership. To adequately account for such huge variation requires a challenge to contemporary theories of genre. For those cases in which genre realizations do not exhibit a sufficient number of properties to match the stereotypical properties of the genre in which they may be classified, the authors propose to make recourse to the notion of 'sufficient similarity'. If this criterion is adopted, texts are assigned to genres on a *pragmatic* basis, applying requisites similar to Austin's (1962) *felicity conditions*. This involves a more flexible approach to genre classification, based on the understanding that instances of a genre may vary in their prototypicality, and relieves the genre analyst from the need to categorize ever new genres in order to accommodate texts which seem characterised by too ample variations to be classified in one of the existing genres.

In the chapter that closes Part I, CHIARA DEGANO raises the issue of how the categories of genre analysis can be adapted to dialogic genres, using as a starting point the analysis of a relatively unexplored (micro-)genre, the US President's press conference, which is part of the broader genre of the political interview, falling astride the political and media orders of discourse, which she classifies as a dialogic genre. As regards the criteria to be used in the application of genre analysis to this type of genre, she argues that, if 'monologic' genres justify a conception of cognitive macrostructures in terms of chronologically organized moves and steps, in genres that are more inherently dialogical like press conferences, interviews but also digital genres – which are increasingly characterized by interactivity and loss of linearity – such an orderly and author-controlled conception might not be appropriate. The solution proposed takes inspiration from pragmadialectical theory, and suggests that in dialogic genres moves and 'steps' might be conceived of as profiles, thus allowing at the same time for a systematization of the genre and greater flexibility than needed for the analysis of monologic genres.

The studies collected in Part II take a more applicative approach, and present various case studies focusing on so far less codified genres, and on some interesting cases of genre variation. The study of newly emerging genres, like online "essay writing services" promotion texts, or of micro-genres deriving from functional variation from a macro-genre (e.g. the Memorandum of Understanding as a variation of the contract (macro-)genre) is all the more useful in order to avoid describing them in terms of previously existing genres, ignoring their innovative aspects, as Swales points out: "The easy adoption of definitions can prevent us from seeing newly explored or newly emerging genres for what they are" (Swales 2004: 61).

Chapter 7, authored by SILVIA CAVALIERI, focuses on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a variation in the genre contract used in academic agreements, which provides the opportunity for considerations on variation within (macro-)genres – such as contracts – and the impact of hybridization. Cavalieri's research is based on a corpus of MoUs signed by Anglophone universities (United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia) with international partners for academic purposes. It uses genre analysis and corpus linguistics to outline the generic structure and the distinctive rhetorical patterns of these documents, as well as the lexical and syntactic realizations, comparing them with those found in corporate contracts. The analysis shows that the MoU can be considered as a "hybrid genre" retaining the typical structure of a contract, but developing different moves and rhetorical patterns. Moreover, MoUs and corporate contracts appear to share some semiotic resources (i.e. move structure, legal professional practice/professional culture), although exploiting them in a completely different field (academic vs. corporate). The results thus highlight the variability that can be observed within the macro-genre of contracts, connected with the need to accommodate the different rhetorical and practical exigencies of the discourse communities involved.

The problem of "seeing" correctly newly emerging genres, without relying on obsolete criteria of categorization arises also in the case of more or less innovative multimodal genres, i.e. web-mediated genres, or genres that exhibit an important visual component in print or in motion pictures.

In the case of web-mediated genres, one of the issues is that of evolution and variation as since their birth in a not too distant past, online genres have tended to evolve in ways with which we are not familiar. In particular, in Chapter 8, GIORGIA RIBONI deals with the

blog, a popular genre that is native to the web, and the microblog, a (micro-)genre that has derived from it, and raises the question of whether corporate blogs and microblogs can still be considered as belonging to the same genre or if the latter only represent a subcategory of the blogging genre, using *The Whole Foods* blog "The Whole Story" and *The Whole Foods* Twitter profile as case studies. Adopting an evolutionary approach, she integrates the investigation of their formal elements with the examination of their rhetorical functions, and concludes that, if communicative purpose and rhetorical organization are taken as main criteria to identify *genres,* then the *Whole Foods Market* Twitter profile is to be considered an evolutionary phase of the blog as both aim at promoting the company and its products through conversational marketing techniques. However, Twitter affordances allow the company to communicate with potential buyers and *aficionados* more effectively, providing real-time interaction, making it possible for conversational marketing messages to virally spread complimentary entries written by satisfied purchasers, using the retweet option. Thus, Riboni's findings show that as multinationals like *Whole Foods Market* become more and more aware of the distinctive affordances and properties of platforms like Twitter and use them to pursue different objectives, it can be expected that, even though microblogging and blogging belong to the same macro-genre for the time being, they may evolve into two distinct genres in the future.

In Chapter 9, WILLIAM BROMWICH explores the generic features of textual realizations in online "essay writing services", primarily in English-speaking countries. He shows that, as an emerging genre that is specific to computer-mediated communication, essay writing promotion appears to be gaining not only in verbal and visual sophistication, but also in argumentative and persuasive force, as services appear to be playing an ever-expanding role not only in undergraduate but also in postgraduate writing. The paper highlights the discordance between the definition of various forms of plagiarism in academic writing customarily given in institutional discourse, and the description of these practices by online "essay writing services" that attempt to present them as legitimate and desirable. An analysis of the generic norms of this occluded discourse community provides evidence that practices once on the margins of the academic world appear to be gaining ground and making increasingly strident claims to legitimacy. Thus, according to Bromwich, recourse to advertising discourse and genre mixing contributes to "define deviancy down",

thus providing evidence of how thanks to generic conventions an activity that is explicitly prohibited can be presented as legitimate and thus be accepted as the norm.

In Chapter 10, SANDRA CAMPAGNA explores texts materially placed in the dynamic context of EATALY, the "biggest food and wine centre in the world" located in Turin, showing that these texts – huge placards and posters – are somehow in contrast with the multimodal, multimedial and innovative dimension of the EATALY environment in that they are 'still signs' traditionally mediated by the printed word. In the chapter a corpus of such 'still signs' is investigated in the context of the EATALY environment to identify the discursive practices they configure and see whether these practices are conducive to codified emerging / re-mediated genres. The analysis also offers the opportunity to reflect on the often hybridized, newly emerging discursive practices characterizing contemporary society, which in many cases are difficult to classify, and at the same time on the proliferation of not so highly codified specialized genres, which also pose problems of categorization.

Campagna's contribution is followed by a chapter focusing on an inherently multimodal genre, Public Service Advertising (PSA), which plays an important role in society today in persuading people to give up harmful behaviours and abide by socially shared regulations. In his study NICOLA BORRELLI investigates the ample variation in the realizations of this genre as a function of cultural, social and historical factors, comparing samples of ads issued by the British Central Office of Information (COI) with those issued by the Italian Ministero della Salute, between 1987 and 2008, aiming at the prevention of HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). The study provides evidence of meaningful cross-cultural differences, which are discussed in light of Hofstede's (2001) model of *national cultural dimensions*, and also of variation in time, highlighting a moderation of the strategy of fear in both subcorpora over the years.

The volume is closed by a short-span diachronic study, focusing on a popular and ubiquitous (micro-)genre, the car advertisement, in which WALTER GIORDANO looks at a corpus of 250 ads published in US magazines in the course of the 1950s. The ads are analyzed as complex communicative events including text and images, using multimodal discourse analysis to highlight the close relationship between socio-cultural factors and the messages conveyed for marketing purposes, showing their evolution in parallel with societal developments in the course of the decade examined. The results of the analysis on

the one hand shed light on the mechanisms that governed the construction of advertising messages in the decade considered, some of which are still in place today, on the other hand they offer insights into some interesting aspect of the relationship between advertising messages and societal values.

The picture that emerges from the book is that genres emerge, develop and change due to a multiplicity of factors related to socio-cultural situations, contexts, events, relationships, environments. Genres are known to travel across time and space, sometimes spontaneously and sometimes purposefully. Genres also tend to interact with other genres and thus bring about mutual change, as well as hybrid genres. But above all, genres, through their flexibility and adaptability, generate change and are generated by change. And through the process of changing and undergoing change, genres do challenge the socio-political and cultural status quo.

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# Part I

*Issues in Genre Analysis*

## 2 Revisiting Genre Analysis in Specialized Communication: The Job Advertisement as a Case in Point

INGER ASKEHAVE

### 1. Introduction

Since the early 90s, genre theory has presented itself as a valuable tool for capturing the characteristics and tracing the development of texts used by professionals in professional settings for getting their work done. Genre theory models are constantly being modified, expanded or revisited to be able to account for the linguistic and contextual aspects of genres and the concern with genres in professional settings is valid and obvious:

> Genres provide a frame (Swales 2004) which enables people to take part in, and interpret particular communicative events – and provide learners with the knowledge and skills they need to communicate successfully in particular situations. (Paltridge 2007: 102)

In other words, genres are textual manifestations of recurrent practices and in order to perform successfully in professional settings one needs to master the social and discursive practices associated with the community in question. Therefore, knowledge about genres – how they are produced, what they look like, how people interpret them, how they develop, etc. is paramount for members of a professional community who want to act professionally and for us, as genre analysts, who have an interest in characterizing professional practice.

In the mid-90s, when I was introduced to the concept of genre, it was presented to me as a tool for (re)producing discourse forms. I was a lecturer in a business school context where I taught my students how to write 'proper' business letters, corporate brochures, annual reports, etc. and genre theory was – and still is – a valuable pedagogic tool for my students' text production. Genre theory allowed us to consider LSP texts as staged, structured, purposeful communicative events and provided us with the methodology for

considering the prototypical linguistic and pragmatic features of texts as genres.

At that time students and researchers alike were using genre theory to meticulously look for regularities in texts in an attempt to account for the schematic moves of genres – some being obligatory and others being optional – but nonetheless trying to account for the prototypical, schematic structure of a genre and a specific form-function correlation between each move and its linguistic realization.

However, our quest for regularities had its downsides as it involved a tendency of making our genre observations very simple and static – leaving aside the creative and ever changing potential of genres.

Today the complexity of genres and genre research is widely acknowledged and the field of genre research has broadened significantly and opened up to a wide range of alternative approaches and interpretations. Bhatia (2008a, 2008b, 2010) emphasizes the need to devote attention to the complexities of professional genres and the contexts of production and consumption "rather than to a convenient selection of ideal examples of such genres for the design of ESP practice" (2008a: 166). Furthermore, Bhatia argues for the need to integrate ethnographic, socio-cognitive research in addition to textual analytical procedures, thus taking into account ethnographic reactions from the specialists who produce and consume the genres. The reason being that:

> It is not simply that a professional genre is constructed and used for a specific professional purpose; it may be that a specific genre is deliberately and consciously bent to achieve something more than just a socially accepted and shared professional objective. (Bhatia 2008a: 174)

Along similar lines Flowerdew and Wan (2010) argue for the need to place emphasis not only on the linguistic analysis of genres but also on the social context in which the genres are produced thus combining linguistic analyses with ethnographic techniques of observation and interview to throw light on the way practitioners produce texts as part of their professional practice.

I have made similar observations and come to the conclusion that rather than trying to capture the essence of genres, be it in terms of communicative purpose, schematic structure or rhetorical strategies, I prefer to move beyond the level of categorization and description and focus on genres as embodiments of ideological assumptions, i.e. consider why a text is written the way it is and what it is

aiming to do – not only as a genre, but as a conveyor of certain be-
liefs and values in specific contexts – and to adopt ethnographic
techniques to investigate how these values and beliefs are received by
people who constitute a potential target group of the genre in ques-
tion. And I, therefore, suggest that a consideration of the ideological
assumptions embodied and produced in genres, coupled with ethno-
graphic studies focusing on genre production and reception, offer an
interesting dimension to genre research, allowing us not only to cap-
ture the way we use language to achieve socially accepted purposes
but also to explore and challenge some of the hidden or more subtle
social and cultural values and norms which constitute and constrain
our language use.

      In this article I shall illustrate this approach by reporting on part
of a large research project on gender, career and ideology within the
Danish banking industry. The project takes its point of departure in a
Danish, medium-sized bank that wants to encourage women, in par-
ticular, to pursue a career as bank managers in the bank. The re-
search project includes interviews with male and female members of
staff and takes a closer look at the bank manager job advertisement
used by the bank to attract qualified applicants for the position as
bank manager. A 'traditional' genre analysis of job advertisements
may help us identify the purpose of the job ad, disclose the move
structure of the job ad, and explore the conventional linguistic reali-
zation of each move. However, it does not necessarily capture the
way a job ad serves to promote not only an available position but al-
so a certain view on an 'ideal leader' and his/her 'ideal leadership
qualities', nor the effect which such constructions may have on po-
tential male and female applicants.

      I, therefore, suggest that an examination of e.g. a bank manager
job ad should include an investigation of the way the job ad con-
structs the *ideal bank manager*, as such (ideological) constructions may
not only influence people's views on what an ideal manager is, but is
likely to have significant recruitment consequences as people, who
*cannot* identify with this construction, may be discouraged from re-
sponding to the job ad in the desired way (cf. also Kinser 2002: 249).


## 1.1. Introduction to the case – gender, career and language use

For the past 40 years advocates for women's rights have worked hard
to secure career advancements of women, trying to fight what is of-

ten referred to as 'the glass ceiling', i.e. the invisible barriers that impede the career advancement of women. And since the mid 90s, government agencies and private and public companies have followed suit, putting the recruitment of women for top executive posts on the agenda in an attempt to increase the presence of women in upper levels of the organizations. There are many reasons for this 'renewed' interest in equal rights. First of all it has become a broadly accepted assumption in the business community and in society in general that women (or other 'minorities'), at least in theory, should have equal access to power, not least brought about by management theories which specifically advocate diversity management (a mix of gender, age, ethical background, etc.) in the work place. More important, perhaps, is the fact that companies and organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to attract enough highly qualified leaders – which, in turn, 'forces' them to look for other recruitment sources (cf. e.g. Kossowska *et al.* 2005).

This increased focus on women in management has resulted in numerous systematic qualitative and quantitative studies of for example male and female leadership styles and executive roles (Kabacoff/Peters 1998; 2002; Bird/Brush 2002), the effect of having women on the top management teams (Welbourne 1999), recruitment practices and application procedures (Dansk Industri 2004; Holgersson 2003; Vinnicombe/Singh 2003a), and the correlation between good company performance and women leaders (Adler 2001; Vinnicombe/Singh 2003b; Kossowska *et al.* 2005). These studies show that (a) women are indeed qualified for taking up top positions, (b) women may have a different (but equally valid and effective) leadership style, (c) and women are good for the bottom line. However, female leaders still seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Why is this? There is no clear answer to this question but some suggest (Ellehave/Søndergaard 2006; Dansk Industri 2004; Svabo 2002; Holgersson 2003) that the recruitment practices in companies and organisations are partly to blame. Companies and organisations primarily recruit people for top positions through headhunting agencies, promotion, and job advertisements (in that order). However, studies also show that women rarely use these channels, except for internal promotion, and that the job ads in the financial sector advertise for a man or very masculine woman to fulfil the position, which in turn prevents women from applying or 'forces' them to filter away or neglect the masculine jargon (Nykredit 2004; Dansk Industri 2004). The same argument of very 'masculine' job ads is put forward by the two

researchers Norlyk and Lundholt in a more recent article (Fyens.dk 2010) where they claim that the wording in job ads in male dominated areas does not appeal to women – but may in fact turn women away and prevent them applying for a position for which they are equally qualified.

As a genre analyst I find the language issue particularly interesting here. Is it in fact the *discourse* of recruitment – and, therefore, the recruitment genres that employ this particular discourse – that appeals to men and turn women away? And are we, therefore, producing countless reports on gender issues with little or no effect, while overlooking an obvious detrimental factor: that the conceptualisations of job qualifications in male dominated areas are male biased and that this biased discourse alienates women and discourages qualified women from applying?

The purpose of this case study was to test the above hypothesis. Taking my point of departure in a very common recruitment genre – the job advertisement – I shall investigate how male and female respondents interpret and react to the job qualifications emphasised in a bank manager job ad. Furthermore, this investigation allows me to consider the job ad as a conveyor of norms and values rather than simply a conventional textual manifestation of recurrent practice.

## 2. The case

At the time when this project was undertaken (between 2006-2008) the banking industry in Denmark was blooming and the major players in the market conducted an aggressive expansion strategy to conquer new market shares e.g. by establishing new bank branches throughout the country. Competition was fierce when it came to attracting qualified managers who were able to set up and run a newly established bank branch. Many banks came to realise that there may be a lack of qualified applicants for leadership positions in the future, and that they might want to start nursing one of their sources of unexploited man[sic]-power in the organizations, namely women.

On this background, in the autumn of 2006, the HR department in a Danish medium-sized bank (referred to as 'the Bank' in this article for the sake of anonymity), launched a major HR project aimed at answering the two main questions:

- How can the Bank support members of staff who are interested in and motivated for a leadership career path?
- How can the Bank encourage women, in particular, to pursue a career which results in a top position within the Bank?

The project contained a wide variety of activities – one of which was to interview members of staff who considered becoming managers or were already managers of various types, asking them to comment on the challenges (negative as well as positive) which they faced as they climbed the career ladder within the Bank. As linguists we[1] were asked to participate in the project and make in-depth analyses of recorded and transcribed focus group interviews, paying particular attention to the way the interviewees *talked* about leadership and leadership traits and the process of becoming part of management (e.g. their own role, identity, and power as well as that of others involved in the process). As a genre analyst I, however, became interested in considering the way the Bank talked about leadership traits in their written material and I decided, in particular, to take a closer look at the bank manager job ad which was used on the Bank's website for promoting available positions as bank managers of local bank branches.

More specifically I wanted to investigate the way language was used in the job ad to construct the 'ideal' applicant – in this case the 'ideal' bank manager – by setting up a professional leadership identity in the ad which the applicant may, or may not, be able to identify with. Furthermore, as the Bank examined in this case was eager to expand its number of bank managers and attract as many candidates as possible (including women) it was relevant to study the *effect* which this discourse may have on male and female readers of the ad, and my study, therefore, involved an analysis of two semi-structured group interviews (one with males and another with female respondents) paying special attention to the respondents' reactions to the leadership construction presented in the ad.

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[1]    The main research project was carried out by members of the research group 'Communication & Culture in Professional Settings' at Aalborg University in collaboration with the Bank's HR staff, who provided the group with the data (transcriptions of focus group interviews). Cf. also Lassen (2009) and Holmgreen (2009).

## *2.1. The job advertisement*

The job ad was made available to me through the Bank's website (accessed on 8 Jan 2008). Originally the job ad was in Danish but for the purpose of this article, I have made a semantic translation of the ad (see Figure 1 below). The bank manager job ad was produced by the Bank's communications department in 2004 and was available on the Bank's website from 2004-2008 where it was used as part of the Bank's recruitment and expansion strategy (trying to attract suitable candidates for setting up new bank branches throughout Denmark in a period of growth and expansion). The job ad is an html text which allows the reader to click on two links (underlined in the text below) – one link providing access to other bank managers, another link which activates the e-mail address which should be used for submitting the application. The ad itself displays no pictures; and lay-out features are restricted to typographical highlighting, providing structural emphasis to certain parts of the text (headlines and lead paragraph):

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**Do you want to be the manager in your own bank?**

After 10 successful establishments in Herning, Vejle, Odense, Horsens, Fredericia, Kolding, Silkeborg, Næstved, Skive and now – soon - Slagelse, we are looking for a manager for a new local bank in e.g. Esbjerg, Haderslev, Holstebro, Sønderborg and Viborg.

**Your challenge!**
is the overall commercial responsibility for the establishment, operation and development of your bank. You know where your bank should be placed, who your employees should be, and you shape your bank's plans for the future.

**Your goal!**
is to create a local and competent bank by developing and using the possibilities in the area.

**Need we say**
that you have a solid banking background with several years' managing experience – preferably together with another higher degree? That you have contact abilities like no one else and experience in customer relations, credit granting and know how your business should develop.

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