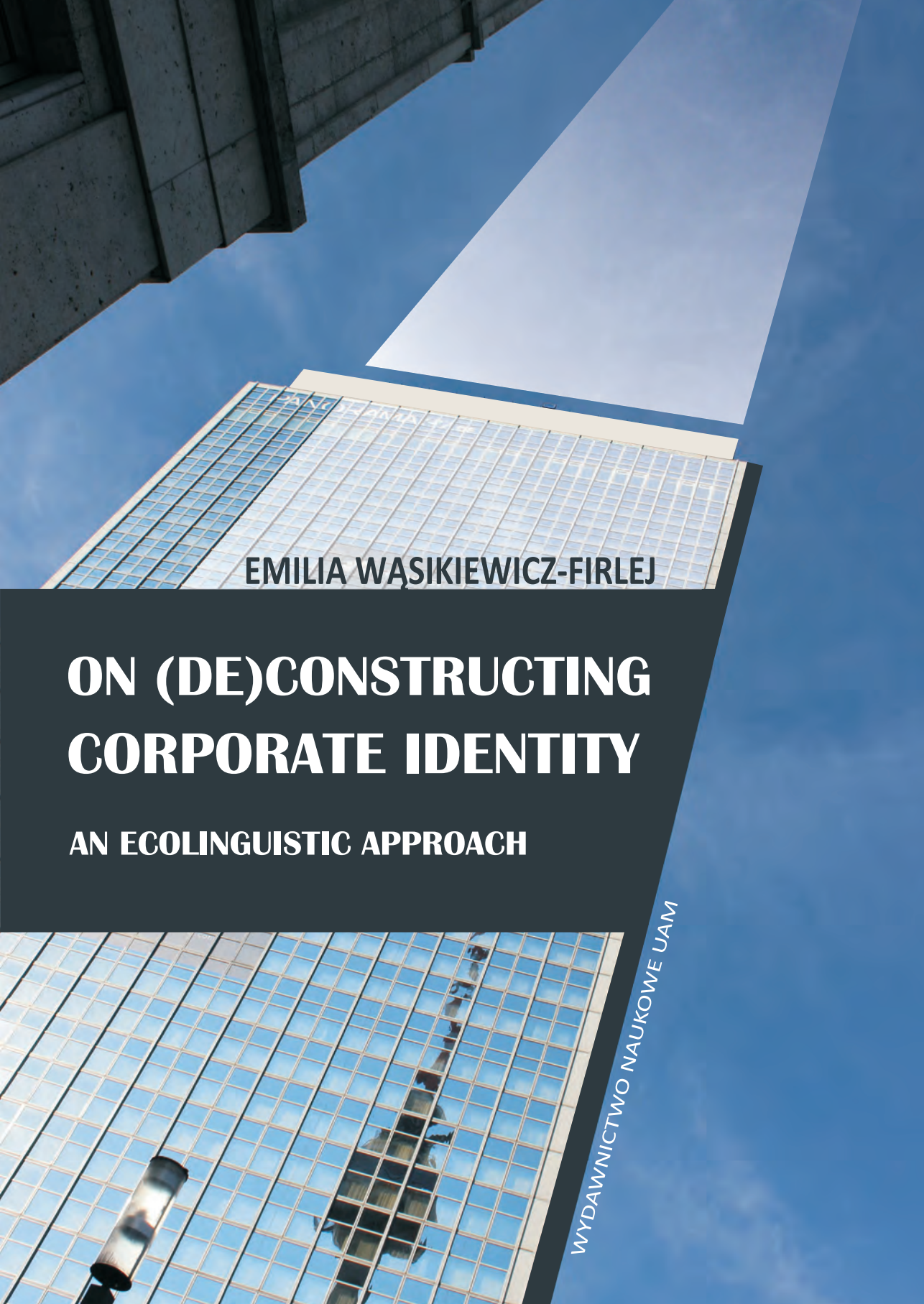




EMILIA WĄSIKIEWICZ-FIRLEJ

ON (DE)CONSTRUCTING CORPORATE IDENTITY

AN ECOLINGUISTIC APPROACH

WYDAWNICTWO NAUKOWE UAM

On (De)constructing Corporate Identity

UNIWERSYTET IM. ADAMA MICKIEWICZA W POZNANIU
SERIA JĘZYKOZNAWSTWO STOSOWANE NR 29

EMILIA WĄSIKIEWICZ-FIRLEJ

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An Ecolinguistic Approach



POZNAN 2017

Recenzent: dr hab. Hadrian Lankiewicz, prof. UG

Publikacja dofinansowana przez
Rektora Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu,
Wydział Neofilologii UAM oraz Katedrę Ekokomunikacji UAM

Wydano na podstawie maszynopisu gwarantowanego

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Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2017



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Zdjęcie na okładce: Emilia Wąsikiewicz-Firlej

Projekt okładki: K. & S. Szurpit

Korektor: Richard Jacobsen

Redaktor techniczny: Dorota Borowiak

Łamanie komputerowe: Marcin Tyma

ISBN 978-83-232-3225-4 (Print)

ISBN 978-83-232-4316-8 (PDF)

DOI: 10.14746/amup.9788323243168

ISSN 0137-1444

WYDAWNICTWO NAUKOWE UNIwersYTETU IM. ADAMA MICKIEWICZA W POZNANIU

61-701 POZNAŃ, UL. FREDRY 10

www.press.amu.edu.pl

Sekretariat: tel. 61 829 46 46, faks 61 829 46 47, e-mail: wydnauk@amu.edu.pl

Dział Promocji i Sprzedaży: tel. 61 829 46 40, e-mail: press@amu.edu.pl

Wydanie I. Ark. wyd. 27,50. Ark. druk. 26,25

DRUK I OPRAWA: VOLUMINA.PL DANIEL KRZANOWSKI, SZCZECIN, UL. KS. WITOLDA 7-9

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Index of Abbreviations

BE	Business Ethics
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CELA	Critical Ecological Language Awareness
CI	Corporate Identity
CLA	Critical Language Awareness
CL	Corpus Linguistics
CMC	Computer-Mediated-Communication
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DA	Discourse Analysis
DRAAM	Domain-Resource-Agent-Access-Management
EDA	Ecological Discourse Analysis
EMCI	Ecological Model of Corporate Identity
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
FL	Foreign Language
HCA	Human Communicating Agent
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KWIC	Keyword-in-Context
NL	Natural Language
NLR	Natural Language Robustness
OI	Organisational Identity
PDA	Positive Discourse Analysis
PR	Public Relations
RQ	Research Question
RSQ	Research Subquestion
SCOT	Social Construction of Technology
SCT	Self-Categorisation Theory
SIM	Social Identity-Based Impression Management
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SST	Social Shaping of Technology
TCELA	Teacher Critical Ecological Language Awareness
WWW	World Wide Web

All words are equal, but some are more equal than others

Bondi, 2010: 1; adapted from Orwell's *Animal Farm*

Introduction

The present volume has been underlain by the four transversal themes, i.e. identity, discourse, ideology and ecology, scrutinised in the context of corporate communication. The choice of the corporate context has been motivated by the fact that transnational corporations wield enormous power in the contemporary world. Reportedly, of the world's 100 largest economic entities, 52 are companies and 49 are nation states (Keay, 2015). Such a concentration of capital does not only translate into economic power but also empowers multinationals to influence world politics in line with their interests, which ultimately affects the whole global ecosystem, including its environmental as well as socio-economic, political and legislative facets.

As any kind of organisation, corporations need to construct their sense of identity and relations with their stakeholders. The key role in this process is played by discourse since corporations constitute their identity through discourse and are constituted through discourse. Taking into account the phenomenon of globalisation and the rise of the media, especially the Internet and social media, capable of providing instant and ubiquitous coverage, the management of corporate communication comes across as a particularly challenging task. Additionally, media coverage might be potentially addressed at an informed audience that approaches corporate messages with a dose of sound criticism and wariness related to ethical aspects of corporate activity, reported in self-praising corporate narrations. The process of the construction of corporate identity is interpreted here as "an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources" (Bauman, 2004: 1). Identifying the resources used to construct and reaffirm corporate identity is the main aim of this monograph.

The concept of identity is tightly intertwined with the ideology underlying it. Nonetheless, little attention has so far been paid to the ideological underpinning of corporate discourse, not to mention its ecological orientation. Researching corporate ideology is not only informative of the corporation itself but also of society, stakeholders and the complex network of relations between them (Fox, 2006). A major discursive practice through which corporations institutionalise and legitimise their ideologies, emerging from their systems of values, beliefs, ideas and concepts, is corporate discourse contained

in the “About us” section of corporate webpages, dubbed the major carrier of corporate identity. Thus, the novelty of this project lies in approaching the discursive construction of corporate identity from an ecolinguistic perspective, accounting for the eco-critical analysis of its ideological grounding. The selection of the ecolinguistic approach has been dictated by the assumption that all human activity is ecologically embedded. The understanding of the concept of ecosystem is broad and encompasses both its environmental and socio-economic dimensions. Thus, the ecosophy lying beneath this volume draws primarily on the Næss’s concept of deep ecology and the idea of sustainable development (Baker, 2006).

So far, the public debate has been monopolised by the neoliberal agenda (Holborow, 2012) and the dominating economic paradigm (Jonker and Marberg, 2007). Discourses of globalisation, market, profitability and marketisation have permeated all possible domains of human activity, including the public sector, colonising even the former anti-commercial strongholds, such as educational institutions, the health service or not-for-profit organisations (Fairclough, 1993). The neoliberal paradigm, however, has been to a large extent discredited by the world economic crisis in 2008. This single event instigated a wave of criticism and opened new avenues for public debate on the alternative socio-political order. The way to possible transformations, however, had been paved much earlier by the rise of environmentalism in the 1970/1980s that reached its climax in the 1990s when environmental issues were on the media and political agenda. This led to an observable rise in the ecological awareness of the public and their growing mistrust in corporations, followed by the emergence of environmental discourses in the public domain that offered a representation of reality alternative to the hegemonic neoliberal agenda. Corporations, however, have not remained unresponsive to the new social expectations. Quite the contrary, they rushed to reconstruct their identities in order to project a new “green” image, emanating an aura of social and environmental involvement, satisfying their stakeholders. Thus, it might be put forward that under public pressure, environmentalism has permeated corporate discourse and the new eco-friendly corporate identity has become conventionalised into the mainstream corporate discourse.

The present volume is divided into five chapters. The first chapter aims at elucidating the theoretical facets and main assumptions of the ecolinguistic approach and providing a frame of reference for further considerations. The next chapter focuses on the concept of identity, central in this book, and its understanding in the organisational context. The notion of identity will be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective, following Halliday’s (1978: 11) argument that “[a]ny study of language involves some attention to other dis-

ciplines". Accordingly, the undertaken discussion draws on selected contributions from social psychology, sociology, discourse studies, organisational studies and corporate communication studies, construed in the ecological paradigm. The chapter also strives for the delineation of the boundaries between the notions of identity, image and reputation, the meanings of which tend to overlap across disciplines. Additionally, it attempts to incorporate the newly-emerged corporate ethical and environmental concerns in the construction of corporate identity. The chapter is finalised with the advancement of the Ecological Model of Corporate Identity.

Following McLuhan's (1962) canonical statement that "the medium is the message", the subsequent chapter focuses on the affordances of the newly-emerged virtual environment and their influence on communicating corporate identity. The frameworks for the discussion on new media have been demarcated by the theory of technological determinism and social constructivism. Further considerations, applied to the corporate context, pertain to the concept of genre and its transformation in cyberspace. The corporate webpage, narrowed to its "About us" pages, is posited as the major tool for communicating corporate identity online.

The fourth chapter centres on the notions of discourse and ideology. It offers an analysis of the principles and applications of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) and the recently proposed (Stibbe, 2014; Alexander and Stibbe, 2014) Ecological Discourse Analysis (henceforth EDA), advancing EDA as a more viable alternative, effectively addressing the challenges of the contemporary world.

The final, fifth, chapter reports the findings of the undertaken study, aspiring to verify the hypothesised ideological shift in the corporate identity discourse towards the eco-social paradigm with "hard" linguistic data. The main rationale behind the study is the lack of relevant ecolinguistic research on the corporate identity discourse. Therefore, one of the challenges faced by the researcher is the development of analytical procedures merging the principles of the newly-proposed and unexplored EDA and Corpus Linguistics (henceforth CL). The study addresses three major research questions concerning the generic characteristics of the "About us" sections (RQ1), the discursive construction of corporate identity (RQ2), as evidenced by keywords and dominating themes, as well as ideological underpinning of corporate identity discourse (RQ3).

The novelty of the current project lies in the application of the integrative ecolinguistic approach to the study of the discursive construction of corporate identity, with a special focus on its ideological aspects. The study also attempts to blaze a trail for the application of CL in EDA and develop methodological procedures for further analysis.

Theoretical Underpinnings for the Ecolinguistic Approach

Introduction

The present, opening chapter aims at explicating the theoretical underpinnings and main assumptions of the ecolinguistic approach – central in this volume. Ecolinguistics is a relatively new discipline that symbolically originated in 1970 with Einar Haugen’s talk “The ecology of language” incorporating the metaphor of ecology into linguistics. Still, twenty years later in 1990 at the 9th AILA conference in Thessaloniki, Halliday opened up new vistas for the development of ecolinguistics by linking language to environmental problems. This schism into two main strands of ecolinguistics, marked with the delivery of the two seminal papers, is one the most deeply-enrooted dogmas in ecolinguistics. Despite recent attempts to verify this dogmatic categorisation and propose an alternative solution (Steffensen and Fill, 2014), the division of ecolinguistics into the Haugenian (metaphoric) and Hallidayan (non-metaphoric) traditions is still widely accepted and followed by ecolinguists (Fill, 1998, 2001; Bang and Trampe, 2014; Stibbe, 2015). Regardless of certain reservations, it will be also reiterated in the current chapter, mainly due to the fact that it naturally presents the development of ecolinguistics in historical terms. Additionally, it illustrates (often unnecessary) compartmentalisation of the discipline and might serve as a springboard for further discussion on the possible integration of ecolinguistics. The overview will also sketch the main assumptions of the socio-cultural strand of ecolinguistics, mostly developed by north-American scholars (e.g. Kramsch and van Lier), and will be wrapped up in the presentation of the development of ecolinguistics in Poland. The current review is by no means exquisite or finite. It does not aim to present a detailed history of the field or provide a comprehensive review of literature but attempts to delineate the ecolinguistic approach taken in this monograph. Thus, it serves as a frame of reference for further considerations.

1.1. The etymology of the concept of *ecology*

The term *ecology*, etymologically deriving from *oikos*, the Greek term for home, was coined by the German professor of zoology Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), who first defined it in 1866 in his work *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen*.

By ecology we mean the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature – the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and its organic environment; including, above all, its friendly and inimical relations with those animals and plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact – in a word, ecology is the study of all those complex interrelations referred to by Darwin as the conditions of the struggle for existence. (Transl. by R. Brewer, 1988: 1; cited in Harré et al., 1999: 163-164)

Haeckel (1866) sketched the frames of the new discipline studying “the relations of the organism to the surrounding outside world”, embracing all “conditions of existence”, both organic and non-organic, that enforce further adaptation of the organism (Haeckel, 1866, vol. 2: 286; cited in Elliasson, 2015: 80). At that time, however, these ideas, were not further developed by Haeckel nor any other scholar, probably being, as Elliasson (*ibidem*) suggests, outshined by the then ongoing debate on Darwinism¹. The term was used again two decades later by Reiter (1885: 4) who, with no explicit references to Haeckel, designated ecology a new branch of biology investigating “the forms of adaptation that the connection between variability and the natural conditions of existence has brought about”. However, it was not until the 1890s that the term found recognition in the realm of biology, mainly owing to the prominent figure of the Danish botanist Eugenius Warming and his landmark work on plant communities (1885) translated into a number of languages (cf. Elliasson, 2015).

In the beginning of the 20th century the concept of ecology was adopted by other disciplines. In 1907 the American chemist Ellen Swallow Richards applied the term *human ecology* to “the study of the surroundings of human beings in the effects they produce on the lives of men” (Richards, 1907: v).

¹ Einar Haugen, the progenitor of ecological thinking about language, does, in fact, distance himself from nineteenth century Darwinism. As he argues:

In writings of the nineteenth century it was common to speak of the ‘life of languages,’ because the biological mode came easily to a generation that had newly discovered evolution. Languages were born and died, like living organism. They had their life spans, they grew and changed like men and animals, they had their little ills which could be cured by appropriate remedies prescribed by good grammarians. (...) Today the biological model is not popular among linguists. It was clearly a metaphor only, which brought out certain analogues between languages and biological organisms, but could not be pushed too far. Any conclusions drawn about language from this model were patently false (Haugen, 2001: 57).

Soon the term appeared in the vein of sociology (Park and Burgess, 1930; Hawley, 1950), where it became concomitant with the study of the form and development of the community “with particular reference to the limiting and supporting factors of the environment” (Hawley, 1950: 67f).

The ecological turn has indeed revolutionised social sciences and humanities that “[f]or the past five hundred years (...) have been committed to extending and celebrating the human domination of nature” (Orr, 1992: 145). Ecological thinking embedded the objects of studies in the context of the natural world they were integrated with. Additionally, it empowered these disciplines to face contemporary ecological problems, embracing the exploitation of natural resources, pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate change, social justice, etc. (Stibbe, 2015: 7).

The new ecological paradigm was adopted by newly-emerging disciplines of:

- ecocriticism, investigating the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glottfelty and Fromm, 1996; Garrard, 2014);
- ecopoetics, tracing connections between human activity – particularly creating poetry – and the environment (Knickerbocker, 2012; the influential journal *Ecopoetics*, edited by J. Skinner)
- ecofeminism (Adams and Gruen, 2014;) “that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women” (Mellor, 1997: 1);
- ecopsychology, placing the disciplines of psychology and mental health in ecological contexts (Fisher, 2013; the renown journal *Ecopsychology*, edited by P. H. Kahn);
- ecosociology, integrating sociological theories with the concept of nature and environmental issues (Stevens, 2012; Hannigan, 2014);
- political ecology, studying the influence of political, economic and social factors on environmental issues (Robbins, 2012; Bryant, 2015; Walker, 2005; influential journals: *Journal of Political Ecology*, *Ecological Economics*, *Human Ecology*);
- environmental communication, focusing on theoretical and practical aspects concerning distribution and perception of messages pertaining to the environment and human interaction with the environment (Cox, 2010; Flor, 2004).

Even though the list above is not finite, it clearly illustrates the interdisciplinary character of the ecological paradigm that has found application in numerous fields of study. On the one hand, incorporating the ecological perspective across disciplines offers copious opportunities for its further devel-

opment. On the other hand, it also signals a strong compartmentalisation of ecological thinking that becomes diluted and less influential in the competitive academic world.

1.2. Arne Næss and the concepts of shallow vs. deep ecology

Significant contribution to the understanding of ecology has been provided by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, whose concepts of *shallow* vs. *deep ecology* have been adopted across disciplines. Næss criticises the dominating shallow ecology movement, aimed at fighting both pollution and the exploitation of natural resources, for being anthropocentric and aiming to provide “the health and affluence of people in the developed countries” (Næss, 1973: 95). In his writings Næss (1973), however, argues that “ecologically responsible policies” should not be restricted to the concerns of shallow ecology but embrace challenges related to “principles of diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralisation, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness” (ibidem), which underlie the less powerful deep ecology movement.

The first principle of the deep ecology movement postulates a shift away from the anthropocentric perspective towards a relational, holistic image. Biospherical egalitarianism, in principle, rejects the dominant position of man that is seen as detrimental also to humans themselves and promotes partnership with other forms of life. Principles of diversity and symbiosis offer a reinterpretation of the struggle for life and survival of the fittest that is seen as an ability to coexist and cooperate rather than the ability to exterminate and subdue. Thus, the “[e]ither you or me” approach is substituted with the more ecological “[l]ive and let live” attitude that celebrates diversity in all aspects of human existence in its biological and social dimensions. An anti-class stance negates exploitation and suppression of certain parts of society that is seen as bringing adverse effects both to the exploited and the exploiter. The postulate of fight against pollution and resource depletion, central in the shallow ecology movement, is also present in the deep ecology with the reservation that this aim should be achieved in observance of all the seven postulates of the deep ecology movement. Furthermore, Næss (ibidem) put forward the sixth postulate of complexity-not-complication that makes a distinction between the complex and the complicated. Applied to ecosystems, it accepts “the profound *human ignorance* of the biospherical relationships and therefore of the effect of disturbances” (ibidem: 97). In reference to humans, this principle “[f]avours division of labour, not fragmentation of labour. It favors integrated actions in which the whole person

is active, not mere reactions. It favors complex economies, an integrated variety of means of living" (ibidem: 97).

The last principle postulates autonomy and decentralisation. It advances the idea of "self-sufficient locality" with its powerful self-government and "material and mental self-sufficiency" as guarantors of "ecological equilibrium" (ibidem: 98).

Næss (1973) emphasises that the tenets of the deep ecology movement have not been informed by logic or induction but by "ecological knowledge and the life-style of the ecological field-worker" (ibidem: 98). Additionally, the principles are highly normative and based on a value system that is only partly shaped by the outcomes of scientific research. Thirdly, Næss (ibidem: 99) points to the ecophilosophical rather than ecological nature of ecology movements. As he further purports, ecology is embedded in science and requires scientific methods, while philosophy offers a wide forum for debate on the fundamentals. The very term "ecosophy" is defined as:

[a] philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy is a kind of sophia wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only "facts" of pollution, resources, population, etc., but also value priorities. (Næss, 1973: 100)

Næss's concept of ecosophy strongly resonates in ecolinguistic writings. It was particularly inspirational for Stibbe (2015), who takes it as a frame of reference in EDA, which is central in this work. A further elaboration of ecosophy will be provided in chapter 4.

1.3. Forerunners of an ecological understanding of language

One of the first attempts to scrutinise the development of an ecological theory of language from the historical perspective has been taken by Trampe (1990) who has discerned its three phases. The first one emerges from the 19th century thought modelling language as an organism. The second stage, dated back to the 1950s, evolves from Wittgenstein's (1953) perception of language as a form of life. The final stage, widely discussed in literature, originates in the application of the metaphor of ecology to language by Haugen in the early 1970s.

Bang and Trampe (2014: 84) detect the roots of ecological understanding of language in the German Classic and Romantic periods of literature and dub their representatives "the earliest forerunners of the concept of language as

an organism" that goes through a cycle of life similar to that of a human being: it is born, develops and dies out. This powerful imagery, firmly enrooted in contemporary linguistics (e.g. Crystal, 2000; Puppel, 2007a), was used by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his most important works on language (von Humboldt, 1820, 1830-35; after Bang and Trampe, 2014). In Humboldt's view, man and language are immersed in culture and nature:

For man, as a species, is a singing creature, though the notes, in his case, are also coupled with thought. But language does not merely implant an indefinable multitude of material elements out of nature into the soul; it also supplies the latter with that which confronts us from the totality as form. Nature unfolds before us a many-hued and, by all sensory impressions, a diverse manifold, suffused with a luminous clarity. Our subsequent reflection discovers therein a regularity congenial to our mental form. Aside from the bodily existence of things, their outlines are clothed, like a magic intended for man alone, with external beauty, in which regularity and sensory material enter an alliance that still remains inexplicable to us, in that we are seized and carried away by it. All this we find again in analogous harmonies within language, and language is able to depict it. (von Humboldt et al., 1999: 60-61)

Language is compared to a living organism that is characterised by a number of particular qualities and for this reason it should be studied accordingly: "For under no circumstances should language be examined like a dead plant. *Language and life* are inseparable concepts (...)." (von Humboldt et al., 1999: 93). Such a perception of language as interrelated with all aspects of life resonates with Herder's (1960) ideas and is fundamentally ecological. Von Humboldt is also dubbed one of the earliest precursors of ecolinguistics by Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001) who point to his celebration of the diversity of human languages perceived as a great potential for the development of human thought.

Echoes of Humboldtian ideas concerning language diversity might be found in the chapter "Language and gnosis" of Steiner's famous book *After Babel* (1975), regarded as one of the key texts laying foundations for the rise of ecolinguistics. The positive aspects of maintaining diversity were not, however, limited only to languages. For example, Lévi-Strauss promoted the idea of cultural diversity and exposed the role of progress in decreasing cultural diversity and enhancing homogeneity (1956: 159-161).

Whenever we go we are bound to carry this system of criteria with us, and external cultural phenomena can be observed only through the distorting glass it interposes, even when it does not prevent us from seeing anything at all. (Lévi-Strauss, 1956: 140; cited in Pupavac, 2012: 94)

Therefore, to some extent ecolinguistics recoils from the ideas of Lévi-Strauss, who also contributed to ecological thinking about language and culture.

Drawing on the metaphor of language as an organism, Wittgenstein (1953) developed the linguistic ecological concept of “forms of life” or “language game” that is used in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein elucidates how language is related to its linguistic and non-linguistics environment and poses it as a part of human life, firmly embedded in social and physical reality. In human life language games play a role similar to the one played by informational, energetic and material processes in inter-connecting other organisms with their environment. Such a perspective resonates with the ecological approach to language and thereby positions Wittgenstein as one of the progenitors of ecolinguistics (cf. Bang and Trampe, 2014: 85; Sarrat, 2012²).

To a certain degree ecolinguistics also echoes the ideas of linguistic determinism as well as linguistic and cultural relativism elaborated by Whorf (e.g. 1940) and Sapir (2001). As Whorf put it: “We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages” (1940: 231). Sapir accentuated an interrelatedness of language, culture and physical environment in traditional societies where language has a strong symbolic cultural power (Sapir, 2001: 22). In primitive communities that base their economy on hunting or agriculture the influence of physical environment on language seems more tangible than in modern communities where language related to the fauna and flora is more specialised and mastered by specific sectors of the population (cf. Pupavac, 2012: 201). Accordingly, the Sapir-Whorf thesis implies that the bonds between language, culture and environment will become weaker and weaker in time. This is explained by the fact that language change, despite being affected by cultural and environmental changes, is not synchronised with them in the temporal sense. For example, grammar forms are very resistant to any change (Sapir, 2001: 23). Albeit dynamically progressing cultural changes in the modern era have broadened the gap between language, culture and environment, Whorfian ideas revived in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, contemporary ecolinguistics views this disintegration as posing serious problems and calls for an intervention.

Moreover, Sapir emphasised the embeddedness of language in the natural environment of its users that is one of the main pillars of the natural ecology of language. As he expressed it: “in actual society even the simplest environmental influence is either supported or transformed by social forces” (Sapir, 2001: 13). Therefore, as Sapir (2001: 13) further stated, “any attempt to consider even the simplest element of culture as due solely to the influence of environment must be termed misleading”. While specifying environmental influences, Sapir (ibidem: 14) employs the term “environment” to refer to

² An elaborate discussion on Wittgenstein’s contribution to ecolinguistics has been provided by Sarrat (2012).

both physical and social factors. In his categorisation, physical environment stands for geographical characteristics, including topography, climate, fauna and flora as well as natural resources that lay economic foundations for human existence. Social environment, on the other hand, stands for “the various forces of society that mould the life and thought of each individual” and include such elements as religion, ethics, political system and art (ibidem). Physical factors are reflected in language, provided they have been activated by social factors. In other words, a particular physical object must bear at least a minimal importance to a group to be given a reference in language.

Nowadays, the Sapir-Whorf thesis informs especially the critical strand of ecolinguistics, particularly its subsection dubbed criticism of the language system (see section 1.5.1), assuming that “language philosophy (or a world-view)” is reflected by the way we treat the natural environment (Chawla, 2001: 115). Modern languages are criticised for being anti-environmental, technology-oriented and lacking adequate grammar and lexical structures to voice environmental concerns (Chawla, 2001: 121). Global English, in particular, is criticised for propagating anti-environmental “language habits” (ibidem) or values (Mühlhäusler, 2001). Halliday (2001) points to the fact that the English language treats natural resources as uncountable, which implies that their availability is unrestricted and they might be freely exploited. In a similar vein, Mühlhäusler (2001) observes that in comparison to indigenous languages European languages are characterised by the scarcity of normative prefixes and suffixes, which could be used to foster a greater awareness of environmental issues.

Chawla (2001: 115-117) criticises modern languages for distorting natural cyclical time and enhancing thinking that is not harmonised with the natural rhythm of the Earth. More specifically, the complex system of tenses in modern languages, contrasted with much simpler two-tense patterns in indigenous languages, is accused of “fragmenting existence” and hampering holistic thinking adjusted to natural time cycles.

1.4. The foundations of ecolinguistics: A metaphoric approach

The role of the founding father of ecological thinking in linguistics is ascribed to Einar Haugen, who in 1970 put forward the concept of “the ecology of language”, defined as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (Haugen, 2001: 57). The very term “linguistic ecology”, however, appeared earlier. For example, the expression was used by the Englishman John Trim in the late 1950s to refer to “the study of variation within

a speech community and its function" (Trim, 1959: 24). Vogelin and Vogelin (1964: 2) used the term in reference to a move from a single language to numerous languages in contact (cf. Fill, 1993). Thus, Vogelin and Vogelin (1964) focused on languages and dialects in contact in a specific geographical area, labelled, accordingly, "interlanguage ecology" and "intralanguage ecology". In their later publication (Vogelin et al., 1967) the application of the term "ecological" was even constrained to multilingual contexts (Eliasson, 2015: 81).

According to Steffensen (2007), the prominent Danish ecolinguist, the origins of Haugen's inspirations lie in Haeckel's ideas transferred to the field of linguistics, as well as ecological philosophy (ecosophy) developed by Arne Næss. It must be noted, however, that Eliasson (2015) finds it rather dubious since traces of such inspirations or meriting comments are nowhere to be found in Haugen's output. Nevertheless, it is assumed here that despite giving an overt credit to Næss's work, Haugen's developments are in line with his ideas and his perception of the world.

Drafting the scope of the new field of study, Haugen viewed language ecology as an approach to or a dimension of linguistics, strongly embedded in sociolinguistics and studies on bilingualism. In this regard Haugen comments that:

[t]he name of the field is of little importance, but it seems to me that the term 'ecology of language' covers a broad range of interests within which linguists can cooperate significantly with all kinds of social scientists towards an understanding of the interaction of languages and their users. (Haugen, 2001: 60)

By numerous references to human ecology and sociological works, Haugen prioritised the role of sociology and called for a more interdisciplinary linguistics, integrating contributions from sociology and psychology.

The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of its users, and it only functions in relating these users to one another and to nature, i.e. their social and natural environment. **Part of its ecology is therefore psychological:** its interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers. Another **part of its ecology is sociological:** its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication. The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others. (Haugen, 2001: 51; emphasis added)

An interdisciplinary character of ecolinguistics is also clearly manifested in the series of questions formulated by Haugen that further illuminate the concept of "language ecology" and specify the scope of its academic interests and their relations with other disciplines.

For any given 'language', then, we should want to have answers to the following ecological questions: (1) what is its *classification* in relation to other languages? This answer

would be given by historical and descriptive *linguists*; (2) Who are its *users*? This is a question of *linguistic demography*, locating its users with respect to locale, class, religion, or any other relevant grouping; (3) What are its *domains* of use? This is a question of *sociolinguistics*, discovering whether its use is unrestricted or limited in specific ways; (4) What *concurrent languages* are employed by its users? We may call it a problem of *dialinguistics*, to identify the degree of bilingualism present and the degree of overlap among the languages; (5) What *internal varieties* does the language show? This is the task of a *dialectology* that will recognize not only regional, but also social and contractual dialects; (6) What is the nature of its *written traditions*? This is the province of *philology*, the study of written texts and their relationship to speech; (7) To what degree has its written form been *standardized*, i.e. unified and codified? This is the province of prescriptive linguistics, the traditional grammarians and lexicographers; (8) What kind of *institutional support* has it won, either in government, education, or private organizations, either to regulate its form or propagate it? We may call this study *glottopolitics*; (9) What are the *attitudes* of its users towards the language, in terms of intimacy and status, leading to personal identification? We may call this the field of *ethnolinguistics*; (10) Finally we may wish to sum up its status in a *typology of ecological classification*, which will tell us something about where the language stands and where it is going in comparison with the other languages in the world. (Haugen, 2001: 65)

Haugen also strongly accentuated human agency in the ecology of language: “The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others.” (Haugen, 2001: 51). Even though the idea of linguistic activism is commonly associated with critical ecolinguistics, Haugen also made an attempt to redefine the role of the linguist who should take a more proactive stance rather than remain a passive observer of linguistic phenomena:

One may venture to suggest that ecology is not just the name of a descriptive science, but in its application has become the banner of a movement for environmental sanitation. The term could include also in its application to language some interest in the general concern among laymen over the cultivation and preservation of language. Ecology suggests a dynamic rather than static science, something beyond the descriptive that one might call predictive and even therapeutic. What will be, or should be, for example, the role of “small” languages; and can they or any other language be made “better”, “richer”, and more “fruitful” for mankind? (Haugen, 2001: 59-60)

The proactive dimension of an ecological approach has also been emphasised by the followers of Haugen and is particularly resonant in Mühlhäusler’s writing:

The ecological metaphor in my view is action oriented. It shifts the attention from linguists being players of academic language games to becoming shop stewards for linguistic diversity, and to addressing moral economic and other ‘non-linguistic’ issues. (Mühlhäusler, 1996a: 2)

Haugen has undoubtedly held a particular position in American and European linguistics and fostered the emergence of the new discipline that he

dubbed the “ecology of language”. Nevertheless, his seminal work of 1972³ is criticised for failing to provide a refined theoretical framework of an ecological approach. It must be emphasised, though, that his ideas challenged the then ruling paradigms in linguistics, especially those developed by Chomsky as well as Hymes and Gumperz, and opened new avenues for scholarly research oriented towards an investigation of people’s interaction with each other and their environment. Even though Haugen’s definition of the new discipline enjoys the status of a dogma in contemporary ecolinguistics, Lecheverel (2009) emphasises the values of some of other comments contained in his paper. For example, she points to Haugen’s inspiration by von Humboldt, detected in his use of the Aristotelian terms of *ergon* and *energia* to state that language is not solely a *product* or *an activity* of humans but both, and language “appears an action, like all behavior, but it exists in the mind as a potential, which can be treated a thing, a thing that implies the possibility of action” (Haugen, 2001: 58).

Haugen’s thought circulated steadily among linguists through the 1970s and 1980s, inspiring primarily the fields of language acquisition, bi- and multilingualism, as well as language diversity, death and revitalisation (Crystal, 2000). In the course of time, his ecological metaphor proved to be intellectually alluring and gave rise to a number of ecological approaches and inspired a large body of research that will be discussed in the following sections.

One of the strands of research inspired by Haugen and Voegelin’s investigates the processes of language shift, code-switching, pidginisation and creolisation (Steffensen and Fill, 2014). Basing on his own experiences, Haugen studied how the Norwegian language was affected by American English in immigrant communities in the US, transforming the very community and its culture. The phenomena of creolisation and pidginisation in the Australian and Pacific region were researched by Peter Mühlhäusler (1995, 1996, 2003).

Haugen and Voegelin’s also stimulated the development of research on language diversity, language survival, language death and language revitalisation – originally the terms of the biological provenience adapted to linguistics by Haugen, probably inspired by Arne Næss and his concept of deep ecology. These themes reverberate in a number of publications (e.g. Crystal, 2000; Harrison, 2007; Nettle and Romaine, 2000; Puppel, 2007b, 2009a, b, c, d, e). A particularly deep concern for natural language preservation is voiced by the distinguished linguist David Crystal (2000), a fierce advocate of language diversity: “If diversity is a prerequisite for successful humanity,

³ The work was, in fact, first published in 1971. However, the reprinted version of 1972 was available to a wider public and further reprinted in 2001 in Fill and Mühlhäusler’s *Ecolinguistics reader*.

then the preservation of linguistic diversity is essential, for language lies at the heart of what it means to be human" (Crystal, 2000: 33f). Analogies between the endangerment and extinction of species and languages might be found in numerous publications (e.g. Denison, 2001; Hale, 1992; Mackey, 1980). Krier (1996) and Bastardas (2003, 2013) accentuated the link between biological and linguistic diversity and called for "linguistic sustainability" paving the way to incorporating linguistic issues to a political agenda. The political aspects of language ecology translated into linguistic human rights and language rights strongly reverberate in the work of Skuttnabb-Kangas and Philipson (2008). In fact, Steffensen and Fill (2014) purport that the transfer of the biological metaphor to the domain of language significantly spurred the development of this line of ecolinguistics.

An important contribution to ecological thinking about language has also been provided by the linguistic imperialism literature (Mühlhäusler, 1996; Phillipson, 1992) that offers certain criticism of modernity and technological progress (Chawla, 2001: 120-121). Mühlhäusler (1996), for example, perceives global English as the main carrier of globalising western materialistic and non-environmental values, contributing to the homogenisation of cultures. These themes also mark their strong presence in the critical strand of ecolinguistics that will be elaborated on in sections to follow.

1.4.1. Ecological linguistics: The Bielefeld School

Haugen's ecological metaphor inspired a group of German scholars, representing mainly the University of Bielefeld, who developed an approach dubbed "ecological linguistics" or the Bielefeld School (cf. Fill, 2001). They have provided a significant contribution to the ecological theory of language, re-defining complex relations between language and the world, hailed as the language-world-system theory. This approach was initiated by Finke (1983, 1996, 2001, 2008, 2013), who actually coined the term language-world-system theory, continued by Trampe (1990, 1996) and transformed by Strohner (1996) into a cognitive systems approach.

Trampe was the first to transfer the concept of ecosystem to language-world-systems as well as cultural systems, including science and language itself, probably drawing on Luhmann's concept of "ecological communication" (Fill, 2001: 45). The theory of language-world-system defies the duality of nature vs. culture. Acknowledging the role of ecological processes in human language, it assumes that human life is affected by both its natural and cultural ecology. Thus, language, traditionally perceived as an element of culture, is hypothesised to be "the missing link" (Finke, 1996) or "a living

fossil, i.e. a mediating structural link" (Finke, 2001: 88) between both the domains of culture and nature.⁴ According to Finke (2008: 75),

It [language] preserves many natural features up to the present day that must be investigated by the methods of different natural sciences: its acoustic dimension, its physiological relations and its neurobiological base, for instance. But in other respects, it exhibits typical cultural achievements which must be considered in the light of typical methods of the cultural sciences and the humanities: its historical dimension, its interpretative openness, its aesthetic and poetic potentials, to mention just a few. (Finke, 2008: 75)

The concept of language-world-systems was applied to different empirical contexts, for example, environmental problems (Trampe, 2002a, b) or dysfunctional language development among children (Rothweiler, 2001). More specifically, Wilhelm Trampe (1991, 2002c) has conducted a critical analysis of the vocabulary of industrial agriculture to scrutinise the representation of ecological crisis in discourse, with a special emphasis on the use of euphemisms as well as linguistic reification as a means to conceal facts. For instance, Trampe (1990, 1991) points to the saturation of the discourse of industrial agriculture with techno-economic ideology that is manifested in the use of the word *production* in place of "growing" or "giving" or euphemising the actual killing of animals.

1.4.2. The Odense School

Steffensen and Fill (2014) point to the parallelism between the Bielefeld School and the Odense School, represented by Bang and Døør (1996, 2007), Døør and Bang (1996, 2002) and Steffensen (2007). Both schools informed ecolinguistics with their contributions anchored in the philosophy of science, offering a new conceptualisation of science. For example, Finke (1996: 31) provides an overt critique of scholars on the grounds of their conservatism. In a similar vein, Døør and Bang (2002: 415) argue that scientific practice is firmly enrooted in a particular social order. Thus, being part of a wider cultural system, contemporary, dominant scientific praxis "is dialectically determined by modern capitalist culture" (Døør and Bang, 2002: 416) that violates the principles of ecological sustainability through a use of specific modes of production and orientation at economic growthism. Similarly to Finke, Døør and Bang (2002) opt for a more ecologically and dialectically oriented philosophy of science.

⁴ Steffensen and Fill (2014: 11) note that a similar position is taken by the so-called Distributed Language Movement (e.g. Cowley, 2007, 2011a, b; Steffensen, 2011; Thibault, 2011; Steffensen et al., 2010).

What differentiates the Bielefeld School from the Odense School is that the former takes a more (eco)systemic approach, while the latter is based on Marxist and non-Western models (e.g. Buddhist philosophy), which highlight the inter-connectedness, inter-dependence and interactivity of *relata* (Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 11; Bang and Døør, 2007: 37-42). Bang and Døør (2007) apply the model to analyse a multitude of interactions, including “relations between speakers, between author and readers, between cultures, and between text and context” (Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 11). Their method of “deixis analysis” (cf. Bang and Døør, 2007: 87-168 has been applied by critical and feminist researchers as well as ecolinguists to analyse an array of different genres of texts ranging from philosophical to EEC acts on organic farming (Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 11). As illustrated by the analysis of EEC acts on organic farming (Bang and Døør, 2007: 212-217), the dialectical approach integrates both the theoretical and methodological aspects of ecolinguistics: it has simultaneously advanced the development of the ecologically oriented philosophy of science and employed the ecolinguistic method of analysis to texts illustrating contemporary ecological crises. Therefore, it might be concluded that the schools share substantial similarities and Bang and Trampe’s (2014) output, in a way, symbolically bridges the two traditions.

1.4.3. Other approaches

Notable contributions to ecolinguistics have also been provided by Adam Makkai (1993) and Mark Garner (2004, 2014). As Fill (2001: 46) notes, Makkai (1993) adopted the term “ecological” to linguistics as synonymous with “transdisciplinary” and “non-exclusive”. Weinrich (2001) also uses the term “ecological” in the sense of “transcending traditional considerations of economy” and offers a critique of Grice’s principles of relevance and economy. One of Garner’s most significant postulates holds (2014: 120) that language as an ecological phenomenon is “dynamic, situated, and holistic” and as such should be perceived as an emergent rather than predictable and orderly process easily controlled by humans. Garner (2014) points to the motivations of communities to maintain their belief in the existence of formularies and the formulae that regulate communicative behaviour, which explicates their role in maintaining the confidence of language users and the reliability of communication, preserving the myth of standard language and facilitation language teaching. Thus, the scholar distinguishes between “first-order languaging” and “second-order language” (ibidem). Further, Garner (2014) discerns the process of formulation and implementation that helps to understand the relationship between the two orders of language – crucial in numerous fields of applied linguistics.

1.5. Critical ecolinguistics: A non-metaphoric approach⁵

At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s a new approach within language ecology emerged that is now widely referred to as critical ecolinguistics. It grew out of the globally voiced environmental concerns focused on the human biological environment and endeavouring to study the phenomenon of ecological crisis and possible destruction of the planet from the linguistic perspective. The beginning of this strand is precisely delineated by Halliday's plenary talk delivered at the 9th World Congress of AILA in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 1990, twenty years after Haugen's seminal talk. Indeed, these two communications mark out two different strands of ecolinguistics. Alwin Fill, one of the most prominent ecolinguists, argues that the Haugenian approach is based on the ecological metaphor passed on "language(s) in an environment" (Fill, 2001: 43). By contrast, in the Hallidayan approach:

[e]cology' is understood in its biological sense; the role of language in the development and aggravation of environmental (and other societal) problems is investigated; linguistic research is advocated as a factor in their possible solution (ibidem).

The division of ecolinguistics into two major approaches that followed either the Haugenian or Hallidayan tradition is one of the basic dogmas deeply enrooted in the ecolinguistic community. Steffensen and Fill (2014) do, however, note that critical ecolinguistics has also been informed by Mühlhäusler (1995, 1996, 1998, 2003) who coalesced the ecology of language and criticism of linguistic practices that contribute to the degradation of the natural environment, subtly showing the links between symbolic and natural ecology.

⁵ In a recent overview of the state of the art of ecolinguistics and its future horizons Steffensen and Fill (2014) swerve away from the dogmatic division of Haugenian and Hallidayan ecolinguistics and propose an alternative nomenclature by discerning four strands in the history of ecolinguistics:

- A symbolic ecology approach investigating "the co-existence of languages or 'symbol systems' within a given area".
- A natural ecology approach addressing the question "how language relates to the biological and ecosystemic surroundings (topography, climate, fauna, flora, etc.)".
- A sociocultural ecology approach scrutinizing "how language relates to the social and cultural forces that shape the conditions of speakers and speech communities".
- A cognitive ecology approach examining "how language is enabled by the dynamics between biological organisms and their environment, focusing on those cognitive capacities that give rise to an organism's flexible, adaptive behavior" (Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 7).

Nevertheless, the current work draws primarily on the "dogmatic" categorization of ecolinguistics into two traditions but it also incorporates the sociocultural strand of ecolinguistics that is particularly powerful in the United States.

Another firmly-rooted dogma assumes that contemporary ecolinguistics differentiates between a metaphoric (Haugenian) and a non-metaphoric (Hallidayan) perception of ecology (e.g. Fill, 2001; Steffensen and Fill, 2014; Stibbe, 2014). Fill's (2001) categorisation is in fact frequently referred to in contemporary ecolinguistic literature. It is, for example, echoed in Alastair Pennycook's (2004) paper "Language policy and the ecological turn":

As Fill (2001) points out, there is a basic distinction to be made between the use of ecology as a metaphor and the reference to real ecologies. Thus, on the one hand, we may talk metaphorically about languages being in an ecological relationship with each other, while we may be interested in how certain languages describe the natural environment. (Pennycook, 2004: 217)

This division played a beneficial role in the 1990s as it sketched the boundaries between the two fields – one associated with sociolinguistics and the other with discourse analysis (henceforth DA) – and helped to comprehend and disseminate certain ecological principles, for example, "peaceful co-existence, interdependence, small is beautiful, etc." (Steffensen, 2007: 6). It must be noted, though, that despite discerning the differences between the approaches, Fill (2001: 43) dubbed them "complementary rather than mutually exclusive". Steffensen (2007) now brings up the need to bridge the gap between the old divides that were purposeful two decades ago, but are no longer substantiated. One of the major arguments put forward in favour of abandoning the schism between "real" and "unreal" is based on the assumption that it reinforces the Cartesian dichotomy between culture (human culture) and nature ecologies which disconnects human society from the "biological order" (ibidem: 6). Instead, (Steffensen, 2007: 7) proposes a non-dualist perspective that perceives nature and culture as "inseparable *aspects* of a complex and dynamic system with certain self-organizing characteristics". Thus, in accordance with the principle of deep ecological ontology that everything in the world is interrelated, language, as a part of this system, affects our social, ideological and biological environment.

One of the main characteristics of the ecological approach is its strong contextualisation that "inevitably leads to a critical perspective" (van Lier, 2004: 196).

The adjective 'critical' is easily used (...) but not so easily defined. I define it as any approach (scientific or otherwise) to a state of affairs that applies an explicit and overt rational, moral and ethical stance to the treatment, interpretation and documentation of the state of affairs (...). As a corollary, a critical approach must be intervention and change oriented. (van Lier, 2004: 168)

Critical ecolinguistics tends to be perceived as an extension of CDA. However, Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001) note that the first attempts to criticise

language use from the ecological and environmental perspective were undertaken by ecolinguists long before the rise of critical linguistics. The topics addressed in their papers embraced the debates on nuclear energy (e.g. Gründler, 1977; Hallerbach, 1978; Gigon, 1983) and the limited range of linguistic means of expression in environmental discourse (Myerson and Rydi, 1996; Mühlhäusler, 1983). Moreover, CDA centres on discourse (*parole*), while ecolinguistics also criticises the language system (*langue*) that through its assumed anthropocentrism might legitimise unecological ideology.

Fill and Mühlhäusler (2001) discern two strands of critical ecolinguistics: system-critical vs. text-critical ecolinguistics. The critique of the language system was pioneered by M. A. K. Halliday's landmark paper (1990), but nowadays a growing body of applied research within the ecocritical discourse analysis suggests that this strand of ecolinguistics is heading for its heyday.

1.5.1. Criticism of the language system

Halliday gave rise to a new strand within ecolinguistics centred on the role of language in addressing environmental problems that gained paramount importance at the end of the 20th century. The scholar called for a linguistic reflection on ecology related issues, arguing that language does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it, shaping our experience and generating meaning. Grammar, understood as lexicogrammar, with no distinct boundaries between grammar and vocabulary, is defined as "a theory of human experience" that instigates social action (2001: 179). Thus, Halliday adopts the view assuming that:

[o]ur 'reality' is not something readymade and waiting to be meant – it has to be actively construed; and that language evolved in the process of, and as the agency of, its construal. (...) Hence language has the power to shape our consciousness; and it does so for each human child, by providing the theory that he or she uses to interpret and to manipulate their environment. (Halliday: 2001: 179-180)

Halliday's reasoning is based on the premise that since language evolves from the material and conscious aspects of existence, any change in material conditions will be reflected in consciousness. Arguing that "the history of language is *part* of human history" (2001: 180), Halliday refers to turning points in human history to illustrate this phenomenon. One of the first milestones in "semohistory" was settlement, understood as the gradual shift from nomadic to sedentary practices, involving land farming and animal breeding that contributed to the development of writing. This, in turn, enforced further changes in grammar resulting in the commodification of "things" (nouns) which gained certain value, quality, quantity and could be categorised. The next

landmark period – the Iron Age – brought further transformations of grammar that mainly involved a wider objectification of more and more spheres of experience, incorporation of technical elements to discourse, paralleling the ongoing technological advancement, and the development of the subject of the clause. The Renaissance in Europe, which eventually led to the Industrial Revolution, gave rise to the use of bureaucratic and technocratic language, so common nowadays, especially in the public domain. In contemporary information society the principal mode of economic activity is not based on exchange of goods or services, but exchange of information that necessitates language use. As Halliday asserts: “This is an applied linguistics world, in which even numbers, and numerical data, become significant only in the context of discursive constructions (2001: 91).

Another important change involves the devastation of the planet and exploitation of its shrinking resources that are not sufficient to meet the current demands of its population. This has, in fact, changed the status of the human race who within several decades – indeed in the blink of an eye in historical terms – “has turned from net creditor to net debtor” (ibidem, 2001: 191). This transformation has been rapid but profound and, despite its dramatic consequences, poorly publicised, which Halliday dubs the intended “disinformation” of society (ibidem).

Thus, nowadays the role of applied linguistics is to “interpret the grammatical construction of reality” (ibidem: 182), specifically to unveil language structures and ideologies that are harmful to the environment and simultaneously the human species. Halliday specifies a list of four items that have inspired subsequent ecolinguistic research:

- A grammatical categorisation of *countable* and *uncountable* nouns that in English and other European languages classifies natural resources (e.g. water, air, soil, coal, iron, oil) as uncountable, which implies that they are not finite and might legitimise their further unrestricted exploitation.
- Asymmetry in grammatical gradation of adjectives which reveals that quality and quantity go together and “bigger” is commonly interpreted as “better”.
- Transitivity which is the part of grammar that regulates our perception of process. Entities are positioned on a bipolar scale in accordance with their potential for initiating such processes that involve, for example, performing action or making things happen. People as initiators of action are naturally positioned at the most active, agentive pole, in contrast to inanimate objects that do not take any action but are acted upon, placed at the other end of the scale. The only contexts in which

inanimate objects are ascribed agentive roles are natural disasters, e.g. "the earthquake destroyed the city" (ibidem, 194).

- At a certain point in this continuum grammar introduces "a sharp dichotomy" classifying phenomena into two distinct categories. This entails the discrimination of the category of human vs. non-human that Halliday substitutes with the opposition of conscious vs. non-conscious. The most obvious reflection of this dichotomy in grammar is the pronoun system in English, in which conscious entities are referred to as *he/she* while inanimate entities are *it*. Such a dichotomous categorisation rejects the concept of Gaia which posits our planet as a conscious being; the grammar makes it difficult to accept such a conceptualisation and strengthens anthropocentrism (ibidem: 195).

Recognising language as the main constructor of reality, Halliday identifies several problematic areas that deserve a linguistic scrutiny. First of all, he points to the register of scientific discourse that scientists themselves find constricting, since highly nominalised grammar tends to construct "a world of fixed, determinate, discrete and abstract objects and could not cope with the flux, the indeterminacy and the continuity that they now saw as the deeper mode of reality" (Halliday, 2001: 196). This, in turn, leads to a vast discrepancy between hermetic technical knowledge and the commonsensical knowledge based on everyday experiences, which leads to a certain dysfunction of contemporary democratic societies. Another sensitive area, related to language and prejudice, embraces linguistic representations of sex roles, social injustice and racial differences. Social class is yet another vital element constructed in language that is transmitted within families giving preferentiality to particular grammar choices. In comparison to the construction of gender and race, this process, however, appears to be lengthier but less tangible.

This view corresponds with Basil Bernstein's (1971) renowned work on *restricted* and *elaborated codes*, emphasising an ideological character of not only language, but also all communication. Bernstein (1971) focused on the study of the influence of social class and class system and the use of different types of language shared by the group. The basic assumption of his theory is that social relations determine the structure of speech used by the group, and simultaneously, the structure of speech accentuates the significance and relevance of a certain "ordering of the society" (Bernstein, 1971: 174). Bernstein (1971: 174-176) argues that the process of "socialization" transforms the child into "a specific cultural being", aware of their social role, which is learnt through different language codes employed in a given community.

Elaborated codes allow the speakers to communicate their ideas explicitly and as the meanings are less context-dependent, they are more available to

the public. Therefore, through the use of elaborated codes speakers demonstrate that they value individuality above group identification. Restricted codes, on the other hand, are more context-dependent, and require a certain set of values and assumptions to be shared by the members of the group in order to understand what is meant by the speaker.

Bernstein (1971) further argues that social class and the use of both codes are strongly interrelated. For example, while the members of the middle class apply both codes, members of the working class show a preference for the use of restricted codes, and their use of elaborated codes seems limited.

The social structure influences work and educational roles and brings families into a special relationship with each other and deeply penetrates the structure of life experiences within a family... I should go on to argue that the deep structure of communication itself is affected, but not in any final or irrevocable way. (Bernstein, 1971: 175)

In conclusion, language in Bernstein's theory is ascribed an essential role in forming social identity. As values expressed by language represent, in fact, the values shared by the group, language plays an important ideological function. This feature of language has been addressed by a range of researchers, i.e. Berger (1972), Wittgenstein (1969), Barley (1983), Tannen (1986), Lochhead (1984), Eaglestone (2000), just to mention a few.

Halliday (2001) points to the fact that the varying coding orientations should not be discerned as two different systems but "different deployment of resources within the system: different enough, however, such that the contradiction which is construed in this way has not been historically transcended" (ibidem: 197). The system is by no means closed – it undergoes transformations evoked by changing material or social conditions. Hence, subtle changes in grammar instigated in Renaissance English, including, for example, a shift from the experiential to textual orientation, laid foundations for the contemporary "alienating discourses of modern technology and science" (ibidem).

In view of the serious environmental crisis, Halliday (2001) calls for linguistic research aiming at discerning elements of language that contain or embed ideologies contributing to the proceeding devastation of the planet and deconstruction of reality through grammar. An example of a particularly harmful discourse is that of *growth* and *production*. In Goldsmith's (1969) view, world production is deceitful as we do not produce anything; instead, we transform certain material elements, usually at the cost of producing some side effects. Simultaneously, growthism, deeply embedded in the grammar, spurs and legitimises consumption and the uncontrollable exploitation of resources that seem limitless. Classism, on the other hand, legitimises the uneven distribution of goods and hegemony of one group over another. It must be admitted, though, that at a certain point in history both growthism and

classism were positive phenomena and played their role in the development of the human species but nowadays they pose a real threat to its further existence. Thus, based on the premises that “language construes the world” and that people “cannot transform language; it’s people’s acts of meaning that do that”, Halliday (2001: 199) argues that current environmental problems are within the scope of interest of applied linguists, whose primary task would be to identify hazardous ideologies that have a direct influence on the perception of environmental problems and construction of pro-ecological attitudes.

[...] classism, growthism, destruction of species, pollution and the like are not just problems for the biologists and physicists. They are problems for the applied linguistic community as well. (Halliday 2001: 199)

This challenge has been indeed taken up, laying the foundations for the development of now flourishing critical ecolinguistics. For instance, Goatly (2001) bases his reasoning on the premises similar to those assumed by Halliday and contends that the contemporary perception of the world has been shaped by modern science, especially by Galileo’s and Newton’s contributions. His conclusions, however, are quite different. Criticising the laws of Newtonian dynamics, Goatly (2001) argues that from the ecological perspective language is not adequate to represent the world. More specifically, a range of grammatical categories, for example, those distinguishing between Participants and Circumstances, Agent and Affected, and Processes and Things (Goatly, 2001: 213) stand in opposition to modern physics and Lovelock’s (1988) Gaia theory.

Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis (1987, 1988, 1992) positions the Earth as a potent, self-regulated planet-sized system represented by the imagery of a “fierce maiden rather than a benevolent mother” (Harré et al., 1999: 105). Thus, Lovelock’s metaphor rejects the idea that humans are capable of regulating Gaia and posits them as parasites that Gaia as a superorganism can easily dispose of. The hypothesis was inspired by the following metaphor:

The clouds over the world’s oceans owe their existence to the microscopic algae that live in the sea. The discovery that these organisms release a quite unexpected gas, dimethylsulphide, from the ocean surface was a real prediction of Gaia theory. (Lovelock, 1988: 38)

Goatly (2001: 220) opens two ideological avenues for critical ecolinguistics research whose “attitudes to grammatical metaphor provide a litmus test”. The first approach, approved by Goatly, is embedded in Critical Language Awareness. The second, rejected by Goatly, offers “a more radical transformation of worldview and a reassessment of congruent transitive grammar” (ibidem: 220). These two approaches will be later referred to, not always consistently, as “surface” and “deep ecologization of discourse” pointing to the

philosophical background of the dispute (Fill, 2001: 50). As explicated in previous sections, deep ecology negates anthropocentrism and views the ecological crises from the ecocentric perspective. As Goatly (2001: 221) puts it: "Though we have reluctantly recognised that the world is not the centre of the universe, we have been slow to accept that humans may not be central either". Thus, man as a species is not positioned at the top of hierarchy but perceived as an element of "the web of life". His activity might, however, pose certain danger to the integrity of nature. In this vein, Goatly (2001) hypothesises that in the course of time languages will adapt to new ecological circumstances and change accordingly. Such transformations might be signalled by an observable increase of ergative constructions (e.g. "The earth warms") in the place of transitive ones, as well as a more frequent use of reciprocal verbs (e.g. "meet", "touch", "interact", "talk", "converse", etc.), expressing empathy rather than dominance (Fill, 2001: 50). Shallow ecology, on the other hand, is reflected in the environmental discourse of the western world, focusing on air pollution and the exploitation of natural resources. It is especially visible in the discourse of advertising characterised by an abundant use of environmental vocabulary as well as in political discourse (Fill, 2001: 50). Finally, Goatly presents directions for an ecological CDA analysis and proposes "an alternative Critical Discourse Analysis [that] could target Anthropocentrism, including Marxist Humanism" Goatly (2001: 221).

Criticism of Goatly's ideas has been voiced by Mary Schleppegrell (2001) who questions the incorporation of the principles of "green" grammar to the educational settings. Goatly's central grammatical argument that the transitive clause type promotes an anthropocentric worldview and his implication that *we*, i.e. all humans, take responsibility for environmental problems are not followed by Schleppegrell (2001). In her view, the responsibility for environmental problems is often dispersed and ascribed to indeterminate individuals rather than institutions that have emerged as a result of the processes of industrialisation and globalisation. Thus, grammatical human-centredness is not perceived as the real root of ecological degradation. Accordingly, Schleppegrell negates Goatly's call for linguistic research confronting anthropocentrism and proposes to undertake a study "that reveals the real forces and institutions that result in environmental destruction" (2001: 228).⁶

Halliday's and Goatly's contributions, echoing the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, have undoubtedly paved the way for raising language awareness. They are, however, criticised for overemphasising the role of language in ecological

⁶ In his response to Schleppegrell's (2001; originally published 1997) criticism, Goatly (2001; originally published 1996) purported that his article was targeted at an adult audience with certain interest in linguistics or philosophy of language rather than school children which might have resulted in a certain inadequacy of the application of his ideas to the educational context.

crisis and ignoring its more tangible causes related to a range of biophysical and socio-political factors. As Susan George observes: “There *are* no ecological problems, only the social and political problems that invariably underlie and cause ecological damage” (George, 1990: 225; quoted after Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 10). Such an approach, focused on lexico-grammar, poses a risk of disregarding the actual human activity that is at the core of current ecology-related problems (cf. Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 10). These concerns were taken into account by more text-oriented ecolinguists, pioneered by Richard Alexander (e.g. 1996, 2000, 2008, 2009) that will be discussed in the following subsection. This view, as well as Schleppegrell’s (2001: 228) call to identify “the real forces and institutions” behind environmental destruction, permeate the current work as I believe it would be naïve to assume that language plays the main role in ecological crisis. Language is only a tool used to achieve certain goals set by an intricate network of political and economic interests of countries and corporations.

1.5.2. Text oriented linguistics

Alexander and Stibbe (2014) discern two main trends within ecolinguistics and dub them “the ecological analysis of discourse” and the metaphorical “language ecology”. They contend, however, that ecolinguistics is not restricted by the limits of these two approaches and should neither be understood only as analysis of text on environmental issues nor “metaphorical thinking of language in contact” (ibidem: 104). Alternatively, they primarily view ecolinguistics as the “ecological analysis of discourse”. This approach involves the perception of ecology as a discipline that studies inclusively the relations of humans with other humans, other organisms and the natural environment. In this perspective, language emerges as one of the factors that shape these relationships. Ecolinguistics is not, however, solely a study of the role of language in establishing any kind of relationships. Ecolinguists do study how organisms interact with each other and their environment, but they primarily focus on the interactions that are oriented towards sustaining life. Accordingly, Alexander and Stibbe provide the following definition of ecolinguistics:

Ecolinguistics is the study of the impact of language on the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment. It is normatively orientated towards preserving relationships which sustain life. (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014: 105)

Thus, ecolinguistics investigates the role of language in establishing, sustaining and breaking a wide array of complex relationships in all possible forms of life and their environment. As far as human relationships are con-

cerned, ecolinguistics is particularly interested in how organised groups of people, e.g. cultures, societies, professions, industries or institutions, use discourse to manage their practices and ultimately construct reality.

Similarly to other critical approaches, ecolinguistics aims to unveil any traces of injustice or inequality in discourses that pose certain risk to the sustainability of the broadly understood ecosystem. As Stibbe (2014) puts it:

[e]colinguistics consists of questioning the stories that underpin our current unsustainable civilisation, exposing those stories that are clearly not working, that are leading to ecological destruction and social injustice, and finding new stories that work better in the conditions of the world that we face. These are not stories in the traditional sense of a narrative, however, but rather discourses, frames, metaphors and, in general, clusters of linguistic features that come together to convey particular worldviews. (Stibbe, 2014: 117)

Stibbe (2014) points to the linguistic and ecological provenience of ecolinguistics. This combination allows a detailed linguistic analysis of the mechanisms constructing, reproducing, proliferating and resisting a particular worldview while the “eco” element provides “a sophisticated ecological framework to consider the role of those worldviews in preserving or undermining the conditions that support life” (Stibbe, 2014: 118).

This stance corresponds with Fill’s (1993) understanding of ecolinguistics as a discipline that investigates discursive construction of relationships in ecosystems or societies which favour humans over non-humans and privilege particular social groups. Thus, the “eco” side of ecolinguistics advances a particular worldview with its key values of justice and equality and negates any form of favouritism of any group in societies or ecosystems.

1.5.3. Ecolinguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis: Literature review

In many respects ecolinguistics and CDA have a lot in common, as they both trace injustice, hegemony and inequality in discourse. Ecolinguistics, however, takes a wider perspective on discourse than CDA; while CDA focuses primarily on social injustice embedded in neo-Marxist social theory that does not take into account ecological or environmental aspects, ecolinguistics also pays heed to the ecological foundation of society (cf. Stibbe, 2010; Biersack, 2006). Among the wide array of discourses analysed from an ecolinguistic perspective are not only these related to neoliberalism, classical economy and consumerism, but also those pertaining to environmentalism. The literature review below is by no means complete as it only aims at illustrating core trends and themes informing this approach.

It will be organised into subsections oscillating around the central themes that emerge from research studies, i.e. economy, advertising and environmental issues.

1.5.3.1. Economy

The relations between ecology, economy and discourse have been explored by Alexander (2000) who contends that environmental and ecological discourse is colonised and framed by the discourse of market economics. This phenomenon is illustrated by a critical analysis of a speech delivered by John Browne, the CEO of BP, one of the leading world multinational corporations, not commonly associated with environmental issues. As Alexander (2000) argues, corporations have adopted “corporate environmentalism” to riposte the thriving ecological movement that openly criticises their anti-environmental activities and thus poses certain risk to their profitability. In his paper Alexander (2000) unveils these mechanisms and shows how language in the analysed piece of the public discourse of BP is used to achieve the organisation’s public relations aims. The function of this discourse is persuasive rather than informative and the projected corporate image is harmonised with the audiences’ expectations which might be interpreted as creating a *phatic communion* that values diplomacy and politeness over the truth (ibidem: 174). Even though the interests of corporations and their relation to ecological and social damage are not concomitant with those shared by their audience, in his speech the CEO of BP appeals to the metaphor of “common journey” in order to create the illusion of the universality of problems associated with the climate change.

Education has as one of its central functions the sensitization of young generations to those patterns of discourse deemed to be suitable for survival in the social formations for which they are being educated and socialized. Where people are employing this discourse to systematically prevent perception of certain facts, the critical linguist and the critical reader need to help students, readers and media-recipients to recognize how this proceeds. (Alexander, 2000: 187)

Alexander’s contribution to ecolinguistics deserves special mention not only due to the wide array of topics explored in his studies, but also the methodology. The scholar combines qualitative and quantitative approaches by integrating CDA and corpus linguistics, thus demonstrating empirically how specific linguistic choices adopted by speakers or writers reveal their ideological perspectives. The most valuable methodological insights have been provided in his book (Alexander, 2009) *Framing discourse on the environment: A critical discourse approach* whose core chapters, six of them being revised and extended versions of previously printed papers, pertain to the issues related

to the incorporation of ecological issues by business and the media. Special emphasis is placed on the ecological commitment of business, analysed in chapter 2 and 3 of Alexander's work, by the combination of CDA and computer-generated concordances. The next two chapters look at two large oil and energy companies (BP-Amoco and Royal Dutch-Shell) and scrutinise the projections of their self-images and approaches to the environment. Accordingly, in chapter 4 the author postulates that the discourse of market economics colonises and frames the opposing discourse on ecology and the environment. In chapter 5 Alexander (ibidem) casts light on the use of lexical and grammatical means, mainly over- and under-lexicalisations and purr-words (especially "sustainable development") to create a positive image of the company. The next two chapters analyse the six 2000 BBC Reith Lectures on environmental issues. The results of the undertaken analysis have shown that the lectures share a common anthropocentric stance but have taken different ideological standpoints towards ecological and environmental degradation. Chapters 8 and 9 elucidate the influence of Western agricultural multinationals and agribusiness methods on the physical and social environment of Third World countries. Alexander (2009) deconstructs the firmly embedded myths concerning the alleged positive role and effects of neo-liberal projects and "solutions" that bring further ecological and social disasters rather than an improvement of life conditions. In chapter 9 the author presents the conflict between the self-image and other-images of two agribusiness multinationals that use and promote genetic modification of food – Monsanto and Pioneer Hi-Bred, respectively. Despite overwhelmingly positive self-presentation on the corporate webpages, characterised by an excessive use of positively loaded "purr-words", the corporate practices are severely criticised and condemned worldwide. The last two chapters discuss the (mis)representation of various events and issues in the media as well as political and institutional discourse and revive the Orwellian concepts of "double speak", "newspeak" and "duckspeak".

The relations between ecology and economy have also been scrutinised by Stibbe (2005) who refers to Bourdieu's (1991) concept of *social magic* that stands for constructing social reality through discourse. One of the main creations of the traditional, predominantly hegemonic discourse of economics is *homo economicus*. Deprived of any form of altruism, *homo economicus* controls and manipulates the environment in order to satisfy their individual needs and desires and amplify pleasure. As argued by Stibbe (2005: 4), the particular consumer decisions of *homo economicus* "are based on price and self-interest". The social construction of the "insatiable consumer" stance is further strengthened by advertising that aims, on the other hand, to meet the goals of "the revenue-maximizing manager", who creates new needs and spurs con-

sumerism. This synergy results in the further exploitation of natural resources and unsustainable economic development (ibidem: 5).

Stibbe (2005), however, signals a creeping change in the language of economics that challenges well-established patterns of consumers' attitudes and behaviours as well as negates growthism. Recently, advertisers have begun to appeal to more altruistic and environmentally-oriented values, contesting "the social magic of neoclassical economics" (ibidem: 5). New economics redefines social relations that embrace the whole bio-system and take into consideration ecological well-being. The discourse of new economics is slowly permeating the public space and, as Stibbe (2005) optimistically concludes, has the potential to challenge the hegemonic discourse of economics and promote a more ecologically-oriented agenda.

1.5.3.2. Advertising

One of the first attempts to study the discourse of advertising in relation to corporate image from the eco-critical perspective was undertaken by Howlett and Raglon (2001) in the early 1990s. Based on the analysis of 500 print advertisements from the US, representing five different periods of the 20th century (namely, 1910, 1930, 1950, 1970, 1990), the authors (Howlett and Raglon, 2001) argue that the incorporation of imagery related to nature, perceived as beneficial by the consumers, is not a contemporary idea. Bridging the product to nature in order to evoke positive associations was already practiced by advertisers and corporations in the beginning of the previous century. What actually changed in the 1990s was a shift towards constructing an environmentally-friendly corporate image, labelled "the greening of the corporate consciousness" (Howlett and Raglon, 2001: 253), that clashed with the values of consumerism, technological progress and the subordination of nature cherished in earlier decades. The target audiences for corporate image advertisements embrace current and prospective employees, investors, financial institutions, law-makers, the authorities, consumers and a larger public while the purpose of such advertising is to minimise the negative social and political effects that might pose any risk to corporate autonomy or profitability. Thus, this is the real rationale for the emergence of "green advertising", often seen as a result of the growing interest in nature. According to Howlett and Raglon (2001: 253), it should be interpreted as "green advocacy advertising" that confers a sense of corporate environmental and social responsibility as well as goodwill and capability to face possible problems, distancing the company from "industrial, technical, or scientific imagery". In Howlett and Raglon's (2001: 255) view, this observable "greening" of the business sector in the contemporary US that attempts to portray itself as an environmental-

ly-friendly social actor, referred to as “the environmental spectacle” emerging from popular culture, aims to legitimise corporate actions by adjusting to “the popular consciousness”.

CDA methodology is applied by Grabowski (2007) to study the environmentally damaging discourse of financial institutions in order to identify how corporations use discourse to advertise their products and services and establish relationships with the reader and the environment. Grabowski deems loan and credit card companies partially responsible for promoting and upholding “rampant consumerism” (Daly and Cobb, 1989: 333; cited in Grabowski, 2007: 9) that has detrimental effects on the environment. In order to achieve their goals, advertisers use a range of discourse techniques, which include, among other:

- problem-solution technique (Fairclough, 2003b);
- grammatical manipulation, most visibly manifested by the excessive use of imperatives urging consumers to purchase goods;
- semantic manipulation consisting in making assumptions and presuppositions;
- synthetic personalisation of discourse (Fairclough, 2001), achieved most frequently by taking the form of the profuse use of pronouns;
- conversationalisation of discourse (Fairclough, 1993), forging a sense of intimacy;
- selective representation;
- and, finally, presence of details.

Verbal content was additionally reinforced by parallel visual images.

The relationship between the discourse of advertising and its effect on the environment has also been studied by Slater (2007) who has investigated how the monthly magazine “Stuff” creates and stimulates the consumption patterns of electronic devices. The primary aim of the magazine is to persuade its readers to constantly upgrade their electronic devices, irrespective of the ecological burden such consumer behaviour leads to, as well as high direct and indirect personal costs. The readers are encouraged to intensify consumption by the use of imperatives and persuasive images. Newly-launched gadgets are presented as indispensable and their previous versions positioned as obsolete. As Slater (2007: 7) concludes, “the constant cycle of upgrading to the latest devices is to be encouraged as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end”.

Hogben’s (2009) study focuses on the use of nature imagery in advertising that is socially, politically and culturally constructed (Hansen and Machin, 2008: 778) and its interpretation by the audience. The author selected five ad-

vertisements representing car manufacturers, utility and energy companies during 2007-2008 that generated criticism and complaints on the part of the audience and had been formally filed to the UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) on the grounds of the lack of credibility of images and linguistic claims. As Hogben (2009) notes, the number of such complaints grew from 117 in 2006 to 561 in 2007 which inspired the author to undertake his own research attempting to specify the relation between text and image and develop a set of criteria for visual interpretation. The analysis embraced a sample of five advertisements as well as the corresponding complaints and adjudications provided by ASA. The author illustrated how companies resort to textual and visual ecological appeals in order to evoke positive environmental associations and enhance their reputation (*ibidem*). Even though the visual modality has at least the same meaning-making potential as the textual one (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Hodge and Kress, 1988; Hansen and Machin, 2008; Urry, 1992), ASA adjudication tends to diminish the role of visual imagery and its manipulative effect.

1.5.3.3. Environmental discourse

Another strand of research flourishing in ecolinguistics embraces critical analyses of environmental discourse and the presence of environmental issues in the industrial discourse. In this area, several themes that attract particular interest might be discerned. Firstly, the analyses centre on the exploitation of natural resources (Kurz, Donaghue, & Rapley, 2005; Meisner, 2007) and excessive use of energy (Russell et al., 2011) as well as their consequences in the form of climate change (Doulton & Brown, 2009; Ihlen, 2009) and the destruction of the ozone layer (Gerbig, 1996, 1997, 2000). A large body of research has been devoted to animals presented in the context of food production and animal rights (Glenn, 2004; Goatly, 2006; Stibbe, 2003, 2012a, b), Foot and Mouth Disease and BSE in the UK (Döring, 2005, 2008), vegetarian discourse (Marko, 2000), and whale-friendly discourse (Marko, 2002). In this vein, special emphasis should be put on Reinhard Heuberger's articles (Heuberger, 2003, 2007) unveiling the anthropocentrism of dictionaries that define animals mainly in terms of their utility for humans.

Gerbig (2000) points to the importance of the political agenda in positioning environmental discourse in public space, which is illustrated by a comparative corpus study. Based on the analysis of keywords in textual corpora, Gerbig (2000) investigated how discourse about ecology was represented in Germany and the United Kingdom in the 1990s. The results of her study showed significant qualitative and quantitative differences. Ecological issues were generally more frequently discussed in Germany than

in the UK. The contexts in which ecology appeared were also different: in the German corpus the use of the node-word *Ökolog** usually pertained to politics and economy, while in the English data the corresponding *ecolog** was frequent in scientific domains and collocated with disasters, threats, catastrophes, etc. In the German corpora *Natur** is used differently than *Umwelt**; the first term is usually applied in reference to global situations, while the latter has a more regional connotation. Additionally, natural disasters are labeled *Naturkatastrophen* and problems caused by humans *Umweltkatastrophen*. In the English corpora *Natur** still has a romantic and spiritual touch that is not to be identified in German. The diachronic analysis has also demonstrated that the volume of public discourse on the environment has significantly increased. Back in the 1960s the word *environment** was infrequently used and not a single occurrence of *ecology** was recorded. Generally, environmental problems were not present in public discourse. It was not until 1968 that they began to appear in the public space. In the late 1990s environmental issues were on the agenda of the major political parties and media in Germany and the UK, and environmental terminology paved its way to massive everyday use, strengthening the power of public opinion and its real influence on ecology-related issues.

1.5.3.4. Ecotourism

Mühlhäusler (2002) criticises linguistic practices in a newly-emergent field of ecotourism. The scholar refers to the phenomenon of “ecologization” of the public discourse developed by Fill (1998: 74) and his concern with the potential risk that it poses to the proliferation of ecological issues. As Fill puts it:

Ecologies can be characterized as structured diversity, i.e. true ecological understanding presupposes both knowledge of both the extent of diversity and the numerous interactions between the diverse members of an ecology. (Fill, 1998: 74)

The results of Mühlhäusler’s (2000) study do, in fact, corroborate Fill’s concerns, since the analysed discourse of Fraser Island ecotourism manifests a range of features that render it in opposition to ecology. Firstly, Mühlhäusler (2000) points to the minimisation of human agency in the context of environmental destruction, in contrast to its exposure in the analysed travelogue, where tourists are presented “as active explorers rather than the experiencers of Nature by becoming part of it” (ibidem: 244). Additionally, the discourse of ecotourism is abundant in anthropocentric metaphors, especially those from the military domain that expose the hostility of Nature. Another striking feature of the analysed discourse is its selectivity that is seen in the reduction of the rich biodiversity of Fraser Island to several species that are worth being

noticed by a potential ecotourist. As a result, the promotional and educational materials under study do not really contribute to a true, in-depth understanding of the diversity and complexity of mutual relations in the ecosystem of Fraser Island as they focus on just a handful of charismatic species portrayed in isolation.

In order to visualise the problem, Mühlhäusler (2000) uses an illustrative metaphor:

More and more materials on ecotourism are being produced on environmentally friendly unbleached paper – the messages contained in them, on the other hand are very much bleached when compared to the discourses that were prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. (ibidem: 247)

Despite the use of the prefix *eco-* implying bonds with the natural environment, ecotourism is, in fact, by no means ecological – instead, it poses certain threats to the island's ecosystem as it centres on satisfying human needs irrespective of their potential harmful effects. For example, four wheels excursions are labelled “ecotours”, even though any positive ecological effects of such endeavours are hard to imagine. The very concept of ecology is understood through the prism of “survival of the fittest” rather than in terms of mutually beneficial relations between the species. Some other examples of “bleaching” include the use of positively loaded adjectives rendering the island's nature as “pristine” or “untouched” which is a far cry from reality. Genuine “discovery” and “explorations” of the island stand for “being taken around on a guided tour to some of the scenic spot that thousands of other tourists have already seen” (ibidem: 249). Independent excursions are obviously not welcome. The results of Marco's study disclose that practice does not always match policy and benevolent aims of ecotourism do not translate into positive results and “green discourse (...) has become a substitute for green practice” (Marco, 2000: 250).

Similar conclusions have also been drawn by Stamou and Paraskevopoulos (2008) on the basis of their study of visitors' books at a Greek reserve (Dadia Forest). Employing CDA framework, the researchers investigate linguistic features in order to verify whether visitors demonstrate any concern for environmental issues and construct protection acts in their entries. Unfortunately, the results leave little doubt about this query as they clearly indicate that the ecological aspect of ecotourism is ignored and tourists show little concern for or knowledge of any action taken to preserve Dadia Forest. As the scholars conclude, their “research empirically verifies that ecotourism conceals a consumerist essence under a green wrapping, functioning ideologically.” (ibidem: 35). The theme of ecotourism is widely discussed in the journal *Environmental Communication* published incessantly since 2007 and strongly reverberates, for example, in the works of Milstein (2008, 2011).

1.5.3.5. Vegetarianism

Marko's (2000) analysis focuses on the discourse published online by the Vegetarian Society, which aims to attract potential vegetarians and make them join the organisation. The results of the analysis have revealed surprising paradoxes. Even though the theme of vegetarianism by definition seems to support ecological values, the text, in fact, conveys non-green messages. Most importantly, it possesses certain characteristics of the genre of advertising that automatically construct the reader as the consumers and individualists. Such a stance resonates with the principles of capitalism and contributes to its cult of consumption, which is not typically expected from vegetarian discourse. The most visible linguistic features characterising the discourse of advertising that have been found in the analysed text embrace the use of personal pronouns and informal style to address the readers and build group identity, numerous imperatives, positive claims about the future, modal verbs, and comparatives. Thus, the text constructs vegetarianism as a product that reflects the dominance of the omnipresent commodification identified by Fairclough (1989). Simultaneously, the potential members of the organisations are represented as consumers rather than followers of green philosophy and their relations with the organisation are hierarchical. The most important conclusion drawn from Marco's study is that the distribution of unecological messages is not limited to ordinary or openly unecological discourses, but it also characterises green discourses that might be interpreted as the reflection of the dominating trend in our society (e.g. commodification).

1.5.4. Ecologisation of language

One of the major issues addressed by ecolinguists is whether ecolinguistic criticism of language should be oriented towards language change or aimed at raising language awareness. On the one hand, the idea of applying the principles of political correctness or verbal hygiene to ecological linguistics, which have arisen from feminist criticism and consist of proscribing certain unfavoured forms and prescribing others (Cameron, 1995), finds some enthusiasts. For example, in her controversial book *Animal equality: Language and liberation* Dunayer (2001) assumes that through the reproduction of its ideologically biased forms language strengthens the discrimination of species and exploitation of animals. Based on an analysis of specimens from the discourse of hunters, sportfishers and zoo-keepers, the author produces a list of guidelines to oppose this discrimi-

nation referred to as speciesism. It contains a lengthy 23 page list of terms and expressions that should be abandoned and their corresponding alternative substitutes. For example, in order to expose cruelty inflicted on animals by humans, Dunayer (2001) recommends substituting "wildlife" with "free-living nonhumans" (ibidem: 189), "overhunting" with "genocide by hunting" (ibid: 190), "play a fish" with "torture a fish" (ibidem: 191), "farm animal" with "food-industry captive" (ibid: 193) and "cattle abuser" for "cowboy" (ibid: 194).

However, the majority of ecolinguists, including the author of the present work, reject the idea of "ecological correctness", perceiving it as "a form of linguistic conservatism or old-fashioned purism" (Fill, 2001: 45). The criticism of language is non-normative and it does not aspire to change the language system (Finke, 1983; Trampe, 1990; Fill, 1993). Therefore, it might be naturally placed within the Critical Language Awareness Movement or "ecoliteracy" (Fill, 2001: 51). The negation of verbal hygiene or "discourse engineering" (Alexander, 2009: 22) has evolved from the tenets of deep ecologisation of language that perceive language change as a long-lasting, evolutionary process. As put forward by Goatly (2001), no human intervention is required to regulate language and its use since languages will adjust to new ecological conditions and undergo an adequate transformation, finally resulting in diminishing environmental degradation. Deep ecologisation is contrasted with "surface ecologization" of discourse, manifested in the saturation of discourse (e.g. discourse of advertising or political discourse) with environmental vocabulary (Fill, 2001: 50).

Goatly (2007) argues that Hallidayan "congruent grammar" is not "natural". In his view, the categorisation into natural (standard) and metaphorical (nonstandard) conceptualisations is regulated by social conventions. Contemporarily, grammatical metaphors promoting a new, ecological worldview are more and more widespread. They originate in perceptual-cognitive processes that are manifested in symbolism, empirical experience, circumstances, as well as creative, unconventional representation of activities and their objects, deconstructing collocations which blur the reification of the object that becomes utterly dependent on the activity, etc. (Goatly, 2007: 306-332). As Goatly further argues (2007: 332):

Some models one is willing to accept in the quest for truth. But we have to recognize that truth is relative to purpose. For architects the earth is flat, for astronauts it is, more or less, spherical. If our purpose is the long-term survival of the planet then truth will be whatever promotes that survival, and the metaphorical models will be selected accordingly. Semiosis certainly is grounded in our interaction with a real world. We have no direct access to this world, since perception, cognition and language intervene between the world and us. But we evolve those models of thinking and perceiving which are positively adaptive to our environment.

Overt reservations concerning verbal hygiene are also voiced by Stibbe (2004) who points out that human intervention in regulating language might result in the production of “a discordant discourse with conspicuous ideology” (2004: 5). Drawing parallels between anti-speciesist discourse and an earlier intervention in the fields of sexism and racism, Stibbe (*ibidem*) refers to Fairclough (2003a: 25), who notes that “some (but only some)... discursive intervention smacked of the arrogance, self-righteousness and Puritanism of an ultra-left politics, and [has] caused widespread resentment even among people basically committed to anti-racism, anti-sexism, etc.”. Stibbe (*ibidem*) also expresses his resentment concerning the prescription of alternative words which might bring adverse effects. This was actually the case with anti-sexist language campaigns which had to “define themselves in contradistinction to what has been defined as ‘political correctness’ by the media” (Mills, 2003: 90; cited in Stibbe, 2004: 6).

Steciąg (2012: 41), however, argues that the majority of ecolinguists take a less radical position towards verbal hygiene and promotes involvement of linguists in developing critical language awareness that will evolve in accordance with the changing perception of ecological issues and their importance in the life of societies and individuals. Such a sociolinguistic approach also involves investigating how language functions in communication and specifying “ecologically best communication practices” (Bang and Døør, 2007: 183-189; after Steciąg, 2012: 41), which take into consideration the intentions of the communicators as well as their relationships with the environment and a particular text/discourse is embedded in. From their perspective, communication is understood as the ecological activity of animate beings rather than the mechanical activity of machines (*ibidem*, 183-189; after Steciąg, 2012: 41). Thus, issues related to verbal hygiene should be part of the reflection on the environmental adequacy of particular practices in and between given cultures and communities, taking into account other species and nature in general. A similar view is also promoted by Steciąg (2012) who applies the criterion of environmental adequacy to the analysis of environmental discourse in public debate.

1.6. Ecolinguistics and the sociocultural approach

Despite the fact that the current work has been primarily inspired by critical ecolinguistics, the explication of the main assumptions of the ecological approach cannot ignore the sociocultural aspects of the ecology of language. In fact, any ecolinguistic study integrates sociocultural factors since “even the simplest environmental influence is either supported or transformed by social

forces" (Sapir, 2001: 13). Steffensen and Fill (2014: 12) view "human (linguistic) interaction" as both constituting and being constituted "by larger social and societal structures that include institutions, economic processes, and sociocultural resources". This scope of interest is, however, characteristic of a number of disciplines that embrace, among others, applied linguistics, discourse studies, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, conversation analysis, etc., which would doubtfully be dubbed ecological. Van Lier (2002: 145) purports that these disciplines are "philosophically very different [from ecological linguistics], because they start out from a selection or system of rules and therefore address only one corner of the ecology".

Differences between the disciplines are also visible in the interpretation of some key notions. For example, the notion of context, focal in traditional sociolinguistics and pragmatics, embraces the physical, social and cultural settings of language production and interpretation (Graddol et al., 1994). In postmodern interactional sociolinguistics context comes to the fore but its traditional perception is challenged by the progressing globalisation (Kramsch and Whiteside, 2008: 655). Additionally, the scholars emphasise the performative character of utterances that are not only set in a particular context but have real power to modify it (Kramsch and Whiteside, 2008: 664). Thus, in contemporary approaches language users play an active role in co-constructing context which itself is positioned as dynamic and changeable (Russel, 2002: 68). The ecological approach also enriches context with a semiotic perspective emphasising that the social and physical aspects of context are based on *semiosis* – the process of meaning-making that is infinite (Lankiewicz, 2015a: 47). As van Lier puts it (2004: 259): "The ecological perspective thus places a strong emphasis on contextualising language into other semiotic systems, and into the contextual world as a whole".

The sociocultural strand of ecolinguistics is firmly embedded in educational contexts, especially those that involve investigating interaction in multilingual and multicultural settings (e.g. Hornberger, 2003 a, b; Haarmann, 1986). These studies, centred on issues pertaining to language policy and planning and extolling "the benefits of multilingual communities" (Hornberger, 2003b; 13), emerge from the Haugenian tradition and its ecology metaphor.

The issues of globalisation and multicultural education, reflecting the complexities of contemporary interactions, particularly inform Kramsch's (2002a, 2002b) and van Lier's (2002) research. In their ecological research set in the multilingual context Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) propose to complement *communicative competence* with *symbolic competence*, defined by Kramsch (2008: 400) as "the ability not only to approximate or appropriate for oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which the language is learned and used". Van Lier also emphasises the role of context in language

learning and points to the connection between cognitive and social process. In the ecological approach to education language and language learning are perceived “as relationships among learners and between learners and the environment” (van Lier, 2004: 258-259). Language is also related to other modes of meaning-making, such as nonverbal, prosodic, visual, etc.

In terms of learning, language emerges: out of semiotic activity. The context is not just there to provide input (linguistic models or object) to a passive recipient. The environment provides a ‘semiotic budget’ (analogous to the energy budget of an ecosystem) within which the active learner engages in meaning-making activities together with others, who may be more, equally, or less competent in linguistic terms. The semiotic budget does not refer to the amount of input available, nor the amount of input that is enhanced for comprehension, but to the opportunities for meaningful action that the situation affords. (van Lier, 2000: 252)

Theoretical foundations inspiring sociocultural ecolinguists are indeed diverse. For example, van Lier’s works echo “Gibson’s ecological theory of perception, Peirce’s theory of signs, and Bakhtin’s theory of language [...] [and] Vygotsky’s theory of mental development” (van Lier, 2002: 151). In van Lier’s (2004) writings special attention is paid to the concept of *affordance*. The very concept of affordance derives from ecology but it was coined by Gibson (1986), an American psychologist, in his seminal work on visual perception. As Gibson (1986: 127) puts it: “affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill” and “refers to both the environment and the animal”. The relationship between the animal and the environment is complementary. An illustrative example of an affordance put forward by Gibson are terrestrial surfaces that might be used and modified due to their users’ particular needs. Animals, including man, interact with the environment, interpret particular affordances and act upon them.

Transferring the term to applied linguistics, van Lier (2000: 252) refers to Gibson’s ecological theory of perception that defines an affordance as “a property of neither the actor nor of an object; it is a relationship between the two”. Further, the scholar (van Lier, 2000: 253) also quotes two other definitions. The first one was proposed by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991: 2003): “affordances consist in the opportunities for interaction that things in the environment possess relative to sensorimotor capacities of the animal”. The second one was developed by Shotton and Newson (1982: 34) who delineate affordance as “demands and requirements, opportunities and limitations, rejections and invitations, enablements and constraints”. In his more recent work van Lier (2004: 91) refers to two more definitions. One, put forward by Neisser (1987: 1), defines affordances as “relations of possibility between animals and their environments”, and another, proposed by Forrester (1999: 88) who

views affordance as “immediately recognizable projections, predictions and perceived consequences of making this (and not that) utterance at any given time”. Van Lier (2004: 91) accentuates the central notions in these definitions, embracing relations, possibility, opportunity, immediacy, and interaction, and completes them with his perception of affordance as a means “available to the person to do something with” and “action in potential” emerging in interaction “with the physical and social world”. In other words, affordances emerge from different social practices. In the context of language learning, van Lier (2000: 246) purports that “from an ecological perspective, the learner is immersed in an environment full of potential meanings. These meanings are available gradually as the learner acts within and with the environment”. Thus, in his view, action, perception and interpretation are prerequisites for the emergence of meaning (van Lier, 2004: 92).

1.7. Ecolinguistics in Poland

Zdzisław Wąsik (1993) derives the origins of Polish ecolinguistics from the work of Leon Zawadowski published in 1966. In his *Lingwistyczna teoria języka* [ang. Linguistic theory of language], published prior to Haugen’s landmark paper, Zawadowski (1966) formulated an ecological-relative and lexical-relative definition of language. Wysoczański (1999) also observes that certain ecological traces are present in Furdal’s (1977) work that promotes taking a wider perspective on language dubbed *open linguistics*. In his paper presenting the research and methodological ramification of the ecology of language perceived by him as a discipline of a heterogenic language description, Wysoczański (1999) himself takes a strong pro-protective slant. The scholar points to particular circumstances that appeared after the political transformation in central Europe at the end of the 1980s that resulted in intensive language contact, especially the domination of English. In Poland such ecologically motivated concerns regarding the Polish language were voiced by Pisarek (1997) and materialised in the foundation of Rada Języka Polskiego [Eng. Council for the Polish Language] that aims at protecting Polish from foreign influences and delineates domestic trends in language policy. Nevertheless, despite their precursory character, these works are not generally considered the cornerstones of ecolinguistics in Poland that evolved from the Haugenian heritage.

A systematic development of ecolinguistics in Poland, both as a field of academic research and didactics, is, however, owed to Stanisław Puppel – the founder and head of the Department of Ecommunication in Poland at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and co-founder of the Laborato-

ry of Language Ecology at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. Over that last 14 years of its existence the department has published over 250 works embedded in the broadly understood field of ecolinguistics. A significant number of these publications use ecology in a metaphorical macro sense and deal with issues related to language contact, maintenance and protection.

Accordingly, the main themes strongly reverberating in numerous writings of Stanisław Puppel are those related to natural language diversity and protection, as well as language planning, sustainability and linguistic imperialism (e.g. 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2013, 2014). The flagship study on the perception of natural languages conducted by S. Puppel and J. Puppel (2005) focused on the triad embracing Polish (the native language), English (the global language) and German (the neighbouring language). One of the practical implications drawn from this study is the idea of teaching a foreign language in an ecologically balanced way in the triad: native language – global language – second foreign language, which was empirically verified and promoted by Wiertelowska (2011b). In fact, one of the most recent paths in S. Puppel's output is the application of ecological concepts to FL education. This interest materialised in the organisation of a conference on ecolinguistic motifs in FL teaching and learning in 2014 and the publication of a volume on eco-glottodidactics (Puppel, 2015a, 2015b).

Stanisław Puppel introduced the term “natural language robustness” (NLR) to ecolinguistics (2007b) which is used in the context of language competition. The competition between natural languages might bring different outcomes, ranging from the death of less robust languages or strengthening of a particular language that might become hegemonic and take the role of a global language. According to Puppel (2007b), natural language robustness is determined by sixteen parameters that might be further grouped into:

- internal parameters, embracing types of modalities used in current communicative practice and communicative fitness, dependent on the diversification and size of NL resources in the three communicative niches (i.e. the daily routine and general culture niche, the professional language niche and the citizenship niche),
- external parameters of NLR that depend on a range of a NL territorial and demographic characteristics include the size of the territorial range of a NL, population mobility, as well as a number of factors related to a particular language planning policy and history of language contacts.

This concept is further elaborated in Puppel's more recent publication (Puppel, 2013) where he proposes to use a “fuzzy” approach to NLR.

In his paper “Remarks on sustainability of natural languages in the cultural-institutional perspective”, Puppel (2009c: 275) dubs language “a cultural phenomenon [that] may be regarded as an institution”. Similarly to institutions, the ontology and dynamics of natural languages might be characterised by the interplay of four parameters: militancy, trade-offs, utility and display, which altogether form the model of the Imperial Tetragon of Institutions. Moreover, all the contemporary natural languages are seen as coexisting within the boundaries of “the natural language global arena” (NaLGA), where they compete for their strongest possible position (Puppel 2009a). For this reason, under specific socio-cultural conditions any natural language might be potentially “imperial” or aim to become dominant and expansionist (2009c: 275). A particular status of a given natural language within NaLGA is determined by the interplay of the four aforementioned parameters, whose proportion and dominating tendencies might change during the lifecycle of a particular natural language. These attributes are distributed in an asymmetrical rather than balanced way and are part of the overall ecology of the language institution, constructing, for example, the power-oriented “militancy ecology”, compromise-oriented “trade-offs ecology”, “utility ecology” marked by features of usefulness, or “display ecology” characterised by exposure tendencies.

In addition to contributing to the areas related to language planning, Puppel introduced ecological thinking to communication studies, sketching the frameworks for the new subdiscipline that he dubbed “ecocommunication”. In his paper entitled “DRAAM – An outline of the domain-resource-agent-access-management (DRAAM) model of human communication: towards an ecology of human communication”, Puppel (2004) specifies the parameters of communication and defines key terms that were further elaborated upon his output (e.g. human vs. non human communicating agent, operational fitness, language and speech resources, communicative competence and its management, communicative tolerance and commitments, etc.). In his paper, Puppel (2004) also proposed a typology of human communicating agents (HCAs) classified as syndromes with names inspired by literary protagonists, namely, Oskar from G. Grass’ *The tin drum*, Gulliver from J. Swift’s *Gulliver’s travels* and Petronius from H. Sienkiewicz’s *Quo vadis*. The “Oskar Syndrome” characterises language and non-language resource managers whose language resources are low and remain undeveloped irrespective of the context of communication and their participants. By contrast, communicators typified as those who have the “Gulliver Syndrome” are recognised by their high language and non-language resources as well as their ability to manage them effectively and adjust to the context of their interaction. The “Petronius Syndrome”, on the other hand, refers to communicators who always use their very high language resources and do not moderate them even if the context requires

it. Puppel (2004), however, does not impose any prescriptive guidelines that favour or recommend a particular type of communicative behaviour, thus leaving open the question concerning the preferable type of communicators in human communication. Nevertheless, formulating his recommendations for education, the author opts for:

[t]he type of human communicating agent who will show both a drive towards attaining higher language and non-language resources, higher communicative competence and higher communicative competence management skills, and who will also strive towards attaining stability with regard to the maximum amount of language resources and maximum performance skills in the face of a host of variable parameters which most naturally encompass human communication. It is hoped that in this way, with the robust communicators being at the top of the hierarchy of the whole population of human communicating agents participating in various human communication networks, both the human communication potential, language and non-language resources and communicative competence management will be kept on sufficiently diversified and ecologically sustainable and resilient levels. (Puppel, 2004: 22)

Another important contribution to communication studies is Puppel's (2007a) paper discerning the notion of interlingualism vs. translanguaging and intercommunication vs. transcommunication. The very use of the prefixes *inter-* vs. *trans-* reflects the approach to the relations between natural languages and communication practices. The "INTER" perspective accepts the rivalry between the native language (L1) and the second language (L2) and promotes the language-communicative skills of the dominant language. Thus, it leads to the marginalisation of the native language by its own native speakers and creates conditions that are inauspicious to the maintenance of linguistic diversity. The mechanisms of the "INTER" perspective have been illustrated by Puppel and Puppel's (2005) study, which showed that native speakers of a given language might consciously position it as a "substratic" language in relation to L2, ascribed the "superstratic" status. In other words, native communicators, both at an individual and collective level, downgrade their native language and give it a "subordinate" status.

Puppel (2007a) argues that the negative effect of the "INTER" perspective might be reduced by the application of the "TRANS" perspective that endorses linguistic diversity and the ecological sustainability of the highest possible number of natural languages. Moreover, it simultaneously enhances multilingualism of both individuals and the whole ethnic communities as well as the development of cultural-linguistic-communicative competence and skills of the native language.

The concept of "INTER" vs. "TRANS" communication has been applied in numerous studies, mostly within the scope of foreign language teaching (e.g. Wiertelowska, 2011a, 2011b). Grześkowiak (2010), however, adapted it to the newly-emerged field of landscape linguistics which reflects linguistic

changes in the city space invoked by a particular language planning and policy. The legal status of minority, regional and global languages is regulated by international legislature and the language policy of a particular country. In her monograph the author (*ibidem*) analyses the city linguistic landscapes of the central parts of Warsaw and London as well as three regions of London (Bangla Town, China Town and the vicinity of Edgware Street) inhabited by ethnic minorities that did not find their counterparts in the relatively ethnically monolithic capital of Poland. The analysis, informed by a meticulous analysis of legal documents concerning language use in both countries, aimed at characterising the coexistence of natural languages in the public space and specifying the profile of the two cities under study within the framework of INTER and TRANS perspective. The results revealed that the linguistic landscape of Warsaw manifests features characterising the INTER perspective. The top-down signs, i.e. official signs, the placement of which is controlled by the government, were dominated by the use of the Polish language. Thus, in the public domain the official language remains robust and maintains its leading position.

Different trends were, however, discerned in the private sphere where bottom-up signs were predominantly in Polish but the presence of English was strongly marked. For example, a number of bottom-up signs were formulated solely in English, yet their equivalents in Polish were not provided. Bilingual signs rather demonstrated the equal status of both languages which was interpreted as a symptom of lowering the status of Polish and its colonisation by English. This apparent external *linguo-pressure* leads to the gradual marginalisation of Polish. By contrast, London slants towards the *trans* perspective. The status of English is high both in private and official signs despite a strong linguistic diversity and noticeable presence of minority languages.

Haugenian inspirations are also present in Elżbieta Wąsik's (1999; 2005) research on minority languages as well as her publications centring on ecological grammar (e.g. Wąsik, 2004, 2007, 2010; Wąsik and Wąsik, 2004; Wąsik and Wąsik, 2012). In her writings, Elżbieta Wąsik (2003, 2007) takes a holistic and dynamic perspective on human linguistics, strongly accentuating the constant change of linguistic properties that emerge from the participation of individuals "in social linkages as assemblage groups (...) dependent upon biological, psychical, social, cultural, technical, political, economic, and other ecological conditionings" (E. Wąsik, 2003: 260). Thus, the scholar integrates parameters not only related to "external" environment, but also accentuates the role of the "internal" environment, taking into account the psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic aspects of human interaction. The perception of language is not limited to that of a communication tool since language is positioned as a specific element constructing "grammar" of human relationships contained

in “communicative linkages”. By proposing “ecological grammar”, which integrates verbal and nonverbal modes of communication and therefore challenges the transformative-generative paradigm and its “universal grammar”, Elżbieta Wąsik (2007) sheds new light on the understanding of language and communication.

Even though ecocritical discourse studies have been thriving in recent years, this strand of ecolinguistics is rather underrepresented in Poland. A significant contribution to the study of discourse from the ecolinguistic perspective, firmly enrooted in the Hallidayan approach, has been provided by Steciąg whose numerous publications mainly investigate the Polish environmental discourse in the public sphere (e.g. 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014). In her monograph Steciąg (2012a) shows the disintegrating character of the environmental discourse in the public debate in Poland at the beginning of the 21st century, which contrasts with the contemporary consensus-oriented communication culture. Elementary concepts in the environmental discourse debate are blurred and undergo constant (re)negotiation or manipulation dictated by current communication goals. The very presence of the environmental discourse in public debate in Poland is marginalised and rationed by the media whose repertoire of ecological themes is rather limited. This marginalisation results, to a great extent, from the incompatibility of the ecological worldview, decentralising the position of humans and perceiving them as part of nature rather than its suppressors, with the pervading anthropocentric perspective. On the one hand, at the discursive level these two competitive worldviews are manifested in public debate in the euphemisation of the ecological devastation and the common use of dysphemism, mainly based on death and killing. As Steciąg (2012a: 322) observes, these two perspectives might be integrated by the anthropomorphisation of the inanimate world that attempts to diminish the opposition of man (the superior being) to other (inferior) species and incorporating it into the *Mitwelt* community. This, however, frequently leads to axiological chaos and the trivialisation of ecological issues that cannot be constrained by such an “embodiment”. Contemporary environmental discourse has a global and abstract character, thus it seems rather difficult to be anchored in everyday life. The ongoing discussion takes a global perspective, not only in relation to truly universal environmental issues, such as global warming or environmental crisis, but also to local problems. In consequence, environmental problems become intangible and unreal and as such tend to be perceived as nonexistent.

The ecocritical discourse analysis undertaken by Steciąg (2012a) revealed a number of trends. First of all, the circulation of ecological terms unveiled the interdiscourse contacts of environmental discourse – especially its relations with economic, educational and legal discourses as well as socio-politi-

cal terminology that model the organisation of plant and animal ecosystems in a way similar to the organisation of the state. Moreover, a number of terms related to ecology have been incorporated into mass culture and have undergone a complete anthropocentrality.

The distribution of flagship words, representing both values and anti-values in discourse, reflects not only the emotional intensity of the environmental debate, but its plurality. Thus, the saturation of discourse with flagship words manifests the growing importance of environmental issues in public space and acts as an indexical signal that allows a certain evaluation of the positioning of environmental discourse in a particular social reality. The case of the Rospuda river valley in Poland of 2007, which involved a conflict between the inhabitants of the region opting for the construction of a motorway, and environmental activists protesting against this endeavour, might be put forward as an illustrative example of the functioning of the aforementioned mechanism. In public debate in Poland "Rospuda" has become the indexical signal positioning the discursive community of ecologists fighting for the preservation of nature against all odds, in opposition to the local community. This conflict considered to be the first "eco-civil war" in Poland, has drawn the attention of the public to environmental problems and reduced the anthropocentric dichotomy in the perception of nature. As Steciąg (2012a: 359) purports, this has led to the loss of "ecological innocence" in the public debate as the conflict has defied taken-for-granted, unreflective perceptions of man-nature relations and "moved debates on ecology to another level – from the level of 'obviousness' to the level of 'pseudo-obviousness', which is used by its participants in a more conscious, detached and often cynical way".

Steciąg (2012a) also points to the uniformity and stereotypicality of the representation of ecological issues in public debates, particularly visible in metaphors, the source domains of which are limited to the areas of war, economy and religion. As a result, environmental discourse undergoes colonisation due to the implementation of common conceptual frameworks that restrict alternative patterns of imagining and interpreting reality. The applied discursive strategies, including personalisation, antagonistic attitude, objectification-subjectification, prioritising, on the other hand, have a direct impact on the image of environmental activists and environmental discourses.

As Steciąg (2012a) concludes, despite its expansiveness and its orientation towards the communicative core of the debate, ecological discourse has been pushed out of the zone of a relative social consensus. It tends to be trivialised and conditionally accepted in its nostalgic version; thus, its accessibility is confined to those participants of public debate who are already engaged and interested in environmental issues.

Issues central to the sociocultural strand of ecolinguistics resonate particularly forcefully in the works of Hadrian Lankiewicz who approaches the problem of language awareness from the perspective of the ecological metaphor (Lankiewicz et al., 2014; Lankiewicz, 2014). Lankiewicz applies his divagations to the field of FL education and focuses on the self-marginalisation and empowerment of FL teachers and students as non-native speakers of a foreign language (Lankiewicz et al., 2015; Lankiewicz and Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2016, respectively).

Following Kumaravadivelu (2012), Lankiewicz takes the “post” perspective in language teaching and acquisition, characterised as postnational, postmodern, postcolonial, postransmission, postmethod. In his view, this stance is compatible with the ecological metaphor in research on language and language acquisition and is reflected in Lankiewicz’s papers that elaborate several main themes. First of all, the scholar swerves away from the embedded perception of language as a socio-cultural monolith and the accompanying vision of input in language acquisition (Lankiewicz, 2011) that might be replaced with the emergentive conceptualisation of language processes (Lankiewicz, 2010). Another discernible theme in Lankiewicz’s output pertains to the significance of variability in language acquisition (Lankiewicz, 2012; Lankiewicz, 2015b).

A number of Lankiewicz’s papers deal with the positioning of the language user in the centre of all language processes (e.g. Lankiewicz, 2013; Lankiewicz et al., 2014). In fact, the latter theme has marked its strongest presence in the volume *Language experiences: Learning and teaching revisited*, co-edited by Lankiewicz (Lankiewicz and Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2014), and its opening chapter delineating the concept of languaging and its pedagogical implications (Lankiewicz, 2014b). In their joint-paper Wąsikiewicz-Firlej and Lankiewicz (2015) ponder on the application of biographical narratives to reflection on the professional formation of FL teachers (2015). The authors (Lankiewicz and Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2015) also apply the ecological metaphor to the context of educating translators and interpreters. Yet, the fully-fledged exposition of the theoretical and empirical assumptions of teacher critical language awareness culminated in the model of Teacher Critical Ecological Language Awareness (TCELA) proposed in his voluminous monograph (Lankiewicz, 2015a).

1.8. Current status of ecolinguistics: Towards an integrative approach?

The previous sections have aimed to present an overview of the origins of ecolinguistics and its development, with a special emphasis put on its lack of unity and dispersion. More than forty years after its symbolic emergence

marked with Haugen's landmark paper, ecolinguistics as a discipline is still rather beyond the mainstream and offers highly diversified yet fragmentary views on language and ecology as well as theory and methods. In fact, this disintegration of the discipline, referred to by van Lier (2004: 2) as "compartmentalization" or "balkanization" of knowledge, attracts the main criticism of ecolinguistics based on the alleged lack "of its research instruments" and "definite boundaries between academic realms" (Lankiewicz, 2015: 72). Gerbig (2003) also points out that criticism of ecolinguistics derives from the adoption of a very wide definition of ecology by ecolinguists that seemingly makes it difficult to bridge a plethora of different approaches.

Nevertheless, despite Fill's calls to integrate "metaphoric" and "non-metaphoric" approaches to ecology voiced in his renown paper "Ecolinguistics – state of the art 1998" (Fill, 2001; Originally published in 1998), these two strands of ecolinguistics are still easily discernible. Fill's (2001: 43) perception of the two Haugenian and Hallidayan traditions as "complementary rather than mutually exclusive" was rejected by Steffensen (2007: 8), who put forward the argument that there existed "convincing theoretical and practical reasons to abandon it". Nevertheless, seven years later in their joint paper the two scholars (Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 16) proposed to integrate their attempt to "dissolve the antithesis within a unified ecological language science" instead of disputing over "the peaceful coexistence of Haugenian/Hallidayan views".

The problem of compartmentalisation of ecolinguistics is also addressed by Stibbe (2014), pointing to divergent perceptions of the discipline by ecolinguists, who remain strongly attached to the dogmatic classification of metaphoric and non-metaphoric approaches. In his own definition of ecolinguistics Stibbe emphasises its role in "questioning the stories that underpin our current unsustainable civilisation, exposing those stories that are clearly not working, that are leading to ecological destruction and social injustice, and finding new stories that work better in the conditions of the world that we face" (Stibbe, 2014: 117). His approach, characterised by a deep concern with social injustice and the relation between discourse and environmental destruction, the application of CDA, as well as the literate perception of ecology "as the life-sustaining interactions of organisms (including humans) with other organisms and the natural environment" (ibidem: 118), is firmly embedded in the critical strand of ecolinguistics. Thus, the objects of analysis are discourses that influence the relationships between humans as well as other organism and the environment, which include narrations pertaining to ecology and the environment and an assortment of discourses qualified as destructive (e.g. those related to neoliberalism or consumerism) due to their lack of ecological consideration and therefore instigating ecologically destructive behaviour (Stibbe, 2014: 118).

A relational character of ecolinguistics is emphasised by numerous scholars representing different strands of the discipline. For example, Wendel (2005: 51) characterises the ecological approach to language as taking into account “the complex network of relations occurring between environment, languages and people speaking these languages”, where the environment embraces biological, physical and social aspects. In a similar vein, ecological linguistics is deemed “a study of language relations (of thought, action, power), rather than as objects (words, sentences, rules)” correlating verbal and nonverbal aspects of meaning-making (van Lier, 2000: 251). Therefore, relational aspects of language and its contextualisation in a broadly understood environment, seen as a complex combination of social, ecological and biological facets, might act as a common denominator that bridges various contributions to ecolinguistics. Additionally, what cements diverging perspectives and approaches in ecolinguistics is its orientation towards justice and sustainability in their social, educational and ecological dimensions: “whether an ecolinguist works with bilingualism, language acquisition and language socialisation, political discourse or environmental problems, he/she stands up for minority language and its learners, for the victims of political exploitation and ecological devastation” (Kramsch and Steffensen, 2008: 19-20). Concluding, it needs to be stated that different currents in ecolinguistics are not mutually exclusive or competitive to each other. Instead, they come across as dispersed and lacking real interaction. As Steffensen and Fill (2014: 21) metaphorically observe, this disintegration weakens the discipline and diminishes its importance:

What is the use of letting the thousand flowers blossom, if we can never appreciate the whole field? What is the worth of exploring our own small island, if we neglect the rest of the archipelago? (Steffensen and Fill, 2014: 21)

Thus, I also postulate to use the term “ecolinguistics” as the umbrella term integrating different approaches in order to consolidate the discipline and avoid its further compartmentalisation. The understanding of ecolinguistics in this work is most closely related to the capacious and integrative definition of the discipline proposed by Alexander and Stibbe (2014: 105) which classifies it as “the study of the impact of language on the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment” and strives for “preserving relationships which sustain life”. Accordingly, ecolinguistics in this view is neither limited to “the analysis of ecological discourse”, i.e. the analysis of texts that deal with environmental problems or ecological concerns, nor the metaphor of “language ecology” (ibidem: 104) most commonly applied to language contact. Thus, ecolinguistics takes a much wider, integrative perspective and investigates

all discourses or forms of language contact that might potentially have an impact on human behaviour and, in consequence, on literally understood ecosystems.

1.9. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to define the ecolinguistic paradigm – pivotal in this work. Thus, I intended to provide a cogent summary of the history of ecolinguistics and its main developments. The discussion was initiated by an attempt to define the notion of ecology, followed by the discussion on the concepts of deep and shallow ecology and ecosophy proposed by Arne Næs that were later echoed in numerous works. Traces of ecological thinking of language were also identified in the works of von Humboldt, Wittgenstein and Sapir and Whorf, dubbed early progenitors of ecolinguistics. The beginning of the field proper is, however, symbolically marked with the 1970 talk delivered by Einar Haugen and the publication of *The ecology of language* (1972) that opened the door to challenging the perception of the relations between language and its environment. Haugen's contributions inspired numerous linguists worldwide and gave rise to the so called "Haugenian tradition", labelled by Fill (2001) as the non-metaphoric approach. The influences of this strain of ecolinguistics are traced, for example, in the developments of the Bielefeld School, the Odense School as well as the works of S. Puppel (e.g. 2007a, b; 2009b, d), Wąsik (1999; 2003 2005), Wąsik and Wąsik (2012).

The second major strand of ecolinguistics emerged from the work of Michael Halliday, who in his breakthrough paper read at the World Conference of Applied Linguistics held in Thessaloniki in 1990, first connected biological ecology as well as ecological and environmental issues to language. Halliday's insights enthused a plethora of papers criticising language use and language system that now form, as Fill (2001) dubs it, the "Hallidayan tradition" or the non-metaphoric approach. Within the Hallidayan tradition further subdivisions emerged, namely, those focusing on the criticism of the language system (e.g. Goatly) and text-oriented ecolinguistics. The latter strand has in fact inspired the current work embedded in the critical tradition. For this reason, the next subsection presented a review of ecolinguistic studies applying CDA. Special attention was paid to the analysis of "destructive" discourse (mainly those related to classical economics and those saturated with neoliberal ideology) and their impact on the environment embracing the biological, physical and social aspects. Themes related to links between discourse and ideology as well as CDA and their place in ecolinguistics will be further elaborated on in chapter 4.

The next section focused on the sociocultural strand of ecolinguistics represented mainly by North-American ecolinguists (e.g. van Lier, Kramsch). Even though this approach marked its particularly strong presence in FL education, its main postulates, especially those pertaining to language contextualisation, sociocultural construction of meaning, interest in themes related to power and justice, strongly resonate with critical ecolinguistics.

Despite recent calls (Fill, 2001; Steffensen and Fill, 2014; Stibbe, 2015) to integrate different ecological approaches to language under one umbrella term of ecolinguistics, the field still remains diffuse and compartmentalised. Yet, the call for the *integrative ecolinguistics* is also contained in the present work, especially in reference to the inclusion of the ecolinguistic paradigm in the critical analysis of discourse that will be further addressed and elaborated on in chapter 4. Such integration would introduce the ecolinguistic paradigm to a wider audience and reinforce it as a discipline, warding off any possible criticism.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Concept of Identity in the Organisational Context

Introduction

In the 21st century the notion of identity has emerged as one of the key concepts in the humanities and social sciences that pertains to both individuals and organisations and is present in every social practice (Foucault, 1984) within which the primary role is played by discourse practices (Fairclough, 1989; 2000a). Despite its significance and centrality in today's world, defining identity still remains an extremely difficult task. Semantically, the word *identity* has not undergone significant changes since the sixteenth century when it was first recorded in 1570 in the form of *identitie* which basically stood for "sameness", "oneness" (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 18). The contemporary use of the notion of identity as perception of the *self* stems from the period of Enlightenment and its key concepts of rationalism and idealism developed by Descartes and Locke. Yet, in the Romantic period the understanding of identity was centred on the individual and shifted towards "personal self-fulfilment and improvement", "self expression" and "harmony with the self" (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 19). In fact, this transformation laid the foundations for the contemporary pursuit of identity, often reduced to the "quest for *authentic* self in popular culture, the *real* you defined by the use of adequate consumer goods, an appeal frequently raised in advertising messages" (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2012: 14). With the rise of modernism identity was viewed through the prism of Freud's developments, especially the impact of the unconscious on the conscious and the role of the process of socialisation. An interest in the psycho-social factors was paralleled with the rise of discourse studies that ascribed a pivotal role to the acquisition of a particular discourse in the process of the formation of the individual understood as a construction of a congruent self and defining relations with others (cf. Sarup, 2005). Post-modernism with its central concepts of "fragmentation", "fluidity", "hybridity", "crossing" or "dislocation of the self" (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 18-22) again reinterpreted the concept of identity that reflected the instability of the

contemporary globalised world ruled by the mass media, which is sometimes envisaged as *simulacrum* (Baudrillard, 1988b).

The present chapter aims at defining the concept of identity in the organisational setting. In discussing the problem I will take an interdisciplinary perspective that draws on contributions representing the fields of social psychology, sociology, discourse studies, organisational studies and corporate communication studies, construed in the ecological paradigm. One of the main challenges undertaken in this chapter is delineating semantic boundaries between the notions of identity, image and reputation whose meanings often overlap across disciplines. Another important aim is to discuss the impact of the relatively newly-emerged corporate ethical and environmental concerns on the construction of corporate identity.

2.1. Identity vs. personality

Seemingly, the concepts of *personality* and *identity* are used interchangeably to address the essential question of “who we are”. These two concepts, however, are not synonymous. They are embedded in two different academic disciplines – psychology and sociology – that have a distinctive scope of interest, research methods and levels of analysis. For this reason, a clear demarcation between the two concepts is well-substantiated from the perspective of this work.

The term *personality*, central in the psychological domain, refers to individual cognitive structures and processes (embracing attitudes, dispositions, temperaments and stereotypes) that affect our behaviour. These inner structures might be genetically transmitted or formed through the process of socialisation, mainly in the early stages of life. Research on personality, the vast majority of which might be categorised as quantitative, is conducted at the level of individual cognition and primarily focuses on identifying and categorising different types of personality, and determining how they influence human behaviour. The key assumption underlying personality studies is that “human beings are discrete, independent entities with unique characteristics” (Kenny et al., 2011: 3). These characteristics are viewed as rather rigid and relatively stable.

By contrast, the term *identity* might be applied to both individuals and groups, and as such it remains within the scope of interest of sociology, social psychology, politics, cultural studies and discourse studies. From the perspective of these disciplines, it is not viewed as a set of inner cognitive structures but interpreted through the lens of the self positioning towards other(s), as well as others’ perception of a particular individual. Thus, personality might

be one of the aspects of identity that incorporates both the psychological and sociological dimensions. As opposed to personality, identity is a highly contextualised, dynamic construct that is shaped and transformed in social interactions. Identity research, focused on the analysis of interaction between an individual and a particular group or society, usually involves the application of qualitative approaches. Another specific aspect of identity appears in the role of power in constructing an individual sense of self that entails a reproduction of a range of inequalities based on the belonging to a particular group in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, etc. (Kenny et al., 2011: 5).

2.2. Identity vs. self

The examination of the concepts of *self* and *identity* has generated an impressive body of literature across disciplines, primarily addressing the question concerning the extent to which individuals manage their actions, or are formed by society and institutions (e.g. Jenkins, 1996; Hogg and Williams, 2000). As Webb (2006) notes, in Modernist European and North American social sciences a clear distinction has been made between:

[t]he sense of continuity of a unique self, and the construction of multiple intersecting and often contradictory social identities. The latter entails socially constructed, multiple differences and inequalities between groups and categories who may never interact with each other, but have characteristics imputed to them by virtue of education, occupation, generation, religion, sex, nationality, ethnicity and so on. (Webb, 2006: 15)

The concept of self acknowledges the experience of a creative individual who is capable of taking reflective and planned actions towards themselves and others, modifying and to some extent controlling them in order to exert certain influence on their surroundings (ibidem). As Craib (1998: 2) expressed it: "The central feature of the self in modern society is its reflexivity, a constant questioning and reconstruction of the self in a lifetime project. We are constantly constructing and revising our personal stories and so constructing ourselves".

The assumption that individuals construct their sense of self through interaction with others is the building block of social interactionism, founded by its leading thinker – George Herbert Mead, whose original theory of the development of the self through communication influenced the work of Jürgen Habermas. In Mead's view: "It is through the ability to be the other at the same time that he is himself that the symbol becomes significant" (Mead, 1922: 161; cited in Gillespie, 2005: 2). Accordingly, children develop their identity through the process of socialisation based on discerning "the generalized other" represented initially by parents, caregivers, and then gradually

extended circles and other members of a given community. Interactions with others, embedded in a particular socio-cultural context, provide individuals with feedback concerning expected and approved behavioural patterns, for example, the assigned social roles dependent on gender (Mead, 1934).

Furthermore, Mead (1934) makes a distinction between the “I” and the “me”, corresponding, respectively, with Freud’s “ego” and “censor”. The “me” is developed in interaction with others, through observation of their responses and actions. Simultaneously, the “me” controls the “I”, restraining it from taking actions disapproved of in a given community. As Mead (1934: 196) puts it: “It is that self which is able to maintain itself in the community, that is recognised in the community in so far as it recognises the others”. The “I”, on the other hand, “is the response of the individual to the attitude of the community as this appears in his own experience. His response to that organized attitude in turn changes it. (...) The ‘I’ appears in our experience in memory.” (ibidem). The “I” can only be externalised through actions or utterances. Our conformity with the social order epitomises the “me” that is constantly present. However, taking a stand against the widely accepted rules, negotiating them, or expressing oneself in any other form, marks the presence of “I”, standing in opposition to “me”. The dominance of the “me” or “I” varies between individuals, however, as Mead (1934) argues, the fully expressed self entails both aspects.

Some of Mead’s ideas might be traced in the works of Erving Goffman (1922-83) who was the main proponent of the dramaturgical perspective based on the analogy between life and theatre. In Goffman’s (1959) view, people, like actors in a theatrical performance, play different roles, which, using Mead’s terminology, might be interpreted as different realisations of “me’s”. The main difference between the two scholars is that Goffman opts for the more conscious, planned staging of “me’s” understood as strategic “image management”. Contrarily to Mead, who perceives “me” as “received and then routinely reproduced by the ‘I’”, Goffman emphasises “the ambivalent and manipulative relationships between the ‘I’ and ‘me’” (Kenny et al., 2011: 25). Thus, individuals are seen as consciously preparing to perform their roles back-stage, while in private or accompanied by family members or closest friends, so as to strictly control their performance for the audience, which takes place front stage.

A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation – this self – is a *product* of a scene that comes off, and is not a *cause* of it. The self, then is a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is resented, and the characteristic issues, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited. (Goffman, 1959: 253)

Goffman (1967: 31) also points to the ambivalence of the concept of self that he defines both as “an image pieced together from the expressive implications of the full flow of events in an undertaking” and “a kind of player in a ritual game who copes honorably or dishonorably, diplomatically or undiplomatically, with judgmental contingencies of the situation (...)”. The first of the two definitions emphasises that the construction of the self is ultimately a conglomerate of various elements, effects of interaction, remaining beyond the individual’s control and often unintentional. Although this line of reasoning has not been taken further by linguists, it seems to be particularly valid in the study of organisational identity, viewed as a product of complex, multilayered social interaction.

2.3. Identity vs. face

Seemingly, the concepts of *face* and *identity* are to a great extent interconnected, especially through their social-interactional characteristic. For example, Goffman’s (1967: 5) definition of face entails the aspect of “image of self”, while Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) define it as “public self-image”. Ting-Toomey (1994: 3) perceives face as an “identity-boundary issue”. Scollon and Scollon (1995: 34-36) have embedded face within the communicative context and define it as the “interpersonal identity of individuals in communication” and the “self as a communicative identity”. As Spencer-Oatey (2007: 639) remarks, there have been numerous debates pertaining to individual vs. relational aspects of face, its public vs. private character, or whether it is a situation-specific or context-independent phenomenon.

As concerns the individual vs. relational aspect of the two notions, a number of scholars (e.g. Lim, 1994; Imahori and Cupach, 2005; Arundale, 2005) argue that identity is situated within individuals while face entails social interaction.

Face... is not equivalent with identity. Both relationships and identity arise and are sustained in communication, but a relationship, and hence face, is a dyadic phenomenon, whereas identity is an individual (and much broader) phenomenon. (Arundale, 2005; cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 643)

Another element differentiating identity from face is that the former involves a certain evaluation of an individual’s qualities by others. The claim for face concerns one’s public image which does not necessarily have to be concomitant with one’s real self. For this reason, face is not equivalent with the psychological concepts of “self-esteem, self-concept, and pride, which can be claimed without regard to the other’s perspective” (Lim, 1994: 210). It should be noted, however, that some social psychologists and communication the-

orists (e.g. Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al., 2005) take a multi-level perspective on identity which integrates self-representation as well as collective and relational construals (cf. Spencer-Oatey, 2007).

In Goffman's (1967: 5) classic definition face is specified as:

[t]he positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes albeit an image that other may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself.

Thus, this conceptualisation of face is relatively convergent with the previously discussed psychological conceptualisations of identity as a construct composed of individual and social attributes. What differentiates these two concepts, though, is the fact that identity entails positive, neutral and negative characteristics, while the attributes associated with face are only limited to the positive ones. A particular evaluation of a given attribute may vary across different individuals and contexts. In other words, an individual may make different face claims based on specific expectations of his/her interactants set in a particular context. For example, in the school context pupils might lose their face if they appear too diligent or studious to their peers. Simultaneously, in individual student-teacher interactions the same students might make face claims to the qualities previously negated in their peer interactions (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 644). It must be also noted that in human interaction: "Ordinarily, maintenance of face is a condition of interaction, not its objective..." (Goffman, 1967: 12). This rule, however, does not always seem to apply to corporate communications who prioritise effective image management rather than real interaction.

Following Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987), Spencer-Oatey (2007: 644) further argues that face is "a vulnerable phenomenon (...) associated with emotional reactions". As Goffman (1967: 6) explains, if we manage to maintain our image in a given interaction we are rather unlikely to be emotional about it. However, if our expectations have not been fulfilled or, quite the contrary, our face perception has exceeded our own expectations in a positive sense, we are prone to experience either negative or positive emotions. This goes in line with Schlenker and Pontari's (2000) contention that individuals' "self presentation concerns (i.e. their concerns about the identity characteristics they wish to convey) can operate in foreground or background modes, but are never absent" (cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 642). The affective dimension of the concept of face is another feature differentiating it from identity, which is not, however, synonymous with a narrower concept of self. Even though individual attributes of identity might be evaluated as positive, negative or neutral, we are not usually affectively sen-

sitive about them. Such sensitivity would imply the involvement of face claims (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 664).

In the light of the above, a number of scholars (Tracy, 1990; Tracy and Baratz, 1994; Spencer-Oatey, 2007, 2008, 2009; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Arundale, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010) reject the dual division of the well-established concept of face into the positive and negative one asserted by Brown and Levinson (1987). More specifically, Arundale (2006, 2009, 2010), Bargiela-Chiappini (2003), Spencer-Oatey (2007, 2008, 2009) and Werkhofer (1992) criticised the model for accentuating the individual dimensions of face and perceived the concept as an interactional and dyadic phenomenon. Accordingly, Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) and Arundale (2006, 2009) assert that face is an extemporaneous phenomenon constructed in interaction in contrast to identity that is a more enduring construal of the self. As Arundale (2006: 202) argues: "Face... is not equivalent with identity. Both relationships and identity arise and are sustained in communication, but relationships, and hence face, are dyadic phenomena, whereas identity is an individual (and much broader) phenomenon".

Spencer-Oatey (2000) developed her considerations of face within the model of "rapport management" in which face, along with the concept of "sociality rights", are posited as the main building blocks of interpersonal relations. While face involves our individual and shared values and concerns "people's sense of worth, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on", "sociality rights, on the other hand, are concerned with personal/social expectancies, and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration, social inclusion/exclusions and so on" (2000: 14). Further, the scholar (*ibidem*) specifies two subcategories of sociality rights, namely, equity rights that are understood as the basic assumption that an individual has the right to personal consideration and fairness, and association rights resting upon a belief that individuals are entitled to be involved with and receive empathy and respect from others. The deprivation of sociality rights might, but does not always have to, influence an individual's face. However, if sociality rights such as the right to express oneself or be treated equally are focal in communication, the two concepts might overlap. For this reason, rapport management cannot be viewed as detached from identity. In fact, group deprivation of social rights for an extended period of time might even become a crucial aspect of collective identity (cf. Warner, 2013: 158).

From the perspective of social psychology, at the cognitive level face claims and face sensitivities are related to values (e.g. Schwartz's value constructs, 1992: 44). Schwartz (1992; Schwartz and Bardi, 2001; Schwartz et al., 2001) has created a universal framework of value constructs, empirically validated in 63 different cultural groups, discerning 10 value constructs

which have been identified in most of the countries/cultures under study. This set of values has a structured relationship and includes the following constructs: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security (Schwartz, 1992: 44). Spencer-Oatey (2007: 650) finds Schwartz's framework helpful in differentiating Brown and Levinson's (1987) concepts of positive and negative face and their debatable universalism. In a nutshell, in Brown and Levinson's model negative face epitomises a desire for autonomy, while positive face stands for a desire for approval. This dualistic conceptualisation, especially its alleged universality, has been, however, challenged (e.g. Matsumoto, 1988), mainly due to its Western overemphasis put on individual freedom and autonomy, accompanied by the simultaneous ignorance of social aspects of face. Thus, Schwartz's model appears useful in addressing these concerns as particular value constructs correspond with Brown and Levinson's positive and negative face (e.g. negative face reflects the value construct of *self-direction*, while positive face corresponds with the value constructs of *achievement* and *power*).

Following Spencer-Oatey (2007: 644), it might be concluded that face and identity are similar in cognitive terms as they both relate to the concept of self-image, comprised of the manifold attributes, including individual, relational and collective construals of self. The distinctive attribute of face is, however, its affective sensitivity to the claimant whose intention is to manifest publicly the positive attributes and conceal the negative ones. In contrast to Goffman, affectively sensitive attributes of face are not viewed as stable but context-dependent and dynamic.

2.4. Individual vs. social identity

In view of psychological theories, identity has both the personal (individual) and social (group or collective) dimension. At the individual level, identity is understood as a self-definition of an individual, while social identity entails self-definition as a group member (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 641). The perception of a given characteristic that constructs one's collective identity is far from being objective as it depends on an individual judgement and experience. For example, one's religious affiliation might either be an aspect of individual or collective identity (Simon, 2004).

Except for the individual and collective dimensions, Brewer and Gardner (1996: 86) discern one more level of self-representation, namely the interpersonal level. At the individual level, identity is recognised as the *personal self*, while at the interpersonal level it is categorised as the *relational self*, drawing

from relationships and interactions with *significant others*. The *collective self*, on the other hand, reflects the self-representation formed as a result of group membership and performed social roles. This three-level structure of the concept of identity has also been proposed by communication studies theorists, e.g. Hecht (1993), Hecht and his colleagues (2005).

Simon (2004) argues that each of all the three-fold aspects of identity are both cognitive and social since individuals form relatively stable, lasting cognitive representations of their self-perception, simultaneously constructing and negotiating their relational and collective selves through interaction. In this vein, identities are seen as emergent products of social interaction.

An important contribution to the study of identity has also been provided by Gee (2001) who proposed a heuristic conceptualisation of personal identity accounting for individual characteristics and self-perceptions as well perceptions enacted and affected in social interactions. Gee's concept of identity embraces four elements, namely: nature, institutional, affinity and discourse constituents. The nature component stands for inborn characteristics developed by the forces of nature that remain relatively static and unchangeable. They might be exemplified by such qualities as race, gender, disability, etc. In other words, these characteristics have not been chosen by an individual but bestowed on them and therefore cannot be controlled; they are, however, easily discerned by others. The institutional component refers to a position ascribed to an individual in a particular institution by those higher in the hierarchy (e.g. rules and values imposed by the employer/superior). Thus, institutional identities must be conferred on an individual by an institution to be recognised as legitimate. Affinity, on the other hand, involves informal relationships or social groups, based on common experiences, interests, goals or values (e.g. peer groups, friends). Importantly, in contrast to institutional membership, affinity does not need to be authorised and arises from a shared set of practices. Finally, discourse, the fourth component, reveals one's verbal representation, exposed in the emotional load, use of mannerisms or tone. Like the other three components, it must be recognised by others.

Apparently, identity theories concerning individuals might not be automatically mirrored and applied to organisations that are primarily seen as social constructs playing a specific purpose-oriented role. Nevertheless, such theories unquestionably provide valuable insights into social or even institutional (see Gee's theory of identity) aspects of an individual's identity that determine their functioning within an organisation or an institution as well as perceptions of organisational identity. Taking into consideration the assumed social-construction of organisational identities (see further sections of this chapter), these perceptions appear crucial.

2.5. The functions of identity

Social psychologists (e.g. Simon, 2004: 66-67; following Baumeister, 1986; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Breakwell, 1986; Brewer, 1991; Fiske, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Smith and Mackie, 2000; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Tyler and Smith, 1999) argue that identity serves particular functions that are related to five key psychological needs of:

1. Belongingness

Identity “anchors the person in the social world”, specifying the temporal and spacial boundaries of our existence in the society, which is particularly important in the case of collective identity resulting from and reflecting “occupation of a collective, socially shared place symbolised by a socially shared self-aspect” (ibidem: 66).

2. Distinctiveness

Identity defines who we are and who we are not, simultaneously specifying where we belong and where we do not belong. At the collective level, identity differentiates in-group members from out-group members.

3. Respect or esteem

Identity, especially the collective one, confirms the individual's place in the social structure which might be a source of self-respect or self-esteem. Additionally, it plays the inclusive function by legitimising the in-group membership on the basis of similarities and positions in particular in-groups within the network of other out-groups which might also positively influence the individual sense of pride and respect.

4. Understanding or meaning

Individual and collective identities are crucial to self-understanding as well as identifying and interpreting one's social position and the surrounding environment, acting as “an indicator of meaningful social existence”.

5. Agency

Identity also enables individuals “to recognize themselves as the origin of their thoughts and actions and to experience themselves as influential social agents” (ibidem: 68). Collective identity provides individuals with the feeling of solidarity and social support that additionally strengthen the sense of individual agency (Simon, 2004: 66-68).

In relation to identity functions, social psychological research has shown that collective identity typically involves the processes of prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping (Mummendey and Oten, 2001; Turner and Reynolds, 2001; Smith and Mackie, 2000). Furthermore, social psychologists have also qualified conformity as a behavioural consequence of stereotyping, understood as its “cognitive precursor” (Simon, 2004: 71). Conforming behaviour enables individuals to manifest their belonging and loyalty to a particular group and in this way verify their collective identity. At the group level conformity comes across as a desired phenomenon as it increases the group efficiency and as such it plays the agency function of the collective identity (ibidem).

2.6. Organisations and identity

The question of identity and organisation has been embedded in sociological theorising for over a century. The classical sociological perspectives (see e.g. Max Weber or Emil Durkheim), have viewed organisations as facilitators of social life, transforming individuals and assigning them their social roles in order to streamline the functioning of modern society. The three pillars that spurred the development of organisational theory were modernity, industrialisation and rationalisations.

Usually, the main motivation of individuals to join an organisation is their inability to achieve certain goals by themselves, unaided by the power of the group. Thus, people affiliate with organisations to be more powerful and reach their objectives more successfully (Hoffman and Ford, 2010: 4). One of the most recognised definitions of an organisation has been provided by Barnard (1969: 73), who posits that “a formal organization is a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons”. The main implication of this definition is that organisations are characterised by three qualities: communication, willingness to cooperate and common purpose.

Communication is the building block of an organisation’s existence, playing a crucial role in the conscious coordination of all its activities, referred to as *structure* (Hoffman and Ford, 2010: 5). The tangible representations of organisational structure embrace, for example, organisational charts, forms of address manifesting a certain organisational hierarchy, as well as other status markers. Communication is essential in the relation-building process and accomplishing tasks; it might also form, strengthen or even question its structure (Poole and McPhee, 2005).

The second characteristic – *willingness to cooperate* – involves the voluntary membership in an organisation on the part of the individual. Such member-

ship is potentially beneficial to the individual as it offers effective accomplishment of personal goals, yet at the cost of simultaneous cession of personal control to the group. As Barnard (1969: 84) puts it: "Activities cannot be coordinated unless there is first the disposition to make a personal act a contribution to an impersonal system of acts, one in which the individual gives up personal control to what he does". The third element specified by Barnard (1969) – *common purpose* – unites members of a particular organisation in their efforts to reach their common goals for which they agree to have their personal control restrained. This aspect also involves communication that plays the crucial role in building relations between individual members of an organisation as well as with its leaders in order to negotiate comprehension of the common purpose.

Critical discourse analysts frequently do not differentiate between the terms *organisation* and *institution* (Wodak, 1996: 32) and use them interchangeably. In sociology (cf. Endruweit and Trommsdorff, 1989: 306f), however, *institution* stands for "scripted practices in general and not to actively and consciously organized societies, companies, etc." (Marko, 2000: 221). According to North (1991: 97), institutions are "humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction". Streeck and Thelen (2005: 9) view them as "building blocks of social order: they represent socially sanctioned... collectively enforced expectations with respect to the behavior... of actors... or to the performance of certain activities". Drawing on North (1991), Hall and Soskice (2001: 9) have distinguished between organisations and institutions, defining the latter as:

[a] set of rules, formal or informal, that actors generally follow, whether for normative, cognitive, or material reasons, and organizations are as durable entities with formally recognized members, whose rules contribute to the institutions of the political economy.

Further, Amable (2003: 9-10) adds that "institutions are expression of a political compromise and are... primarily designed... to solve conflict among unequal actors with divergent interests". Swedberg also (2004: 12) points to the fact that the power of the institutions lies in their role to "channel interests" and offer "dominant models for how interests can be realized". In sociology the term "institution" was traditionally perceived as "a great name, one deserved only by those things which embody the highest of human values" (Hughes, 2009: 53). Even though this view is sometimes challenged and institutional approaches to organisations have been developed (see Scott, 2013), in business contexts and organisational literature the use of the term *organisation* prevails. Accordingly, in this monograph corporations are referred to as organisations rather than institutions.

Recent writing on identity in organisations shows that there is little consensus on the definition and meaning of the concept among scholars. The vivid example of this is a meta analysis of 81 journal articles on organisational identity conducted by Cornelissen (2006) who identified six dominating research approaches (organisational communication, organisational behaviour, cognitive framing, discursive psychology, institutional theory and social identity), offering a wide spectrum of interdisciplinary nuances and shades of meaning of the notion under study and its interpretation. This profundity of perspectives from numerous disciplines, calls for a multilevel framework for analysis, embracing the individual, group, social, organisational, corporate and cultural identities (Albert, Ashforth and Dutton, 2000; Brown, 2000; Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2002).

Table 2.1. Definition of social, organisational and corporate identity constructs

Construct	Primary definition	Secondary definition	Illustrations of (1) primary and (2) secondary definitions
Social identity	Individuals' knowledge that they belong to certain groups together with the emotional and value significance of that group membership	The shared meaning that a group is understood to have that arises from its members' (and others') awareness that they belong to it	(1) I am proud to be in Group X (2) As managers, we do A well and B badly
Organisational identity	The shared meaning that an organisational entity is understood to have that arises from its members' (and others') awareness that they belong to it	Individuals' knowledge that they belong to particular organisational groups together with the emotional and value significance of that group membership	(1) Department X is good at C but bad at D (2) I am proud to be in Department X
Corporate identity	The distinctive public image that a corporate entity communicates that structures people's engagement with it	The shared meaning that a corporate entity is understood to have that arises from its members' (and others') awareness that they belong to it	(1) Bank X is good at E (2) Bank X is good at E but bad at F

Source: Cornelissen et al. (2007: S3)

Notably, an “amazing theoretical diversity” (Pratt and Foreman, 2000: 141) as well as the polysemy and interpretative openness of the concept of identity result from applying the notion to label very different constructs (e.g. self-knowledge, beliefs, discourse, capabilities or structures; cf. Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000). For instance, in the marketing and corporate communications vein the comprehension of identity has been limited to the company's positioning and promotion towards its target audience, while the focal

themes in social-psychology literature are related to enhancing the collective self-esteem (e.g. Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994).

Based on a thorough literature review, Cornelissen, Haslan and Balmer (2007) attempted to classify the main constructs related to identity and put them into the three categories of social, organisational and corporate identity (see Table 2.1). The primary definitions vividly express the differences in emphasis of each category. Accordingly, “[s]ocial identity (after Tajfel, 1972: 31) tends to be seen as an *internalized knowledge structure*, organisational identity tends to be seen as a *system of shared meaning*, while corporate identity tends to be seen as a *projected image*” (Cornelissen, Haslan and Balmer, 2007: S3; emphasis in original).

Recent thorough reviews of the large body of literature on organisational identity has been done by a number of scholars (e.g. Balmer, 2001; Cornelissen, 2006; Haslam and Ellmers, 2005; van Dick, 2001). In order to “map” this research terrain, Cornelissen and his colleagues (2007) propose a framework for organising the relevant literature based on the analytic focus, i.e. the dimension referring to the attribution of identity (whether it involves individuals and groups internal or external to a particular organisation) and the dimension of the analytic form of identity, stretched between the cognitive and symbolic ends.

At the cognitive end of the dimension, identity is defined as involving a mental framework, categorization or set of beliefs and attributions in the minds of individuals. On the other hand, the symbolic end of the same dimension defines identity as the symbolic manifestation or projection (through language, artefacts and behaviour) of an identity. (Cornelissen et al., 2007: S4)

Based on the above categorisation, these scholars have distinguished three research traditions that put emphasis on different aspects of organisational identity. Thus, social identity research, embedded in the vein of social psychology, has focused on the internal aspects of identity processes involving individuals and groups within an organisation, in contrast to research studies on corporate identity, slanting toward marketing and communications, which have emphasised the external, symbolic factors of identity products, e.g. “material manifestations of identity” (ibidem: S4). Research on organisational identity, on the other hand, might be qualified as a compromise between the two former traditions, as it attends to both the internal and external dimensions of identity, especially their meaning within the organisational context, viewed as a negotiated, dynamic process (ibidem: S4).

2.6.1. The social identity perspective

The development of social identity theory (SIT) that emerged in social psychology in the 1980s is owed to Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986), based on “minimal group experiments” attempting to address the question of discrimination against different group members (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel, 1982). The research results have suggested that the processes of social categorisation play a significant role in intergroup discrimination, primarily provoked by the categorisation into our- and in-group members. Thus, a particular group membership spurs the development of an individual’s group or social identity (Simon, 2004: 35). SIT assumes that after categorising their group membership, individuals aim to satisfy their need for positive social identity which induces them to differentiate their in-group from out-groups. As Cornelissen and his colleagues (2007: S5) put it:

This quest for *positive distinctiveness* means that when people’s sense of self is defined in terms of ‘we’ (i.e. social identity) rather than ‘I’ (personal identity), they strive to see ‘us’ as different from, and preferably better than, ‘them’ in order to feel good about who they are and what they do. (emphasis in the original)

The key assumptions of SIT, especially those pertaining to group conflict and identity management strategies, have been supported by an impressive body of research (reviewed by: Brown, 2000; Ellmers, 1993; Ellmers and Bareto, 2001; Simon et al., 2001; Wright, 2001). Nevertheless, certain controversies, concerning primarily inherent limitations of the theory, have been voiced by numerous scholars (Abbrams and Hogg, 1988; Ellmers, Kortekkaas and Outwerkerk, 1999; Jackson and Smith, 1999; Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

The signalled need for the elaboration of SIT led to the development of self-categorisation theory (SCT) by Turner et al. (1987), providing a more extended theoretical framework than SIT. SCT clearly distinguishes between personal identity understood as “self-definition as a unique individual in terms of interpersonal and intragroup differentiations” and social identity standing for “self-definition as a group member in terms of ingroup-out-group differentiation” (Simon, 2004: 37). Furthermore, SCT assumes that both personal and social identity stem from the hierarchical system of self-categorisations which allow a multi-level construction of identities (Turner et al., 1987). As Simon (2004: 38) exemplifies it, one’s social identity as a resident of Berlin is more abstract and simultaneously more inclusive than one’s identity as a resident of a particular quarter of this city. Accordingly, one’s identity as a member of a broader category, e.g. German or EU citizen, a human being, appears even more abstract and entails one’s lower-level identities, including the personal one.

Except for the dimension of abstraction or inclusiveness, identities may also vary along the multiplicity of identities based on the criterion of an individual's membership in various groups. People usually belong to different groups but all of their group memberships are not simultaneously salient. Thus, this *identity salience* is the core element of SCT which "is assumed to be joint function of people's *readiness* to adopt a particular identity and the extent to which that identity *fits* as a meaningful definition in the given social context" (Simon, 2004: 38). Readiness to take on a particular identity depends on individual characteristics, embracing values, goals, past experiences, as well as needs for assimilation or differentiation (Brewer, 1991).

The main theoretical assumptions as well as practical applications of SCT have been supported by an impressive number of studies (e.g. Haslam, 2001; Oakes et al., 1994; Turner et al., 1987). However, the central tenet of SCT pertaining to this paper is that it presents the self as "a dynamic process of reflexive social judgment" (Onorato and Turner, 2001: 159), represented by a range of fluid, content-dependent self-aspects. Another key contribution of SCT appears to be the distinction between personal and social identity that has provided explanatory power for the interpretation of group processes and behaviour. As Turner (1982: 21) puts it: "social identity is the cognitive mechanism that makes group behaviour possible". Elsewhere, Turner (1999) even holds that the shared sense of identity constitutes a foundation of social influence and organisation as it motivates members of a particular group to seek agreement and adapt their behaviour. Furthermore, Webb (2006: 11) notes that except for creating opportunities for individuals, modern organisations also act as "important arenas for the exercise of power" that enable those holding power, sanctioned by their control of any type of resources, to "channel and structure opportunities, enabling certain identities and constraining others".

2.6.2. The notion of organisational identity

Applying the principles of SIT social identity theory to the realm of organisational studies, it has been asserted that (Haslam, 2001; Haslam et al., 2003; Hogg and Terry, 2000, 2001) organisational identity might be interpreted as a specific form of social identity. In this view organisational identity has been defined as both a "psychological and social reality" and a "mental and material fact" (Haslam et al., 2003: 366), which might be motivated by the fact that it integrates not only the cognitive categorisation process at the individual level, but also the collective behaviour and products structured by these processes (see Postmes, 2003; Postmes et al., 2005). Therefore, the core

idea of this approach is that a particular organisational identity, which has become salient for a given organisational group and whose norms and values have been internalised, shapes the individual's psychology (e.g. a person's beliefs, attitudes, and intentions) and then transforms it into "the structures and products (e.g. the plans and visions, goods and services, practices and institutions) that are the material building blocks of organizational life" (Cornelissen et al., 2007: S5).

It has to be noted, however, that scholars formerly tended to differentiate between the individual and collective levels of organisational identity (e.g. Albert and Whetten, 1985; Gioia, 1998). In this view organisational identity was not perceived as a body composed of individuals – it was rather defined metaphorically as an organism of its own form and dynamics, addressing the phenomenological question of its own identity (Cornelissen, 2002, 2005, 2006; Gioia, 1998; Hatch and Schultz, 2002). In Kuhn's (1997: 199) definition, identity is "the central, enduring character projected by an organization, as perceived and interpreted by others". Kuhn's definition does not only involve the aspect of self-presentation of an organisation and the message it conveys, but also the audience's perception and interpretation of this message, relating in this way to the traditional perception of the communication process deriving from antiquity (e.g. Aristotle). Thus, communicating an organisation's identity involves informing the audience about "who an organization is, what it does, and what it stands for" (Hoffman and Ford, 2010: 122). Similarly, Aust (2004: 516) provides the following definition: "Organizational identity (OI) refers to those core distinctive and enduring features unique to an institution". These two definitions base on the ideas developed by Albert and Whetten (1985) who stated that an organisation's identity relies on three elements, namely: "the central character of the organization, the claimed distinctiveness of the organizations from other organizations and the consistency of these elements over time" (Hoffman and Ford, 2010: 121). The first element, "the central character", stands for key practices and values of an organisation, as well as its core activity (e.g. products, services, etc.). "The claimed distinctiveness", as the name suggests, refers to an organisation's unique quality(ies) that differentiate(s) it from other organisations. The more distinctive an organisation is, the clearer and stronger identity it has. Finally, the definition highlights the fact that in order to be effective these two elements must be consistent over time, which explains the efforts involved and costs incurred by the companies when changing their identity or even some of its elements (e.g. name, logo, etc.). Additionally, Dutton and Dukerich (1991: 520), in line with Albert and Whetten's (1985) ideas, view organisational identity as "what organizational members believe to be central, enduring and distinc-

tive character". This definition takes an insider's perspective, reflecting an organisation's members' value systems and focusing less on how an organisation is perceived externally.

Such a perception of organisational identity as "an interpretative system, or set of shared cognitions, or shared language and behaviours" positions it as "a cognitive frame" or "perceptual lens" that "guides individuals' sense-making" (Cornelisen et al., 2007: S6). In other words, organisational identity is used by organisational members as a means of self-representation and self-definition (ibidem). Moreover, inspired by Mead's (1934) ideas, organisational identity is also seen as being symbolically enacted and emerging from language and behaviour (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Czarniawska and Wolff, 1998). In other words, the building blocks of organisational identity are language and culture, externalised, respectively, in the form of organisational names, rhetoric, myths, stories and narratives, as well as a dress code, rituals, ideology, etc. (Cornelissen et al. 2007: S7; after Glynn and Abzug, 2002; Glynn, 2000). The main role of such practices is to distinguish the organisation from other rival organisations (Lamertz et al., 2005) and legitimise it in the eyes of its stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz, 2002).

2.6.3. Culture and organisational identity: Realist vs. constructionist approach

The discussion on organisational identity should also entail an overview of the competing traditions within the social sciences and the study of management and organisation, namely, the realist tradition, presented by Whetten (2006) or Elstak and van Riel (2005), and the constructionist one, advocated by Gioia and his colleagues (2002). Posed at opposite ends of the continuum, these two traditions hold different views on organisational identity as well as the method it is studied.

Scholars taking the realist perspective, perceive organisational identity through the prism of its innate properties or assets that are directly represented and, as empirical phenomena, can be measured through scientific research (Elstak and van Riel, 2005). Such research, questing "reliable" and "unbiased" knowledge, would lean towards "model building, hypothesis testing, and empirical measurement" (Whetten, 2006: 229). Soenen and Moingeon's (2002) framework (see Table 2.2) is an illustrative exemplification of the realist perspective. The five facets of identity proposed by the scholars stand for the tangible organisation's properties or assets that can be identified by scientific research.

Table 2.2. Five facets of organisational identity

	Definition	Example
Professed identity	What a group or organisation professes (claims) about itself	Mission statement
Projected identity	What elements an organisation deliberately uses to present itself to specific audiences	Advertising
Experienced identity	The experiences and collective representations held by members within an organisation	Current norms, rules, values, rituals
Manifested identity⁷	The elements that have been associated with the organisation for a period of time	Well-established and enduring structures, strategies, myths, taboos
Attributed identity	Elements that are ascribed to an organisation by various audiences outside the organisation	Media report

Source: Adapted from Soenen and Moingeon (2002: 17)

On the contrary, constructionists assume that organisational identity is better understood through articulated beliefs and perceptions. In other words, in this approach organisational identity is constructed on the basis of narratives about an organisation created by people in order to make sense of the organisation, rather than the organisation's self-narrative about its own particular properties. For this reason, the main aim underlying constructionist research would address the questions of "*how* and *why* people construct different interpretations of the organization's identity" (Kenny et al., 2011: 129; emphasis added). Accordingly, in the constructionist view the five facets of identity discerned by Soenen and Moingeon (2002: 17) would be interpreted as polyphonic narratives developed by particular groups of people (employees, managers, academics, consumers) who actively contribute to the construction of a particular organisational identity by activating specific values and beliefs. The main idea underlying this approach is that meanings are produced in a particular culture, thus organisational identity is embedded in organisational culture that simultaneously forms and is formed by the members of a given organisation as well as the "vision and leadership of the top management" (Kenny et al., 2011: 131). As Hatch and Schultz (1997: 360) put it, organisational culture stands for "a symbolic context within which interpretations of organizational identity are formed and intentions to influence organizational image are formulated".

⁷ The concepts of manifested identity and attributed identity to a large extent overlap with the concept of reputation discussed in the sections to follow.

These relationships have been illustratively presented by Dutton and Dukerich (1991) in the study of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey confronted with a tainted corporate image issue. The problem appeared when homeless people started to dwell in the company's bus and train stations. The Authority initially ignored this issue, but later on it decided to "cleanse" its premises by moving the homeless out. However, this undertaking was disapproved of by the company's employees who perceived it as discrepant with the projected positive public image and conflicting with their sense of organisational identity. In order to seal this gap and reinstate their identification with the organisation, the employees took action to influence the management to change their policy. As a result of this pressure, the company changed its policy and, in order to compensate for its former actions and maintain its image as a public service organisation, it built drop-in centres for the homeless (Kenny et al., 2011: 131). Kenny and her colleagues (2011: 131) argue that the Port Authority case exemplifies the dynamics of the mutual interrelatedness between culture, identity and image.

Hatch and Schultz (2000; 2002; 2004) have integrated manifold cross-disciplinary perspectives and proposed a comprehensive framework for the study of identity. Their major concern in providing an interdisciplinary definition of identity was incorporating relationships between internal and external perspectives. The *Organisational Identity Dynamics* (OID) model, advanced by the scholars in 2002, viewed the concepts of identity, culture and image as fluid rather than absolute, interpreting organisational identity as a "dance" or "conversation" (Hatch and Schultz, 2002: 91). The concept of organisational identity dynamics encoded the interplay between identity, culture and image into four processes, namely: impressing (identity/image), mirroring (image/identity), reflecting (identity/culture) and expressing (culture/identity). More specifically, impressing is concerned with the impression an organisation leaves on its stakeholders. Mirroring is defined as the process whereby identity mirrors the images of others, viewed as constraints on a collective construction of organisational identity. Reflecting is understood as a process in which organisational identity is embedded in organisational culture, not only limited to the perception of an organisation by others, but also involving the interaction between such external images and an organisation's self-definition.

Finally, expressing involves the outcomes of interactions between external organisational images and internal culture, as externalised through corporate discourse (Hatch and Schultz, 2002). Even though the scholars perceive these four processes as integrated, "working dynamically together to create, maintain and change organizational identity" (Hatch and Schultz, 2002: 986), the focal point of their considerations is the relation between reflecting and

expressing, linking identity and culture. They put forward an argument that a healthy organisation is one where identity maintains an equilibrium between the concern with its external image and internal culture. Any distortion of this balance might lead to “dysfunctions of organizational identity” (ibidem: 1010). Typically, organisations put excessive emphasis on their image, which results in the “loss of organizational culture”, or to culture, leading to organisational narcissism (ibidem).

Hatch and Schultz (1997; 2002; 2004) have significantly contributed to literature on identity. First of all, they have recognised culture and identity as conceptually different but equally essential in the process of identity construction and management, viewing it as a social rather than management process. In order to explicate the intricate relationships between identity, image and culture Hatch and Schultz (2004) point to Mead’s (1934) model of identity as the interaction between “I” and “me”, identifying culture with “I” and image with “me”. Hence, the notion of identity expresses cultural understandings and simultaneously by being expressed it leaves certain impressions on others. These impressions are reflected by identity and embed it in culture. From the perspective of public relations practitioners such images are almost tangible and become invaluable in the moment of crisis posing certain risk to an organisation’s existence, exerting a positive influence on the organisation’s target groups.

Although Hatch and Schultz’s contribution to the understanding of the concept of organisational identity is highly valued, it has certain limitations. First of all, their work is criticised for the lack of explanation of the mechanics of the defined processes. As Jack and Lorbiecki (2007: 582) note:

It is one thing to suggest that ‘organizational identity occurs as the result of a set of processes that continuously cycle within and between cultural self-understandings and images formed by organizational “others”’ (Hatch and Schultz, 2002: 1004), but quite another to describe the ‘grammar’ through which identity ‘utterances’ are made possible.

Additionally, their model has been rather poorly empirically verified. Nevertheless, having these limitations in mind, Hatch and Schultz’s (2002) model remains a classic point of reference in any discussion on organisational identity.

2.6.4. Corporate vs. organisational identity

As mentioned earlier, the concepts of organisational and corporate identity emerged almost simultaneously but followed two different paths. While the roots of the former are to be found in organisational studies, the prove-

nience of the latter is related to marketing and corporate communications. Thus, initially the concept of corporate identity was predominantly used in reference to visual design and advertising, centring on the presentation of the organisation to external audiences. Accordingly, it stood for the visual elements, especially the logo, perceived as vital factors in image formation and projection, shaping the corporate perceptions and associations of the external audiences. This “visual school”, as Balmer (1995) labelled it, was linked to the graphic designer community and naturally focused on the “tangible” elements of identity that later also embraced the olfactory and tactile aspects (Schmidt and Simonson, 1997).

Simultaneously, the concept of corporate identity started to be applied holistically to all forms of communication and behaviour in the marketplace (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Henderson et al., 2003). One of the first models of corporate identity was proposed by the German corporate design specialists, Birkigt and Stadler (1986), who perceived corporate identity as a construct built up of three elements through which organisations communicate and disseminate their image to their stakeholders:

- *Symbolism*: corporate logos and the company house style (stationary, etc.) of an organization;
- *Communication*: all planned forms of communication including corporate advertising, events, sponsorships, publicity and promotions;
- *Behaviour*: all behaviour of employees (ranging from managers and receptionist to front-line staff such as sales people and shop assistants) that leaves an impression on stakeholders. (Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; cited in Cornelissen, 2008: 66)

Birkigt and Stadler’s model views corporate identity as a broad concept which influences all aspects of organisational activity. It also implies that as an outward embodiment of an organisation it should evolve from an in-depth comprehension of its mission, vision and culture.

A clear distinction between organisational identity and corporate identity on the basis of their provenience, originating, respectively, in organisational and marketing literature, has also been made by Hatch and Schultz (1997), who provide the following definitions of the two concepts:

Organizational identity refers broadly to what members perceive, feel and think about their organizations. It is assumed to be a collective, commonly-shared understanding of the organization’s distinctive values and characteristics.

Corporate identity differs from organizational identity in the degree to which it is conceptualized as a function of leadership and by its focus on the visual (Abratt, 1989; Balmer, 1995; Olins, 1989). Although both concepts build on an idea of what the organization is (Balmer, 1995: 2), strong links with company vision and strategy (e.g. Abratt, 1989; Dowling, 1993) emphasize the explicit role of top management in the formulation of corporate identity. (Hatch and Schultz, 1997: 357)

More recently, literature on corporate identity has pondered the general meaning of corporate identity embedded in socio-cultural factors, e.g. values, beliefs and behaviours of an organisation's members as well as the shared symbols and other artefacts they produce, primarily through *branding* (Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006). Accordingly, empirical research in this domain has tended to explore connections between corporate identity, understood as the projected image of the organisation, its core identity and culture (Balmer and Greyser, 2002, 2003; Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000) and its perception by the stakeholders (e.g. Simoes, Dibb and Fisk, 2005; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003).

Nowadays, the term is applied not only to the external presentation of the company, but it also stands for "what the organization is" (Balmer, 1995: 32-37). Similarly to individuals, organisations have their individuality and distinctiveness expressed in communication practices, anchored in a specific combination of traits such as "geographical place, nationality, strategy, founding, core business, technology, knowledge base, operating philosophy or organization design" (Cornelissen et al., 2007: 57). These essential traits, related to strategy, structure, culture and history, play a key role in defining a company's uniqueness and providing its stability and coherence (Melewar and Karaosmangolu, 2006). This conceptualisation reverberates in the definition of organisational identity provided by Albert and Whetten (1985) which distinguishes three *identity anchors*, embracing central, distinctive and enduring traits.

In communication studies the role ascribed to corporate identity is that of integrating all communication and PR practices of the company and presenting a desired vision of what the company wants to become rather than what it really is (cf. Collin and Porras, 1996). In other words, this framework is oriented towards synchronising all channels of corporate communication and all types of messages, both verbal and visual, in order to create a consistent, distinctive and recognisable portrayal of an organisation.

Despite certain overlaps, Hatch and Schultz (2000) point to the difficulty in integrating the concepts of corporate and organisational identity due to their disciplinary origin. Nevertheless, they attempted to deconstruct these contrasts juxtaposed in Table 2.3 below.

The first difference pertains to the perspective from which the disciplines define the concept of identity. As Hatch and Schultz (2000: 17) argue, corporate identity typically involves the design and application of particular symbols representing the company that usually embrace the name, logo, company colour(s), the layout of the documents, etc. Organisational identity, on the other hand, is a mosaic of different projections, stories and experiences that all members of organisations share, expressed informally and spontaneously

by the declaration “who we are”. However, I would not agree with this classification since both the form and content of any kind of narration about the company that is officially communicated by any type of media, be it a flyer or a webpage, is meticulously planned and controlled by the management. Apparently, corporate messages should resonate with organisational perspectives and vice versa and they often do influence each other. This is especially true in contemporary times that enable easy proliferation and exchange of information in the virtual space. Nevertheless, I assume that the very definition and projection of the core message of who we are as an organisation, involving the specification of a company’s core activities, mission statement, values, etc., is in the hands of its top managers and their advisers and thus remains corporate.

Table 2.3. Contrasts between corporate and organisational identity that need to be deconstructed

Dimensions of identity	Corporate identity	Organizational identity
Perspective	Managerial; top managers and their advisers	Organizational; all members of the organization
Recipients	External stakeholders or audiences	Organization members or internal stakeholders
Communication channels	Mediated	Interpersonal

Source: Hatch and Schultz (2000: 17)

As far as recipients are concerned, I share Hatch and Schultz’s (2000: 18) view pointing to the blurred barriers between external and internal stakeholders. On the one hand, corporate communication is largely self-referential and targeted at internal audiences (esp. employees). On the other hand, some of the corporate stakeholders play diverse roles in an organisation, e.g. employees might also be positioned as customers, investors or members of the public (ibidem). These ambiguities are, for example, seen in the use of pronouns in corporate discourse, especially the ambiguous “we” that might stand for an organisation’s members, the management, clients, suppliers, or the whole of humanity (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2012).

Finally, what differentiates both notions is the fact that organisational identity is considered unmediated and direct, while corporate identity is often mediated (Hatch and Schultz, 2000: 19). The mediated channels include television, the press, video and the Internet and they are typically used to communicate with external stakeholders. Organisational communication is experienced in the everyday interactions and behaviour of organisational members – most often employees. Again, however, it is difficult to maintain clear-cut divisions: direct contact between internal and external stakeholders

is by all means possible and so is the use of a different channel. Therefore, both concepts permeate each other as mediated and direct interactions are not mutually exclusive.

2.6.5. Identity vs. image and reputation

A number of scholars have pointed to the inconsistent or even contradictory use of the terms *identity*, *image* and *reputation* in organisational literature (Gilpin, 2010; Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty, 2006; Brown, Dacin, Pratt and Whetten, 2006; Gotsi and Wilson, 2001; King and Whetten, 2008). Nevertheless, these terms are used interchangeably across and within disciplines (Barnett et al., 2006). Thus, due to the overlaps and discrepancies in terminology, it seems well-substantiated to differentiate between identity, image, brand and reputation that are used in organisational literature. In this context, the classification proposed by Brown et al. (2006) is worth scrutiny for further clarification (see Table 2.4). Except for the notion of “identity”, which addresses the phenomenological question of “Who we are as an organization”, the remaining four terms are usually subject to scrutiny within the fields of marketing, public relations or corporate communication. The main point in this classification is that a company’s intended image might not be convergent with its construed image or reputation. For example, the multinational corporation Unilever offers a wide range of differently branded products (e.g. Persil washing powder and Ben & Jerry’s ice cream) whose images evoke diverse associations. Furthermore, the launch of an environmentally friendly product (e.g. Persil washing liquid), intended to demonstrate corporate social responsibility, might evoke certain scepticism on the part of some consumers. In such a case, there would be discernible discrepancies between the company’s reputation and the intended image. In most cases, however, it would be rather difficult to cut clear semantic boundaries between the five terms distinguished by Brown et al. (2006) as they are closely intertwined (e.g. the Apple company whose brand and products are harmonised with its identity and reputation as the world leader in innovation and design; see Kenny et al., 2011: 127).

The confusion also concerns the use of the terms *corporate identity* and *corporate image*. Wood (2004) defines these two terms from the communicological perspective, positioning them at two different ends of the process of communication. Namely, corporate identity is what an organisation – a source of communication – communicates about itself, either intentionally or unintentionally, via different communication channels. Corporate image, on the other hand, stands for the perception of this identity on the part of the receiver – the public who interprets “an identity in a wider context with broader frames of

reference” (Wood, 2004: 96). In other words, organisations are not the sole architects of their image as the very context of the reception, interpretation and understanding of their communications is beyond their control. However, it must be admitted that a clearly constructed and effectively managed corporate identity might significantly contribute to a positive perception of an organisation while “a failure to control communications results in a confused image” (Ind, 1990: 21). Therefore, the key role of corporate identity is to specify an adequate image and communicate it effectively in order to avoid any dissonance between the projection and interpretation of a particular message.

Table 2.4. Distinguishing identity, image, reputation and brand

Term	Key question
Identity	Who are we as an organization?
Image (intended)	What does the organization <i>want</i> others to think about it?
Image (construed)	What does the organization <i>think</i> others think about it?
Reputation	What do others <i>actually</i> think about the organization?
Brand	What attributes and images do we want others to associate with a particular product/service?

Source: Adapted from Kenny et al. (2011: 127; after Brown et al., 2006)

In this context, the notion of reputation might come across as another gratuitous and superfluous term, easily confused with image. The source of this confusion lies in the positioning of image and reputation on the receiver’s rather than the sender’s side. However, while image is seen as a fleeting, instant impression, reputation is defined as a more permanent and stable assessment constructed over time on the basis of a company’s past and future performance. According to Carroll (2013: 4), corporate reputation is “a widely circulated, oft-repeated message of minimal variation about an organisation revealing something about an organization’s nature”. Based on an analysis of numerous definitions of reputation, Wood and Somerville (2016) point to the evaluative character of reputation and its historical dimension as well as its durability and consistency compared to image. In practical terms positive reputation translates into tangible, monetary effects. As Fombrun (1996: 81) explains:

Corporate reputations have bottom line effects. A good reputation enhances profitability because it attracts customers to the company’s products, investors to its securities, and employees to its jobs. In turn, esteem inflates the price at which a public company’s securities trade. The economic value of a corporate reputation can therefore be gauged by the excess market value of its securities.

A discrepancy between a company's intended image and its perception by outsiders has been well illustrated by Bhatia and Lung (2006), who refer to the case of a corporation in Hong Kong coded as XXX. Despite projecting itself as a successful and efficient organisation in self-controlled communication channels, XXX is perceived in a rather negative way in the media, mainly due to its poor market performance. For example, the self-declaration that "XXX is a global leader in telecommunications technology (2003 *Interim Results*)" is contrasted by the following media extract: "XXX remains a telecommunications company in an investor no man's land, neither offering the earnings of a growth stock nor dividend yield of a secure utility (SCMP: March 5, 2004)" (Bhatia and Lung, 2006: 268). Such incongruity might potentially pose a certain risk to the company's future existence as corporate stakeholders (including shareholders, investors, consumers, employees, job candidates, etc.), base their decisions concerning investments, careers or consumer choices on the company's reputation (Melewar, 2003: 195). Another illustrative example is that of Monsanto – one of the most powerful corporations in the world – whose overwhelmingly positive self-presentations clashes with the reputation of one of the world's most hated companies (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2017a).

In fact, numerous scholars highlight the importance of "alignment" or "transparency" at multiple levels for an organisation's development and well-being (e.g. Balmer and Greyser, 2002; Fombrun and Rindova, 2000; Simoes, Dibb and Fisk, 2005). Following the definition of Fombrun and Rindova (2000: 94), transparency is "a state in which the internal identity of the firm reflects positively the expectations of key stakeholders and the beliefs of these stakeholders about the firm reflect accurately the internally held identity". As research has shown, successful functioning of an organisation is to a large extent regulated by the concurrence between all aspects of identity, namely, organisational identity expressed by the management, corporate identity and corporate reputation. The lack of integration of these three elements negatively affects or even denigrates an organisation due to the fact that it decreases both the employees' commitment and customers' satisfaction (Cornelissen et al., 2007; Hatch and Schultz, 2001, 2002).

A valuable contribution to the theory of image has recently been provided by Puppel (2016) whose main postulate is commonality of image in biosphere. In other words, the possession of image and its continuous maintenance both at the individual and species level are perceived as essential elements of life dynamics accompanying any "biological cohabitation" (Puppel, 2016: 110). As far as humans are concerned, their image is characterised by the duality of their biological and cultural dimensions. Image might be further viewed as static and dynamic. The static aspect pertains to the self-awareness of biological organisms or institutions of their own identity vis-à-vis other entities

cooperating or competing in the all-encompassing space or life arena. Human image in its static dimension might be further categorised as: (a) an awareness of possessing one's immanent self-image and (b) an awareness of the necessity and capability of making a particular impression on others in the public space that are both conditions incessantly and ineluctably accompanying our existence (Puppel, 2016: 111).

The dynamism of image is understood by Puppel (*ibidem*) as the continuous engagement of a given entity in undertaking interaction-communication activities in order to project a particular image to the audience ("the other") in order to create desired impressions. This signaling might be either "honest" or "dishonest". Image dynamics might also be interpreted as "adaptive rhetoric potential" to be realised in particular communication modalities (see Puppel, 2016) as well as an array of strategies in order to reach intended persuasive goals. These strategies are further classified into a broader category of "image architecture" that might take either a monolithic form that allows it to maintain a holistic image or a fragmentary, dispersed form that focused on the exposure of selected elements of image (Puppel, 2016).

This model might be easily applied to organisational or institutional images. It entails the self-identification of a particular organisation that, in the case of corporations, involves defining the mission statement addressing the basic questions of "who we are and what we do". The static and dynamic dimensions of image specified by Puppel (*ibidem*) to a large extent correspond, respectively, with the notions of intended and construed image that are to be reflected by a desired reputation. The ultimate corporate goal is flawless reputation that creates a beneficial, positive climate for performing business activity. Corporate "adaptive rhetoric potential" (*ibidem*) embraces a wide selection of honest as well as dishonest strategies, particularly frequently applied in advertising and PR flak, communicated in the public space through all possible modalities.

2.6.6. Postmodern perspectives on identity and image

The boundary between identity and image becomes even less distinct in the postmodern perspective. As Gioia et al. (2000: 72) put it, postmodernists argue that organisational identity is disintegrated and "no longer holds a distinct and persistent core of its own but becomes a reflection of the images of the present moment". In fact, image becomes central in contemporary organisations (Baudrillard, 1988b, 1990). As Gioia et al. (2004: 362) note: "regardless of the starting point, everything ends up as image. More dramatically, everything ends up as *illusion*". In the modernist tradition identity was perceived as

relatively stable and enduring irrespective of external changes or the passage of time. Postmodernists, however, turned the relationship between identity and image upside-down, giving priority to image and positioning identity as “a chameleon-like imitation of images prevailing in the postmodern marketplace” (ibidem: 363). Thus, identity is presented as a dynamic, transient and unstable construct, transformed into a duplicate of manifold images of organisational life labelled by Baudrillard (1988b) as *simulacra* or, as Perniola (1982: 59) worded it, “image without identity”. Both scholars perceive these images as being constructed and transmitted by the mass media and professional communicators.

Baudrillard (1988b) takes a radical approach by emphasising the sequence of identity transformation from the stage of reflection of reality through its distortion and the concealing of its absence, to a complete detachment from reality. This progression of image points to its dynamic nature and its distancing from the original identity. As a result, both identity and image become illusions. Such a perception negates the vision of identity as enduring and stable. Postmodernists argue that *bona fide* identity might be discerned only at the initial stages of an organisation’s existence but with the passage of time it is transformed into an image that finally becomes illusory.

Nevertheless, Gioia et al. (2004: 364) consider a complete shift of identity into image rather unlikely, pointing to the external and internal inertia that hamper organisations’ efforts to adapt to environmental changes. Furthermore, they also assert that certain elements of identity and image are separate and remain distinct. Finally, complex organisations might actually have multiple identities addressing the demands of various contexts and audiences (e.g. employees, customers, competitors, etc.). This multiplicity of different facets of identity hinders a holistic, uniform perception of image and identity and simultaneously positions it in a state of flux, impeding its endurance (ibidem). Taking into consideration the postmodern arguments for the progressive transformation of identity into image or even illusion and arguments emphasising certain restraints of such transformations, it might be concluded that organisational identity is undoubtedly affected by image but does not necessarily become one. It must be, nevertheless, articulated here that both identity and image are dynamic and unstable constructs. This instability, however, has an important and beneficial role to play in organisational life: it smoothes the progress of adaptation to changes in internal and external environments (cf. Gioia et al., 2004: 365).

It must be noted that in organisational studies postmodern perspectives are marginalised and viewed as non-standard (e.g. Jablin and Putnam, 2001; He and Brown, 2013), along with discursive and narrative approaches to organisational identities (e.g. Brown and Humphreys, 2006; Chreim, 2005;

Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994; Humphreys and Brown, 2002) theorising them “as texts constituted through discourse, most usually narratives” (He and Brown, 2013: 10). Czarniawska-Joerges (1994: 198) purports that organisations’ identities are constructed through continuous processes of narration “... where both the narrator and the audience formulate, edit, applaud, and refuse various elements of the ever-produced narrative”. Bauman (1996: 18) summarised the postmodern perception of identity in the following way: “If the *modern* ‘problem of identity’ was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the *postmodern* ‘problem of identity’ is how to avoid fixation and keep the options open”. Referring to Bauman’s words (ibidem), Hatch and Schulz (2000: 16) dubbed identity “a mask that can be changed according to context or whim”. This is indeed the approach taken in this work perceiving identity as strongly interacting with the environment and therefore being characterised by its strong contextualisation, diversity and dynamic character.

2.6.7. Corporate identity and consumption

The discussion on the concept of organisational identity would be incomplete without scrutinising it from the perspective of the consumer. Omnipresent professional communications fiercely struggle to captivate the attention of the targeted groups and project a flattering image that is further monitored and modified to their even most delicately signalled expectations (Gioia et al., 2004). In the postmodern world individuals tend to make up for their sense of instability and insecurity through their membership in a particular group based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion or even lifestyle and consumption patterns promoted by corporations through the media (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2004). I note elsewhere (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2012: 14) that: “Consumerism has, in fact, attempted to redefine identity within the narrow limits of consumer choices, transferring products’ identity to their users or presenting products as keys to one’s own identity, e.g. “Be yourself. Drink Pepsi”.

The domain of identity construction has been highly professionalised in recent years. Marketing, PR and advertising have become essential aspects of any organisational or institutional activity and the boundaries between once separate fields have blurred, giving rise to a pervasive customer-focused and consumer-friendly marketing orientation (Cheney and Christensen, 2001).

Whether or not people are persuaded by marketing and promotional activities to identify with particular brands is an open question. There is a sense, however, in which organizational concerns with identity and image may become ends in themselves, in a familiar process of goal displacement. The industry of advertising, PR and marketing needs to make itself indispensable, facilitating a self-referential world of symbols,

where designed and packaged organizational identities float free of substantive points of reference to the particular organization, in a process akin to Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum, a decoy that has no reference to an original. (Webb, 2006: 62)

Marketing and PR communications promote the values of materialism, consumerism and individualism as elements forming the consumer's identity. Moreover, corporations lessen personal meaning and attempt to manipulate passive consumers who "become fully controlled by the dictates of capital" (Webb, 2006: 65; after Lee, 1993). Selling goods is nowadays centred on the idea of market segmentation and "lifestyling" (du Gay, 1996a). Corporate presence is really tangible in affecting consumers' purchasing choices and constructing their lifestyles. Brands have become identified with particular lifestyles that embrace values, attitudes and worldviews (Lury, 2004), reified as commodities available for purchase. The once condemned vices of hedonism, excessive consumption and self-indulgence have been rehabilitated, while prudence and self-denial have been replaced with self-centredness, aspirations and self-improvement (Featherstone, 1991). Nowadays, the primary goal of marketing is not simply selling more goods but convincing people to look critically at their lives and image and "upgrade" them by purchasing particular products, dubbed as a pass to a better life (Fjellman, 1992). Accordingly:

Consumers are constituted as autonomous, self-regulating and self-actualising individual actors seeking to... optimize the worth of their existence to themselves by assembling a lifestyle, or lifestyles, through personalized acts of choice in the marketplace. (du Gay, 1996a: 77)

Despite being highly desired, complete control over the projected image is rather out of companies' reach and the effects of meticulously designed organisational identity are not always predictable. First of all, certain politics of identity might be challenged by the audience. It must also be emphasised that both corporations and non-profit organisations use the same tools and techniques to contest each other's claims (Alvesson, 2004). This mechanism might be exemplified by cases of the spectacular success of environmental organisations (e.g. Greenpeace, Corporate Watch, Friends of the Earth) that forcefully won the hearts and minds of public opinion in their clashes with corporations (e.g. the controversial company Shell [Webb, 2006: 59] or Monsanto [Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2017a]). Another illustrative example is that of the eco-critique of mass tourism, seen as ecologically harmful and unsustainable, that spurred "green tourism" more respectful of the natural environment and sensitive to its devastation (ibidem). The activity of non-profit and social organisations has resulted in increased public awareness and a more critical approach to corporations, despite their enormous resources to rebut such criticism and justify their actions. In fact, public trust in corporations is dramat-

ically low and “[p]eople are far from captured by the promotional messages of business.” (Webb, 2006: 72). Similar scepticism and distrust in corporate communications have also been expressed in a more recent interview-based study (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2017b).

As a response to this loss of public confidence, corporations undertake various image-restoring activities to show their social and environmental responsibility. The study of the reflection of the new corporate social and environmental concerns in identity discourse is the main purpose of the present work.

2.7. Corporate identity: Formation and management

Numerous studies have confirmed a link between favourable reputation and professional success, both in the individual and organisational dimension (e.g. Ibarra, 1999; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2001; Creed and Scully, 2000; Miller and Kaiser, 2001). Corporate image, drawing on corporate identity, can effectively influence consumers’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviour (Bravo et al., 2009; Flavián et al., 2005; Hsieh et al., 2004). Therefore, it plays an important role in presenting a company as distinctive and competitive (Balmer, 2008; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). Nevertheless, some critical voices point to the fact that CI management is in the hands of a small group of a company’s top executives who might hold wrong assumptions concerning the role and importance of identity:

In a world saturated with symbols, where there is a great demand for every organisation to keep communicating, it is easy to think that each message and every campaign are taken seriously and received in the ways designed. But such meanings are often malleable, unstable and of only ephemeral interest. In fact in many cases, cynicism may be the most prominent outcome. (Christensen and Cheney, 2000: 267)

Despite these reservations, the issues concerning organisational identity and image management play a significant role in affecting stakeholders, ranging from employees, consumers, shareholders or potential investors, and require an in-depth discussion.

Hatch and Schultz (1997) perceive organisational identity as “at least partially socially constructed through interactions between organisational members and those who give them feedback about the organization” (Hatch and Schultz, 2002: 984). Therefore, the image of a particular organisation is a conglomerate of both the identity the organisation communicates to the public as well as the identity of the very public who finally co-constructs an image. (Hatch and Schultz, 2002). The importance of “construed external image” is also emphasised by Gioia et al. (2000), who see it as the main stimulus evoking changes in identity

and representation of outsiders' perception of an organisation. The obtained feedback from the audience acts as a point of reference for the organisation's insiders, enabling them to verify their own perception of the organisation. Thus, "construed external image acts as the primary concept linking organizational self-definition through self-reflection with self-definition through other reflection" (Gioia et al., 2000: 71). The central idea behind Gioia and his colleagues' (2000) words is that the interaction between identity and image leads to transformation in both constructs. Gioia et al. (2000) further assert that incongruities between identity and image inspire modifications within an organisation that allow effective adaptation to the changing environment.

Drawing on Goffman's (1959) ideas of image management, as well as Leary and Kowalski's (1990) theory of impression management and social identity theory, Roberts (2003) has proposed her own model of "social identity-based impression management" (SIM). The model differentiates three components of the process of impression management: *impression monitoring*, *impression motivation* and *impression construction*, which are paralleled in the SIM process. Referring to one's cognitive awareness, *monitoring* stands for the perception of an individual's social identity or group membership by others. *Motivation* is understood as an individual's drive to use SIM in order to change the way the others perceive them. Finally, *construction* refers to the process of generating a particular impression, based on individual decisions of how to present oneself in a given context. Among numerous strategies employed to create a positive image, these two are of primary importance: social re-categorisation and positive distinctiveness. Although SIM enables individuals to control and creatively shape their image, it might as well stimulate the feeling of identity conflict, which is experienced when there is a discrepancy between one's emotional and personal commitments and the performed image. The sense of identity conflict leads to psychological stress and discomfort that might affect both personal and professional life (Bell, 1990). As Goffman (1959: 236) puts it: "[t]o the degree that an individual maintains a show before others that he himself does not believe, he can come to experience a special kind of alienation from self and a special kind of wariness of others". For this reason, the compatibility of one's social identity comes across as an important aspect of personal well-being.

Corporate reputation as a construct brings tangible monetary effects for the company as it translates into profitability. Fombrun (1996: 81) explains that:

Corporate reputations have bottom line effects. A good reputation enhances profitability because it attracts customers to the company's products, investors to its securities, and employees to its jobs. In turn, esteem inflates the price at which a public company's securities trade. The economic value of a corporate reputation can therefore be gauged by the excess market value of its securities.

The benefits of a strong corporate identity include the following aspects: greater public recognition, attractiveness to customers and in general better customer relations, product or brand support, congruent visual presentation, financial advantages and financial confidence, expression of culture and values, staff motivation, support for advertising and communications (Schmidt, 1997: 42; after Wood, 2004: 96-97).

In van Riel's (1995) view, identity management involves the integration of three elements, namely, symbolism, communication and behaviour, referred to as the corporate identity (CI) mix. As exemplified by the Nike company, the overall company's public image might be tarnished even by negative perceptions of just one of the elements of this mosaic – in this particular case excellent management of the company's symbolism and communication did not manage to make up for the company's behaviour that involved mistreatment of third world workers.

2.8. Ethos and corporate identity

The formerly discussed concepts of identity, image and reputation are firmly embedded in organisational and communication studies. In corporate communications their use is, however, often limited to conveying what is desired of an organisation by its audience. Therefore, Stallworth-Williams (2008: 100) recommends using the term *corporate ethos*, motivating it with the fact that the concept of ethos is, in fact, central in rhetorical theory as it explains the mechanism of persuasion and its interplay between the source, the audience and the message (e.g. Beason, 1991; Cross, 1991; Hyland, 1998; Kallendorf and Kallendorf, 1985a, b; Stoddard, 1985; Swales and Rogers, 1995).

The very term *ethos* was developed by Aristotle who for over two millennia has remained the unquestioned authority on persuasion. His *Rhetoric* still remains one of the most essential reference books for communication theorists and practitioners. Even though Aristotle aimed at educating individuals mainly for their political success, his guidelines might also be applied to modern organisations, since, as Stallworth-Williams (2008: 101) observes, the basic aim of communication for both individuals and groups is creating and conveying their positive character.

Aristotle, in Book I of *Rhetoric*, differentiated three basic appeals used by communicators to persuade their audiences: *ethos* (appeals to the source's character), *logos* (appeals to reason), and *pathos* (appeals to an audience's emotions). Although Aristotle stressed the integrity and unity of all three appeals for effective persuasion, he still perceived ethos to be the most important of all of them.

Aristotle (1932: 92) identified three elements of ethos: “intelligence, character, and goodwill”. The first component, intelligence, encompassing expertise and knowledge, appears crucial for credibility since communicators perceived as ignorant or uninformed are not persuasive and very unlikely to achieve their goals. For this reason, in the part of *Rhetoric* called *Inventio* Aristotle presents numerous techniques of argumentation that are recommended for influencing the audience. Despite Aristotle’s recommendations and significance of argumentation in persuasion, Swales and Rogers (1995) observe that in mission statements – the flagship corporate genre communicating a company’s identity – logically developed arguments are rarely used. Nevertheless, companies refer to their competence when providing a detailed description of their service, goods or skills of their management and employees, or applied technologies. An organisation’s knowledge or skills might also be communicated by writing style, text organisation or visual rhetoric (Stoddard, 1985).

As regards character, the second element of ethos, Aristotle claimed that communicators should themselves embody the right character and refer to values shared and appreciated by their audiences. In fact, following this rule in the context of organisational communication implies that companies should communicate values most important to them and their audiences (Collins and Porras, 1991: 35). Indeed, core values and beliefs are the organisation’s basic precepts about what is important in both business and life, how business should be conducted, its view of humanity, its role in society, the way the world works, and what is to be held inviolate. Therefore, such values are usually communicated in mission statements or in separate sections of PR identity narrations (e.g. “Our values” sections in websites).

As Collins and Porras (1991) suggest, in order to come across as sincere, a company should first define and pronounce the values that are core to its identity, and then look for those shared with the audience. Additionally, words are not sufficient to build a convincing identity since they should be accompanied by actions. For example, pure declarations of an environment polluter to be environmentally-friendly will be easily uncovered by the audience. Stoddard (1985) suggests that rhetorical strategies and corporate discourse should be harmonised with the whole rhetorical situation, including the purpose of communication, its context and the characteristics of the audience. Stallworth-Williams (2008: 103) asserts that the stakeholders addressed in mission statements reflect an organisation’s understanding of its audiences and communication contexts. One of the most powerful strategies of winning over an audience is finding and articulating similarities between the communicator and the recipients of the message. Beason (1991: 331) notes that appeals to “similitude” are effective since finding common ground increases trust and acceptance of the communicator by the audience.

Finally, in accordance with the principle of the third element of ethos (goodwill) communicators should demonstrate their good intentions toward their audiences and make sure they evoke positive emotions in them. Indeed, managing your audience's emotions, understood as their identification and satisfaction, is one of the most desired, yet rare, skills a communicator might be equipped with (cf. Cross, 1991). Thus, as Amato and Amato (2002: 72) conclude, showing goodwill appears to be a crucial strategy for "cultivating and maintaining a corporate good guy image in the eyes of various stakeholders".⁸

The concept of ethos has also been explored by Foucault in his later works on pagan antiquity. Foucault (1996) points to the significance of self-cultivation expressed through personal style that framed all aspects of an individual's life and was perceived as a manifestation of liberty.

Ethos was the deportment and the way to behave. It was the subject's mode of being and a certain manner of acting visible to others. This ethos was seen by his dress, by his bearing, by his gait, by the poise with which he reacts to events etc. For them, that is the concrete expression of liberty, the way they 'problematized' their freedom. (Foucault, 1996: 436)

Foucault's references to antiquity and his considerations on ethos provoke certain reflections concerning freedom in the present times and stimulate individuals to deliberate on a more autonomous form of existence that might be gained by the informed supervision of "the excessive powers of political rationality" (1982: 210). In this respect, Foucault's thoughts on *parrhesia*, contained in his *Fearless Speech* (2001), seem particularly applicable. In classical literature *parrhesia* is closely associated with dialectic meaning and stands in opposition to rhetoric related to sophistry, focusing on the use of rhetoric means to persuade the audience. The very concept signifies the principle of telling the truth in the public domain, even at the cost of certain personal risk, including physical injury, incurred by the speaker. As Foucault (2001: 16) puts it: "(...) in its extreme form, telling the truth takes place in the 'game' of life and death". Thus, Socrates appears as an exemplary Parrhesiast who embodied the balance between "logos and bios" (Miller, 1993: 359). Being frank and harmonising one's words with actions is perceived by Foucault as a *duty*, an essential element contributing to the public good.

Theoretically, Foucault's postulate to orchestrate one's words and actions should also lie at the very root of any human activity, including the business one. In the organisational context this principle also finds application in synchronising an organisation's identity, image and finally reputation, since

⁸ The considerations on the concept of ethos have been based on Wąsikiewicz-Firlej (2012: 18-19).

consistency in the content of all these elements is required to maintain organisational “health”. The very idea of public relations does, in fact, assume honest, symmetrical communication between organisations or institutions and their stakeholders. In business activity, though, this principle might come into conflict with profit-making. Therefore, companies have been forced by public opinion to verify their organisational goals and redefine their roles and position in society. The intricacies of this transformation will be addressed in the next section.

2.8.1. Corporate Social Responsibility as a function of identity

In recent years the effects of human activity and economic development on the environment and society have come under severe criticism and instigated a public debate on the roles and responsibilities of companies in society (de Oliveira Arantes et al., 2013). Due to the growing concern of public opinion with social and environmental issues business organisations are nowadays expected to broaden their perspective “from merely ‘profit’ to the three ps: ‘profit’, ‘people’, and ‘planet’” (Verboven, 2011: 415-416). In other words, there is a certain pressure put on companies to demonstrate their ethical concerns and corporate social responsibility (CSR) that requires tangible contributions to society, beyond their interest or legal regulations.

In fact, Pollach (2002), in her monograph on communicating corporate ethics online, differentiates between the business-ethics approach (BE) and the corporate social responsibility approach (CSR) and, following Altham (2001), discerns four differences between them. First of all, the two approaches have different aspirations; BE mainly aims to prevent the negative results of business activity while CSR exposes its positive aspects. Secondly, BE takes a rather reactive stance as a reply to existing problems in contrast to CSR that is more proactive and focused on enhancing corporate reputation or protecting it from public criticism or charges (Altham, 2001: 10). Another difference lies in the characteristics of their target groups. BE aims to reach stakeholders that are vital to the survival of the organisation (i.e. employees, customers, suppliers and shareholders). Yet, CSR takes a more inclusive approach and recognises corporate responsibility to the society, not only at the local, but also at the global levels. In other words, CSR is directed at the public at large – a huge, diversified group of stakeholders, representing a plethora of different and often conflicting interests and values (ibidem: 10-11). Taking the above into consideration, managing CSR does seem an inherently challenging task.

In consequence, CSR has become one of the key aspects of corporate communication strategies that reinforce and consolidate corporate identity and

reputation (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004; Pomeroy and Johnson, 2009; Poolthong and Mandhachitara (2009). As Luring and Thomsen (2009: 38) express it: "CSR is often defined within the frame of the corporate identity and thereby considered well embedded in all organisational thought of action". CSR has defined new social roles for companies and positioned them as engines and leaders of social development (Grayson and Hodges, 2002; cited in de Oliveira Arantes et al., 2013: 52). In Neto and Froes' (2001: 84; cited in de Oliveira Arantes et al., 2013: 52) words: "CSR is seen as the company's commitment towards society and general humanity. It is a means of accountability to its performance, based on ownership and use of resources that did not belong to it at start". As a result, companies incorporate CSR values into their identity policies, and articulate them in corporate mission and vision statements, codes of conduct and social reports (Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2012). The public commitment to these values enables the companies to retain their credibility in the eyes of the stakeholders and legitimises their actions and existence (Chenney and Christensen, 2001).

It must be noted, however, that providing a comprehensive, widely accepted definition of CSR appears a challenging task, mainly due to the evolution of the concept and its varying perception among scholars and business practitioners. The very idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) originated in the US in the beginning of the 20th century in response to the growing criticism of corporations accused of being too sizeable, too powerful, antisocial and monopolistic. It grew out of the ethical concerns about the operations of organisations and their effect on third parties. In academic literature the concept of CSR appeared in the 1950s, introduced by such authors as Bowen (1953) and Spencer (1958), who asserted that the expansion of businesses and the process of globalisation significantly affected the exploitation of the planet's resources and imposed new obligations on corporations. Accordingly, companies were expected not only to make profit, but also contribute to society. At that time such contributions took the form of philanthropy.

An exhaustive definition and review of the literature on the concept of CSR has been provided by Carroll (1999) in his landmark paper "Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct". Carroll (1999: 275) asserts that CSR, spurred by the growing criticism of capitalism and the activity of environmental and social rights movements, clearly marked its presence in the mainstream discourse at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s which is widely accepted by scholars as its starting point (cf. Jonker and Marberg, 2007). From the very beginning the definition of the concept of CSR and the perception of its role in business activity stimulated fierce debate among scholars and business practitioners. For example, Nobel laureate Milton Friedman (1970) firmly advocated the stance that: "[t]he only one responsibility of business towards

the society is the maximisation of profits to the shareholders, within the legal framework and the ethical custom of the country (1970: 31).⁹

This view is, however, contested by Frederick (1987) who argues that the social responsibility of corporations should surpass the limits of the profit-making goal, which nowadays would be a commonly accepted position. Frederick (1987) specifies four phases in CSR development. The first phase took place in the 1960s and 1970s and was characterised by the emergence of the very idea of social responsibility of companies expected to contribute to society through, for example, philanthropy, and its initial resistance on the part of business organisations. In the next decade, labelled by Frederick (1987) as “corporate social responsiveness”, companies took offensive rather than defensive positions towards their social responsibility and offered more public involvement, mostly focused on improving their public affairs and communication. Moreover, as Waddock (2004) observes, the business sector engaged in the active support of political candidates and political action committees in order to influence the policy-making process to their advantage. At that stage, the main motivation of business organisations to take any CSR practices was the potential financial reward rather than real moral concerns.

This changed in the late 1980s when ethics were brought forth (Carroll, 1999; Waddock, 2004). Due to numerous corporate scandals, business was now ordered by law to address ethical issues and incorporate them into their daily practices. The publication of the first CSR report by Shell in 1998 signalled the readiness of large corporation to discuss social responsibility issues and effectively shunned, at least temporarily, any possible governmental or consumer criticism. The fourth phase moves away from corporate-centredness towards a more eco-social orientation that “appears to parallel and reinforce the discourse on sustainable development” (Jonker and Marberg, 2007: 111).

In a similar vein, Cappellin et al. (2001: 32; cited in de Oliveira Arantes et al., 2013: 52) assert that the traditional concerns of companies with the generation of profits have shifted towards ethical and moral aspects of their business activity. Such perception has redefined the notion of success that is now not only limited to the economic performance of a company, but also incorporates its commitment to society and preservation of the environment. Additionally, according to Srour (1998; after de Oliveira Arantes et al., 2013: 52), a socially responsible company maintains positive relationships with its all stakeholders, provides high quality products at competitive prices, contributes to the development of the community, preserves the environment and acts as an

⁹ It must be noted, though, that despite his focus on profit, Friedman did not entirely negate the ethical aspects of business activity which should be run “... within the rules of the game... in open and free competition without deception or fraud.” (Friedman, 1970: 63).

ethical employer offering decent working conditions and investing in staff development. Thus, the fundamental pillars of CSR integrate business ethics, preservation of the environment and respect for employees (De Paula Soares, 2004; after de Oliveira Arantes et al., 2013: 52).

Due to the fact that CSR considerably affects organisational reputation or even legitimacy, CSR communication has become one of the central facets of corporate communications (Verboven, 2011: 416). In fact, a substantial body of research has shown (e.g. Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Maignan and Fernell, 2004) that CSR is indeed one of the most effective means that might be used to enhance a company's image. Additionally, there is growing social pressure for companies to raise CSR budgets and incorporate CSR activities into their agenda and join international CSR projects (e.g. The Global Compact, The GRI). Additionally, corporate activity in the field of CSR is evaluated and ranked in the global business arena (e.g. Fortune 500, Global Rep Trak, Dow Jones Sustainability Index, FTSE4Good). These taken together, might, however, raise certain doubts concerning the motivation of organisations to integrate CSR with their identity. For example, Alexander (2009: 18) perceives the incorporation of ecological issues "as a façade for PR and advertizing purposes" and points to the fact that in the United States companies are legally obliged to publish environmental reports. Verboven (2011: 416) points to the fact that some companies treat philanthropy as their "license to operate" and use it as an effective marketing or branding tool. Similar doubts have also been voiced by other scholars (e.g. Boatright, 1999; Porter and Kramer, 2002). Peattie, Peattie and Ponting (2009) refer to this phenomenon using a powerful metaphor of "greenwashing", defined as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service" (TerraChoice, 2009: 1).

In the 21st "supercapitalist" (Reich, 2008: 5) century the interpretation of CSR as an instrument to maximise profits rather than as an expression of social responsibility suggested in 1970 by Friedman seems to resonate with the principles of neoliberalism¹⁰. As Ashley (2005: 5) contends, in the neoliberal perspective the ultimate aim of every company, including a socially responsible one, is to earn money for its shareholders, even at the cost of social solidarity. Nevertheless, the terms *corporate social responsibility* as well as *stakeholder*, the meaning of which has been recently extended to both people and the environment (Hopkins, 2003: 10), have nestled in the public discourse, wielding substantial influence on the companies' social and environmental engagement. CSR discourse, however, has met considerable scepticism, voiced, for example, by Villagra (2008) and Whitehouse (2006) doubting the sincerity of

¹⁰ A further discussion on neoliberalism in chapter 4.

CSR declarations. Such mistrust on the part of the stakeholders might notably tarnish a company's reputation and impair its efficiency. For this reason, CSR goals and values must be harmonised with actions as well as overall corporate identity.

Nevertheless, despite the above reservations, one of the tangible effects of globalisation has been an observable rise in the ethical standards in business activity, which have been either imposed on the company by the public or developed by the company itself in order to maintain a positive reputation that is nowadays perceived as one of the prerequisites of successful organisational performance (Veloso, 2005). A number of studies have, in fact, been conducted to verify the assumed positive correlation between CSR and profitability; their results, however, have been rather inconsistent. For example, Lee et al. (2009) have not confirmed the hypothesised correlation, as opposed to Waddock and Graves (1997), Herremans et al. (1993), McGuire et al. (1988), and Vilanova et al. (2009) who found it highly significant. Additionally, Ashley (2005) points to the duality in the theoretical perception of the concept of CSR, which might be either ethical or instrumental. The former view promotes ethical behaviour on the part of the company and its employees based on moral norms, even if it generates certain costs. The latter one, on the other hand, assumes that socially responsible conduct of the company translates into its monetary success.

Nowadays, a certain ideological polarisation of the approaches to the debate on the role of CSR in business might be identified, reflecting the conflict between "profit-seeking and prosociality" (Sabadoz, 2011: 78). On the one hand, CSR is seen as unnecessary, "implicit utopianism" hindering corporations that within the frameworks of capitalism are primarily expected to generate profit, while the CSR paradigm has forced them to share their wealth and get involved in altruistic activity (Sabadoz, 2011: 79). As van Marrewijk (2003: 96) puts it: "too often, CSR is regarded as a panacea which will solve the global poverty gap, social exclusion and environmental degradation". Thus, Sabadoz (2011) contends that such a perception of CSR might shake the foundations of capitalism by undermining the process of wealth production.

CSR has also been criticised by advocates of the opposite side of the debate. Recently, studies conducted independently by Hanlon (2008) and Banerjee (2003; 2008) have shed new light on the perception of CSR and questioned its emancipatory character. One of the main findings of their research implies that CSR legitimises corporations which is regarded essential for the further expansion of neoliberal capitalism. Accordingly, Banerjee (2008: 52) perceives "discourses of corporate citizenship, corporate social responsibility, (and) corporate sustainability as ideological discourses that are intended to legitimise the power of large corporations". Moreover, the results of the discussed

studies have rebutted the hypothesised impeding effect of CSR practices on the capitalist order and corporate profit. Quite the contrary, CSR has turned out to increase business profitability. Hence, Banerjee (2008: 60) has labelled CSR “a praxis of evil” that, using Sabadoz’s words (2011: 80) “trades upon society’s naïveté and ignorance to advance private interests”.

Irrespective of the pragmatic motivation of corporate executives to gain public appreciation, incorporating CSR into business operations might indeed bring positive social and environmental outcomes. Since the 1950s the very understanding of CSR has significantly changed, evolving from philanthropy to a comprehensive approach embracing social, environmental and legal responsibilities. Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque (2012: 148) purport that “[i]t is obviously necessary that CSR principles and goals are well embedded in corporate personality to reduce the stakeholder’s scepticism by designing more credible and effective CSR strategies”.

In practice, in the case of numerous companies there have been noted apparent inconsistencies between their value, mission and vision statements and their actual CSR that resulted in corporate fiascos publicised by the media (cf. Christensen and Askegaard, 2001). Thus, since stakeholders evaluate the organisation on the basis of its behaviour, the integration of CSR policy with the actual corporate personality appears, indeed, one of the priorities in corporate communication. A successful integration of these elements brings tangible benefits: it considerably enhances the company’s credibility, trustworthiness, and as a result boosts its image and stakeholders’ loyalty (cf. Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Rifon et al., 2004; Menon and Kahn, 2003; Gupta and Pirsch, 2006).

According to Athanasiou (1996: 171), “There is a fundamental conflict between the logic of social and environmental protection and the demands of deregulated international trade”. Economics, however, should be constrained by morality and ecology (ibidem: 183). It must be emphasised, though, that multinationals “help set the agenda for global negotiations on the crises of environment and development” (Greer and Bruno, 1996: 13).

2.8.2. Organisational legitimacy

Legitimacy appears to be one of the perennial issues related to the identity of contemporary organisations and simultaneously one of the main goals of corporate communication. A comprehensive review of literature on organisational legitimacy has been provided by Suchman (1995), who purports that the term was conceptualised by Weber and Parsons. According to Suchman (1995: 574), legitimacy might be defined as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate

within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions". Suchman (1995) discerns three dimensions of legitimacy.

First, legitimacy is generalised as long- rather than short-term oriented and, as the scholar (Suchman, 1995: 574) puts it: "While individual events or actions may impact actual or perceived legitimacy, legitimacy transcends the specific". Second, legitimacy is also synonymous with a perception or assumption as it "represents a reaction of observers to the organization as they see it" (Suchman, 1995: 574). Finally, legitimacy is socially constructed since it "reflects a congruence between the behaviours of the legitimated entity and the shared (or assumedly shared) beliefs of some social group" (ibidem). In other words, Suchman's (1995) definition puts emphasis on the social aspect of legitimacy that is construed through social relations and practices.

According to Pfeffer (1981: 5), legitimacy translates into support and commitment for an organisation from its internal and external stakeholders. Organisations considered legitimate display congruency between their norms and behaviour and the widely accepted social values (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975: 122); a discrepancy between them results in a "legitimacy gap" (Sethi, 1978) that might bear a negative effect on the perception of the organisation and lead to "legal, economic, and other social sanctions" (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975: 122).

Approaches to organisational legitimacy might be divided into two major strands: strategic and institutional. In the strategic perspective legitimacy is deemed controllable and adaptable, mainly through communication (Aerts and Cormier, 2009: 3). On the other hand, in the institutional perspective legitimacy is viewed from a broader angle as "a set of constitutive beliefs" (Suchman, 1995: 576) and recognised as the building block of organisational identity. This perspective downplays the role of managers in the decision-making process as it assumes that their "decisions are constrained by the same belief systems that determine audience reactions" (Suchman, 1995: 576). Therefore, legitimacy helps to construct the desired image of organisations by "making them seem *natural* and *meaningful*; access to resources is largely a by-product" (Suchman, 1995: 576, emphasis in original). Although the institutional perspective deems communication strategies fundamental in constructing organisational identity and daily functioning, it also takes into consideration the broad contexts in which they are set.

These two perspectives have dominated research on organisational legitimacy undertaken principally in the vein of organisational or business studies. Nevertheless, even the representatives of these disciplines see the potential of discursive approaches (e.g. Tregida et al., 2007), especially focusing on the role of social and environmental reporting in construing legitimacy, integrating both the strategic and interpretive approaches. Further discussion on the

benefits of a particular approach requires, however, a brief literature review and a clarification of how legitimacy and social and environmental reporting are related.

2.8.3. Organisational legitimacy and the social and environmental reports

Drawing on Suchman's (1995) definition of legitimacy presented above, it must primarily be emphasised that due to the fact that legitimacy is generalised rather than specific, and therefore a long-term rather than a short-term concept, it is relatively resistant to and independent of particular events, yet reliant on a sequence of events (*ibidem*: 574). The process of constructing corporate legitimacy might be characterised as dynamic rather than static, evolving along with an organisation and (re)established by social enactment. In fact, it gives insights into corporate behaviour and communication situated in a given society and environment (Bansal and Clelland, 2004; Phillipe, 2006). In this context, the most useful insights into the ways an organisation communicates with its stakeholders are offered by social and environmental reporting.

The body of literature on legitimacy and social and environmental reporting is poorly represented in the vein of broadly understood applied linguistics. The topic has been, however, scrutinised in a number of organisational studies (e.g. Buhr, 2002; Milne and Patten, 2002; Mobus, 2005; O'Donovan, 2002; O'Dwyer, 2002). Part of this research investigates the media coverage of crisis situations experienced by organisations and their attempts to take rather short-term actions in order to regain lost legitimacy (Deegan, Rankin and Voght, 2000; Patten, 1992; 2002; see also Allen and Caillouet, 1994; Elsbach and Sutton, 1992; Elsbach, 1994). Since these studies emphasise the agency of organisations in controlling the process of communication, they might be categorised as embedded in the strategic perspective discussed above. Moreover, the majority of studies do not investigate the effects of corporate communication and their impact on corporate legitimacy (Phillipe, 2006). Tregida and her colleagues (2007) also argue that the very perception of legitimacy is too narrow. Most importantly, though, the scholars (Tregida et al., 2007) call for research addressing the concern that corporate social and environmental reporting legitimises the corporation and, in consequence, also legitimises and enhances continuing social injustice and environmental damage rather than minimising these problems. To a great extent, these problems are, in fact, addressed in the current monograph.

Subsequent studies, mostly relying on content analysis, have provided some valuable insight into the content, scope and quantity of reporting as well as its addressors. They have, however, failed to examine the discourse of such reporting and its outcomes. Discourse studies of corporate legitimacy and social and environmental accountability are indeed scarce. Some exceptions include several quantitative studies undertaken by Adams, 2002; Buhr, 2001; 2002; Harte and Owen, 1991; Owen et al., 2001, as well qualitative studies conducted by Cowton and Dopson, 2002; Hoskin and Macve, 1986; 1994; Loft, 1986. Nevertheless, the study of corporate discourse and communication and its impact on society and environment seems to be a rising trend.

2.8.4. Towards the Ecological Model of Corporate Identity

The literature review on the concept of identity in organisational settings has shown a shift towards the incorporation of ethical and ecological concerns in corporate self-positioning. In other words, companies tend to define their identity in reference to the intricate network of socio-cultural relations as well as their relations with nature. Thus, my claim is that this newly-emerged ecological slant requires a new paradigm for the definition of corporate identity that should provide for *ecological identity*.

The very term “ecological identity” was popularised by Mitchell Thomashow, a preeminent educator and environmentalist, who used it to entitle his monograph *Ecological identity: Becoming a reflective environmentalist* published in 1995. The book is embedded in the field of environmental education, promoting the development of one’s sense of identity in relation to natural and social ecosystems. As Thomashow (1995: 3) maintains:

Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self. Nature becomes an object of identification. (...) the interpretation of life experience transcends social and cultural interactions. It also includes a person’s connection to the earth, perception of the ecosystem, and direct experience of nature.

The main assumption of Thomashow’s work is that “ecological identity describes how we extend our sense of self in relationship to nature” (ibidem: 3). In a similar vein, in his “provocative” paper, “Ecology and identity”, psychologist Richard Bowen on the basis of literature review puts forward a thesis that the “study of ecology leads to changes of identity and psychological perspective, and can provide the foundations for an ‘ecological identity’ – a reframing of a person’s point of view which restructures values, reorganises perceptions and alters the individual’s self-directed, social, and environmentally directed actions”.

Growing ecological awareness of individuals influences their consumer attitudes and behaviours and leads to more profound and large-scale changes in the awareness of public opinion. These, in turn, affect self-representations of companies whose identity is very sensitive to any possible alternations “in context or whim” (Hatch and Schulz, 2000: 16).

Information about the self accompanies information about the environment, and the two are inseparable. [...] Perception has two poles, the subjective and the objective, and information is available to specify both. One perceives the environment and co-perceives oneself. (Gibson, 1986: 126)

Therefore, I postulate that corporate identity should define a company's role and position not only in reference to the traditional socio-cultural-economic context but also to the environmental domain. Accordingly, I propose the following model of corporate identity, dubbed the Ecological Model of Corporate Identity (EMCI), which will be applied in further considerations.

Within the EMCI the environment is seen as an element of a broadly understood ecosystem in accordance with the ecolinguistic principle of ecological embedding of all human activity, including that of business. In other words, the company is seen as constructing and being constructed by its *ecosystem* that stands for an overall context embracing social, cultural, political, legal, economic, technological and environmental factors. All these factors, taken either individually or collectively, have an impact on the processes of designing, communicating and interpreting corporate identity.

Corporate identity is seen as a dynamic construct that is, in Breeze's (2013; 14) words, “created, expressed and replicated through discourse, and it is also performed through the actions and practices of the corporate entity and its members”. *Corporate identity* is designed and communicated by the *source* that represents the company. Even though in common understanding the word “company” metonymically stands for the corporate entity and its members, it must be emphasised that not all of these members participate in generating *corporate identity* since this task is usually performed by the top management or appointed consultants (cf. Breeze, 2013; van Riel 1995, 2003). Accordingly, *corporate identity* is defined here as a highly persuasive statement of a company's identity, including the projection of the company's main goals and scope of activity, its mission and value statement, specifications of stakeholders, which is constructed by the company's top managers and consultants and addressed to broad and varied audiences of corporate internal and external stakeholders (e.g. employees, suppliers, shareholders, potential investors, the public, authorities, NGOs, etc.).

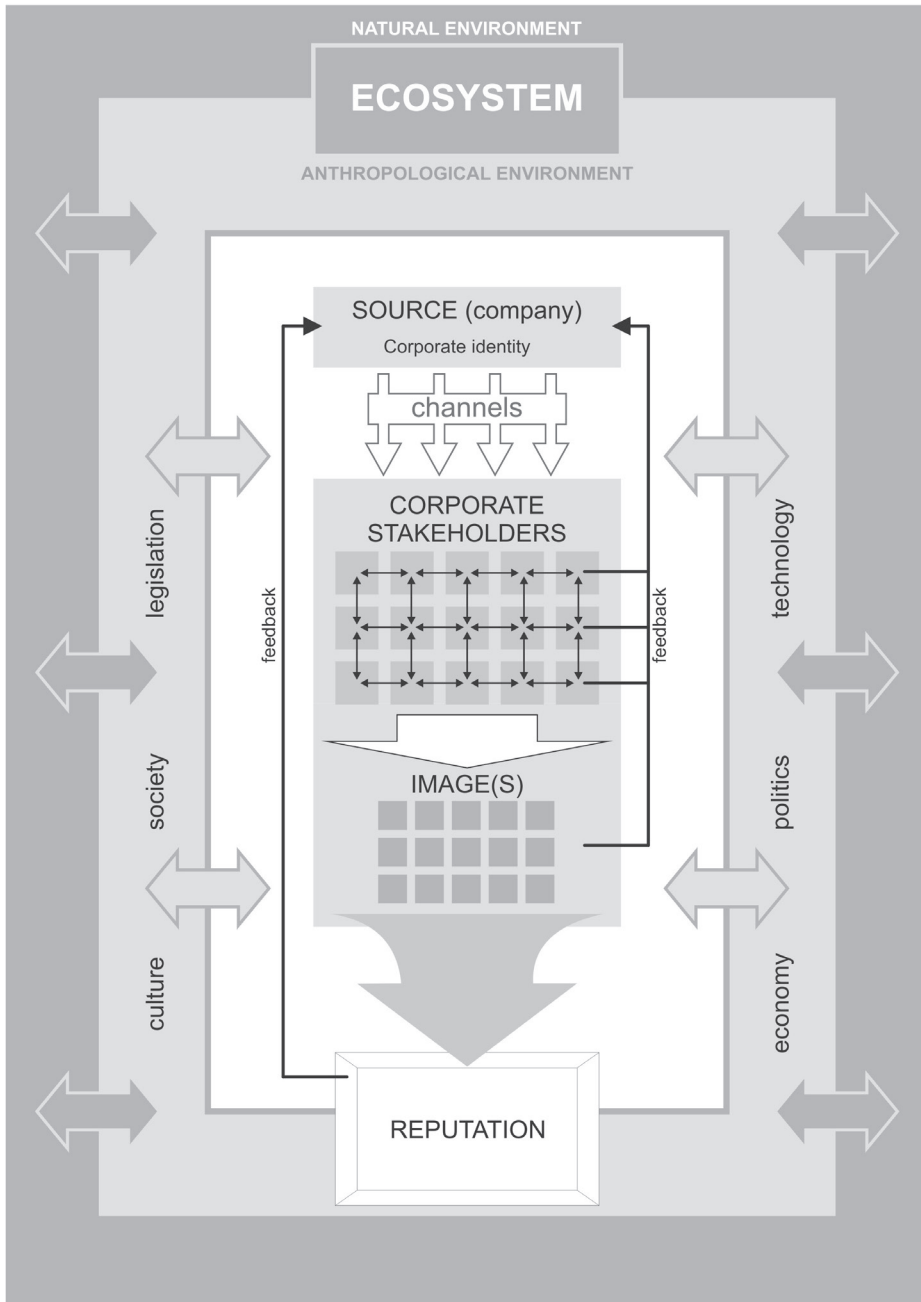


Figure 2.1. Ecological Model of Corporate Identity

Corporate identity, understood as a company's "self-representation" to the public (*recipients*), is distinct from its *image* or *images*, to be more accurate, which stand for multiple perceptions of the company by the public based on corporate communication and behaviour and characterised by diversity, instability and temporariness. The image of a company is not uniform and consistent; it is rather a mosaic of different images created by individuals, guided by corporate communication, media representations and their own personal experiences, opinions or emotions that are sensitive to changes in any element of the broadly understood ecosystem. Thus, corporate image is mainly constructed by the recipients who are considered its main architects. For this reason, corporate identity and corporate image(s) might be discrepant, since the former is fully controlled by the company in contrast to the latter. Yet, the congruency between the two is seen as desired from the perspective of the company's reputation and profitability. Compared to fleeting and unstable images, *reputation* is defined as a more widespread, consistent and permanent construct that has emerged from the evaluation of the company's past and present performance.

Finally, CI is seen as an emergent and dynamic construct that arises from the interaction between the company and its ecosystem, represented in the scheme by the bidirectional *feedback* arrows. The arrows form a loop that symbolises the dynamic and cyclical nature of CI. In practical terms, CI is responsive to any changes in ecosystem, e.g. political agenda, legislature, or a particular socio-economic situation, that enforce, privilege or negate certain worldviews or values (e.g. sustainable development vs. unrestrained capitalism) and in the end affect the discursive construction of corporate identity. Simultaneously, the company, guided by its verbalised principles and values, exerts real influence on its ecosystem, for example, in the form of the tangible destruction of the environment or socio-economic status of its employees, or in the more subtle form of pressure on the authorities to create their business-friendly environment.

2.9. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to elucidate the concept of corporate identity – central in this monograph. The discussion began with an overview of definitions of identity, contrasted with seemingly similar terms such as personality, self, face, individual and social identity. The following sections discussed the concept of identity in the organisational context, focusing specifically on corporate settings. This focus required a clear distinction between the overlapping concepts of organisational and corporate identity that involved

a thorough review of literature, mainly from the field of organisational and communication studies. Further deliberations illustrated definitional discrepancies and overlaps of the concepts of identity, image and reputation and addressed the need to delineate more distinct boundaries between these terms. Such delineations seemed challenging, particularly from the perspective of the postmodern theories, especially Baudrillard's (1988b) concept of *simulacrum* assuming the substitution of identity by its image, which is often completely detached from its original. I leaned towards a less radical approach, positioning both identity and image as dynamic and unstable, yet distinct constructs.

Further, I also emphasised the significance of ethical aspects of corporate identity realised in modern organisations mostly through their Corporate Social Responsibility policy. CSR was presented as the central element of corporate communication, reinforcing and consolidating corporate identity and reputation.

In the final section of the chapter, I proposed the Ecological Model of Corporate Identity that situates the company in the broadly understood ecosystem accounting for a complex network of social, cultural, economic, political, technological and environmental factors. The novelty of the model lies in exposing the company's embeddedness in the intricate network of mutual relations between the company, its stakeholders and the ecosystem and assuming the centrality of ethical and ecological appeals in constructing corporate identity, particularly vividly expressed in mission statements and CSR reports,

Based on Bhatia and Lung's (2006: 266) assumption that corporate identity "is realised in and through the discursive practices of members of business and disciplinary cultures", the next chapter will, accordingly, focus on corporate communication practices as the main architects of corporate identity.

Communicating Corporate Identity in the Virtual Environment

Introduction

The aphoristic phrase “the medium is the message” coined by McLuhan (1962), canonical in the field of media studies, has recently gained critical importance with the rise of the World Wide Web and the ongoing massive digitalisation of communication pervading all aspects of human life. This communication revolution, predicted by McLuhan over forty years ago, has not only transformed the media landscape, but also affected the way information is transmitted, interpreted and stored. Naturally, technological changes also pertain to the question of identity that is contemporarily inextricably intertwined with communication and the rule of the mass-media. As Cheney and Christensen (2001: 240) note, “[t]he ‘explosion’ of communication that we are witnessing (...) goes hand in hand with the question of identity”. Thus, in a world flooded with information, making oneself visible, distinctive or simply heard, in order to mark one’s presence in the public space or provide oneself a favourable position in the marketplace, appears as one of the main concerns of both individuals and organisations. Baudrillard (1988a: 24ff) observes that “(...) the space is so saturated, the pressure of all which wants to be heard so strong that [we] are no longer capable of knowing what [we] want”. For this reason, the task of building and maintaining a congruent, favourable identity becomes a really challenging task.

The present chapter aims to elucidate the relationships between corporate communication and constructing corporate identity in the newly-emerged virtual environment that has already become the main medium for internal and external communication. Accordingly, the first sections discuss the aims and functions of corporate communication and its development in view of the latest technological changes. The role of the new media in public space will be discussed from the perspective of the theory of technological determinism and social constructivism. The following sections analyse the concept of the genre and its transformation into cybergenre later narrowed

to the corporate context. Special heed is paid to the corporate webpage – especially “About us” sections – posited as the main tool for communicating corporate identity online.

3.1. Corporate communication and identity construction

The question of identity as the main concern of all living organisms, including corporations, is primarily handled by communication and communication practices seen as the “chief architects of organizational identity” (Cheney and Christensen, 2001: 242). As mentioned earlier (see chapter 2), communicating a consistent corporate identity that is harmonised with the organisation’s performance appears to be the most significant aspect of corporate image formation. Accordingly, the company’s behaviour is perceived as an expression of identity, which is regarded as the most powerful tool to communicate the desired corporate personality. In fact, some scholars (e.g. Melewar and Jenkins, 2002; van Riel and Fombrun, 2007) argue that the very concept of corporate communication embraces all behaviours and actions undertaken or supported by the company and its employees. In other words, behaviour is classified as a part of nonverbal communication.

In Cheney’s view, the primary aim of contemporary public relations is in fact “representing major organisations and institutions of our society with values, images, identities, issue positions and so forth. Thus, it is crucial that we probe the structure and meaning of that process of representation” (Cheney 1992: 170). The scholar, however, points to the problem of an excessive focus on the form rather than content, and exploiting image(s) devoid of any references to “reality”¹¹ that are becoming the dominant patterns in external and internal corporate communication (Cheney, 1992: 1973). Such an approach evokes certain ethical doubts as it questions the declared symmetry and honesty of organisational communication. Instead of being reflected as close to reality as possible, identity is tailored to a company’s hidden needs and goals. Such a “flexible” approach to corporate communication positions it closer to manipulation or propaganda¹² rather than ethical bi-directional

¹¹ This issue has also been discussed in chapter 2 of the present volume.

¹² Propaganda is understood here in the light of its classic definitions proposed by Lasswell (1953):

Propaganda is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulating of significant symbols... Collective attitudes are amenable to many modes of alteration... intimidation... economic coercion... drill. But their arrangement and rearrangement occurs principally under the impetus of significant symbols; and the technique of using significant symbols for this purpose is propaganda. (Lasswell, 1953; quoted in Carrey, 1995: 12).

communication with stakeholders. Managing stakeholder relationships is yet another area that remains in the scope of activity of public relations (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000a, b).

In the twenty-first century the most discernible trend in corporate communication is that of striving for a more integrated global communication strategy grouping all company communicative activities, often controlled by one department, in order to “project one uniform and unambiguous image of what the organization stands for” (Cheney and Christensen, 2001: 162). In other words, this turn results in the merging of communications that were previously targeted at different groups of stakeholders (e.g. investors vs. potential customers) to make the company speak one voice and provide a congruent message. The need for a “a strong corporate culture” and “a coherent corporate identity”, accompanied by homogenous professional communication that involves high competence in the use of modern technology, management of relationships with the media and deep understanding of global contexts, have also been verbalised by Goodman (2000: 70).

At this point, it seems worth one’s while to analyse the very concepts of corporate communication and public relations that are often used interchangeably in the context of corporate communication practices. The number of definitions of public relations is indeed abundant, but despite their profusion and variance of perspectives, the majority of them emphasise that the main goal of PR is the management of communication between an organisation and its audiences (Tench and Yeomans, 2006; Theaker, 2016). Corporate communication is usually classified into categories based on the types of audiences it addresses, namely:

- *internal communication* targeted at current employees in order to boost their morale and improve organisational effectiveness;
- *external communication* directed at wider publics, embracing investors, potential employees, authorities (local and central), local community, the media, business partners, etc. in order to influence their attitudes and/or behaviour. (cf. Yeomans, 2006: 332-353; Jablin and Putnam, 2001).

Ideally, this communication with different sorts of audiences is presented as honest and dialogical, aiming at the maintenance of “mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip et al., 2000: 6). Thus, PR plays an important role in implementing corporate strategy through influencing and gaining the support of specifically defined target groups or the general public. Despite the declared need to build bi-lateral relationships and understanding between an

organisation's main stakeholders (Gordon, 1997), it must be remembered that these actions primarily serve the organisation's interests. Objection to this seeming neutrality of PR has been expressed by numerous authors. For example, Botan and Hazelton (1989) point to the discrepancy between the theory of PR and its practice often boiling down to manipulation of public opinion. The negative face of PR has been particularly exposed by Moloney (2000: 65), who views it as "manipulation against democracy" due to the fact that it is employed as a tool to promote interests of the government and business, frequently at the expense of other interests.

This evident bias of PR favouring governmental or commercial interests has led to the perception of the term as synonymous with deceit (Edwards, 2006: 5) or "'spin', propaganda and corporate lying" (Wood, 2006: 571). Therefore, in order to differentiate themselves from pejoratively loaded "spin doctors", PR practitioners have started to use the notions of *reputation* and *relationship management*, *stakeholder communication* and *corporate communication* in reference to their professional activity. As a result, the terms are used interchangeably since there is, in fact, "no theoretical difference between 'corporate communication' and 'public relations'" (Steyn, 2003: 163).

In practical terms, van Riel (1995; 2003) takes an integrative approach to corporate communication that embraces all communication activity undertaken on the part of an organisation i.e. public relations, public affairs, investor relations, internal communication and corporate advertising¹³. In van Riel's definition (2003: 53), corporate communication is understood as:

[t]he orchestration of all the instruments in the field of organizational identity (communication, symbols and behavior of organizational members) in such an attractive and realistic manner as to create or maintain a positive reputation for groups with which the organization has an interdependent relationship (often referred to as stakeholders). This results in a competitive advantage for the organization.

The approach taken in this work might also be dubbed integrative – public relations and corporate communication will be treated as synonymous umbrella terms standing for all types of communicative activities undertaken by an organisation to construct a desired identity and manage its image, reputation and relationships.

Recently, corporate communication has been naturally affected by the ongoing technological changes that have revolutionised practically every walk of life. One of the most evident changes is the growing importance of the online media environment that offers high efficiency and cost-effectiveness, compared to traditional media, and allows more direct interaction with company stakeholders. The Internet provides an array of different

¹³ Most of these activities are, in fact, within the remit of public relations.

tools that have been incorporated by public relations or corporate communication practitioners, ranging from corporate webpages to social media, such as blogs, Facebook, or the best known microblogging platform Twitter. From the corporate communication perspective, these tools improve the quality and quantity of interactions with the public (Sweetser and Metzgar, 2007). Smudde (2005: 38) suggested that they “should help stakeholders to identify with an organisation and its messages, build community rapport, and maintain image, reputation, and credibility”. In fact, Gilpin (2010: 268) points to the adoption of blogging and microblogging (conveying messages not exceeding 140 characters) as integral elements of organisational reputation management.

The incorporation of social media exerts tangible influence on reputation management as it has transformed the dynamics of the process of identity projection and interpretation. Trosborg (2010: 27) notes that “private corporations are very adept at using newer genres and media”. In the past, organisations were able to communicate a relatively uniform image to stakeholders who, in turn, were able to co-construct this image only on the basis of their own experiences with the organisation and its representation in the mainstream media. Nowadays, however, the virtual media environment, especially this created by social media, has completely remodelled this mechanism. Even though most new and social media are still controlled by public relations practitioners, they enable multiple stakeholders to mark their presence and express themselves, which translates into a multiplicity of voices and relations that contribute to the overall reputation of the company (cf. Gilpin, 2010). This polyphony of voices simultaneously opens new doors for corporate communication and poses certain challenges related to image management. The rise of the new media and their affordances will be further elaborated on in the following sections.

3.2. The rise of the new media and mass self-communication

The emergence of the concept of World Wide Web in 1991 is owed to Tim Berners-Lee and his employers at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN). The implementation of the WWW and making it accessible to the public in the early 1990s dramatically changed the form and content of human interaction. Early websites were rather static, single authored documents that were primarily composed of personal homepages, frequently asked questions (FAQs) or sites related to ecommerce (Herring, 2013: 2). In the course of time, they started to become more and more interactive, paving

the way to the emergence of Web 2.0 – the term first used in 2004 by the Californian web-entrepreneur Tim O'Reilly (ibidem) in reference to the ongoing transformation of Internet communication towards being more integrative and community building. New communication media, such as blogs, wikis or networking sites, have offered particular affordances, which have given rise to new concepts for Internet communication practices. What distinguishes Web 2.0 from its predecessor Web 1.0 are the new affordances that allow to “incorporate user-generated content and social interaction, often alongside or in response to structures or (multimedia) content provided by the sites themselves” (Herring, 2013: 4).

This new turn was generally welcomed with a techno-deterministic enthusiasm similar to that commonly shared by the IT sector after the commercial success of the Internet in the 1990s. As Tapscott and Williams (2007: 15) express it, the rise of Web 2.0 is expected to lead to “a new economic democracy (...) in which we all have a lead role”.

A significant contribution to understanding the latest developments in information technology and their impact on the public sphere has been provided by Castells (2009), who neither joins the followers of Web 2.0 ideology promoting techno-optimism, nor echoes techno-pessimists, but takes a more balanced stance opting for a techno-dialectical approach. In his seminal work *Communication power*, Castells (ibidem) discerns “mass self-communication” as the newly-emerged feature characterising communication in contemporary society. As he argues:

It is mass communication because it can potentially reach a global audience, as in the posting of a video on YouTube, a blog with RSS links to a number of web sources, or a message to a massive e-mail list. At the same time, it is self-communication because the production of the message is self-generated, the definition of the potential receiver(s) is self-directed, and the retrieval of specific messages or content from the World Wide Web and electronic networks is self-selected. The three forms of communication (interpersonal, mass communication, and mass self-communication) coexist, interact, and complement each other rather than substituting for one another. (Castells, 2009: 55)

The novelty of mass self-communication, which translates into significant consequences on culture and society, lies in its form that amalgamates “forms of communication into a composite, interactive, digital hypertext that includes, mixes, and recombines in their diversity the whole range of cultural expressions conveyed by human interaction” (Castells, 2009: 55). Anchored in Umberto Eco's semiotic model of communication, Castells views mass self-communication as the rise of “the creative audience”, based on the concept of the “sender/addressee” that produces meaning in an interactive way (ibidem: 127-135). Thus, new Web 2.0 technologies empowered individuals to produce and disseminate their own messages, augmenting the number and

diversity of potential senders/addressees and offering them “unprecedented autonomy” (ibidem: 136)¹⁴.

There is, however, a certain clash between the attempts of the newly emerged “creative audience” to exert citizen control over the Internet and exercise its right to communicative freedom and the goals of the global multimedia business networks to commodify the Internet and, as a result, dominate it and dictate their own rules. Having analysed the business activity of ten global multimedia networks (Apple, Bertelsmann, CBS, Disney, Google, Microsoft, NBC Universal, News Corporation, Time Warner, Yahoo!), Castells pointed to their growing economic concentration, the use of a variety of platforms as well as customisation and segmentation of audiences (ibidem: 73-92), their ultimate goal being the monetisation of “these networks in terms of advertising” (ibidem: 80). In an attempt to increase their profits, major multimedia players aim at controlling and curtailing the autonomy of Internet communication through concentration of their activity around the world. Nevertheless, these practices do not remain unanswered as “the global culture of universal commodification is culturally diversified and ultimately contested by other cultural expressions” (ibidem: 136).

3.2.1. New media and the public sphere

The discussion on the role of the media in the public sphere oscillates between either pessimistic or optimistic stances. On the one hand, the media are perceived to have a derogatory impact on the public sphere through their reduction of discourse and proliferation of advertising and propaganda. On the other hand, the media play a key role in civic society and have the potential to increase the scope and quality of the participation of individual citizens in the public sphere.

A classical pessimistic approach to the role of the media in society reverberates in the writings of the representatives of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, especially its two most prominent figures: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. The Frankfurt School as a social and philosophical movement of thought developed in the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt am Main in the 1920s. Established in 1923 with the aim to develop Marxist studies in Germany, the institute was forced into exile after Hitler seized power in 1933 and finally settled in the USA, hosted by Columbia University, New York. The thinking of the School was mainly formed by the works of Marx,

¹⁴ In his review of *Communication power*, Fuchs (2009) criticises Castells for not defining the concept of autonomy for communicative subjects, arguing that it is not self-explanatory in the context of the new media.

the experiences related to the rise of Nazism and the expansion of capitalism that evolved into mass production and consumption, also known as Fordism after Henry Ford's practices in the automobile industry. In the 1940s Adorno and Horkheimer developed a thorough critique of mass society, best exemplified by their essay "The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception" (1944/1993). The growth of the media and the entertainment industry in the USA as well as pervasive consumption were blamed by the scholars for manipulating the public who transformed into consumers rather than critical readers, rendering individuals ever more passive, uncritical, indifferent and befuddled. In consequence, the media contributed to the fall of critical thinking and the praise of consumption.

Under liberalism the poor were thought to be lazy; now they are automatically objects of suspicion. Anybody who is not provided for outside should be in a concentration camp, or at any rate in the hell of the most degrading work and the slums. (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1993: 16)

A more positive perspective on the role of the media in society was taken by Marshall McLuhan in his widely cited works (1964; 1967). Contrary to Adorno and Horkheimer, McLuhan contended that the particular form of a medium was of a far greater significance than any other discourses or representations proliferated by the media. For example, in his view the power of television and its effect on society lay not in the contents of the broadcasted programs, but in their simultaneous exposure to a massive audience. In this vein, McLuhan perceived the development of the electronic media, offering varied, instantaneous representations, as enhancing rather than curtailing democracy.

A significant contribution to understanding contemporary media and communication has been provided by Habermas whose views neither completely dismiss Horkheimer and Adorno's fears, nor share McLuhan's optimism, but reflect the actual ambiguity and conflict in the role of the media. In his theory of the "structural transformation of the Bourgeois public sphere" Habermas (1994) introduced the concepts of the "public sphere", "public opinion", and "publicity" that have enabled researchers to construct a more advanced and less biased framework for analysis of the media's impact on society. The "public sphere" is understood as the modern institutional space where members of civil society raise and debate issues of public concern, including state-related matters. Such space might exist in a number of venues, e.g. academia, public places, ranging from coffee houses and reading rooms to town halls, where people gather to debate social, cultural or political issues, as well as the media.

Habermas traces the origin of the public sphere back to the 18th century and the then newly-emerged interest of the Bourgeoisie in public matters. The participation in public debates and formation of the "public

opinion"¹⁵ was related to the growing literacy of social actors that gave rise to reflexivity enabling an interpretation of individual experiences and a more informed, critical engagement in social life. In fact, Habermas finds the emergence of the public sphere to be one of the major developments of modernity. In contrast to Adorno and Horkheimer, who emphasised the manipulative power of the media safeguarding the capitalist economic interests of the Bourgeoisie as the dominating class, Habermas argues that the modern Bourgeoisie public sphere can embrace all members of society who are not bound to be characterised by naivety, but might also be active and critical.

Being a critical receiver of media messages might be to a large extent ensured by the institutionalisation of the public sphere itself which controls and legitimises discourse and representations. Thus, despite being broadcast by the same media, different media genres are recognised by the audience and adequately scrutinised, as is, for example, the case with advertising and entertainment representations. On the other hand, Habermas's theory also accounts for the false legitimisation of media messages that leaves plenty of room for manipulation. This might result in a complete distrust in the public sphere and lead to cynicism. In comparison with the Frankfurt School, Habermas's theory has not only accounted for the manipulative power of the media, but also pointed to the agency of the audience in interpretation of media messages and acknowledged that the impact of specific media on discourse and representation might either have a positive or negative effect on the quality and scope of public discourse.

Habermas's optimism concerning the rise of the Internet and its impact on the public sphere was also shared by other scholars. For example, Grossman (1995), similarly to Habermas (1989), perceived it as a truly democratic medium, enabling citizens to participate in politics. This myth, however, was toppled by studies of online communication conducted in the late 1990s demonstrating that instead of involving more citizens, it provided "new venues for existing political actors" (Singer, 2005: 175). This phenomenon might be exemplified by the use of blogs that initially attracted internet users with its "aura of authenticity" (Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005: 551). Nevertheless, instead of inspiring civic engagement, the potential of blogs as tools for "real" communication was discovered by politicians who simply transferred their canvassing arenas online and began to use this tool to carry out traditional campaigning practices: to persuade voters, attack adversaries and gain support (cf. Singer, 2005). As I noted elsewhere

¹⁵ The concept of "public opinion" is also present in public relations literature and plays a key role in corporate identity, especially corporate reputation (Bernays, 1923).

(Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2011: 130), “blogs do indeed seem excellent vehicles for political self-presentation and establishing credibility: no shouting through megaphones, no time limits, no interruptions or uneasy questions from inquisitive journalists”. Unfortunately, despite declared intentions to communicate openly and directly with their constituencies, politicians manufacture their authenticity and spontaneity that brings a rather comic effect to a more critical reader. This situation is vividly rendered by Coleman’s (2005: 277) words: “Blogging politicians are always going to be seen as a little bit like those old Communist apparatchiks who had to sit in the front row at rock concerts and pretend to swing to the beat”.

Moreover, as “cognitive misers” (Fiske and Taylor, 1991), we are rather unlikely to master all possible information before making a political or consumer decision. In fact, even the most motivated and cautious citizen or consumer would be unable to confront the multiplicity of sources available in the public space. On the contrary, we tend to take cognitive shortcuts and, in accordance with the phenomena of social herding and group polarisation, select our sources and channels of communication reinforcing our own “values and prejudices” rather than re-forming or challenging them (cf. Coleman, 2005: 278). Thus, in the context of political communication politbloggers should address their supporters in order to build their loyalty, instead of engaging in the wearisome process of persuading their adversaries or the undecided (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2011: 130). Consequently, engagement in “real” corporate communication seems even harder to imagine due to the low motivation of stakeholders and its perceived aura of “unauthenticity”.

3.2.2. Technological determinism vs. social constructivism

Contemporary considerations of the notion of corporate identity require the elucidation of the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in contemporary society, especially in the context of organisational communication practices. Distinct views on technology are offered by two competing approaches, i.e. technological determinism and social constructivism.

The main assumption of the deterministic perspective is autonomy of technology that resides outside society, equipped with its own logic driving it forward and exerting certain influence on society. In this approach “social progress is driven by technological innovation, which in turn follows an ‘inevitable’ course” (Smith, 1994: 38). Accordingly, technological inventions are perceived as milestones in social development. For example, the invention of stirrup is considered by some historians (Mackenzie and Wajcman, 1999: 4; Vurdubakis, 2007: 412) as one of the main factors that contributed to the rise

of feudal society. This seemingly insignificant device facilitated horse-riding and as a result led to the reorganisation of the whole society, giving rise to the mounted knight as the key element in medieval warfare. Remarkably, the names of historical epochs (e.g. the Bronze Age, the Iron Age) are attributed to particular technological developments that brought about profound social change. Key turning points in the history of human civilisation have been indeed landmarked by the development of such inventions as the steam engine, the telegraph, the telephone, or more recently, the Internet. As Williams (1994: 218) puts it: “technology determines history”. Yet, advancing the focal role of technology in social life, the deterministic stance leaves little room for social agency in the application of technology and completely ignores the socio-cultural, economic or political contexts from which it emerged.

By contrast, the anti-deterministic approaches to technology, frequently referred to with the umbrella term of *social shaping of technology* (SST) coined by Mackenzie and Wajcman (1985), negate the apolitical and neutral nature of technology as well as its autonomy. Thus, SST researchers are interested in how organisational, political, economic and cultural factors influence the creation and implementation of technology. Among these approaches the most recognised one is the *social construction of technology* (SCOT) that views technology as developed by society rather than an autonomous force. Accordingly, social creationists purport that particular technological inventions are not creations of individual inventors but are differently interpreted and adapted by various social groups (Selwyn, 2012). Final technological outcomes and their social consequences are negotiated rather than imposed. An illustrative example of social re-interpretation of technological advances might be the Internet: initially developed for military applications, and later adapted by software programmers in the US university system, it is now used massively by a multitude of users and for a multitude of purposes in public, private or professional contexts. For example, digital social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, might be used by individuals to maintain or break their social relations as well as organised social groups to promote certain ideas or call for action. Yet, further applications of the Internet seem countless and impossible to predict (cf. Kenny et al., 2011: 145).

The perception of technology as an outcome of social interpretation has been developed by Grint and Woolgar (1997), who put forward the metaphor of “technology as text”, arguing that technologies might be viewed as open texts created by designers, producers and marketers. At the later stage, technologies are interpreted by consumers and users. Despite the fact that particular interpretations of technologies are favoured due to predominant economic or political interests, the very process of text reading remains open and negotiable. Additionally, the metaphor of “technology as text” points to

the duality of the nature of technology, which is both material and rhetorical. It simultaneously acknowledges the contribution of professionals constructing its materiality and the role of socio-cultural factors driving its alternative applications which are always open (Selwyn, 2012: 6).

The assumptions of social constructivism are also tuned with the notion of *affordances* first proposed by Gibson (1977) who defines them as possibilities in the environment that enable (or constrain) an agent to take certain action. An agent at the same time must possess certain *abilities* to identify and make use of available affordances. An affordance, however, exists irrespective of being detected. Thus, the affordances of information technologies frame communication practices on the Internet. As Hutchby (2006:1) puts it, “different genres of media talk have their own frameworks of participation and dynamics of address that operate within, and necessarily shape, the ‘message’ that reaches the audience at home”. In other words, a particular medium provides specific affordances that shape the production and reception formats among its users.

Undoubtedly, understanding the role of technology in the contemporary world plays a key role in comprehending society, especially its communication practices and formation of identity, but selecting a particular theoretical approach is to a large extent motivated by personal beliefs and preferences. For this reason, a complete rejection of the theoretical prism that does not chime with one’s experiences or convictions seems rather pointless. In this context it seems worthwhile to refer to Castells’s (2000) recommendation to “wear one’s theoretical clothes lightly” when deliberating on technology and society instead of being rigidly fastened to one perspective. Nevertheless, while appreciating other perspectives, the present work leans towards social constructivism, taking into account the complexities of social action and change as well as unlimited human creativity. It must be stressed, though, that technology is also seen here both as forming and being formed.

3.3. The concept of genre and corporate communication

The concept of genre was initially associated with folklore and literary studies, however, since the 1980s it has been thoroughly discussed throughout the world and has been successfully used to study all sorts of texts. Australian functional linguists (e.g. Martin, 1992; Eggins, 1994) perceived the concept as an extension of the Hallidayan notion of register. In the USA, however, the genre theory has extensively evolved, owing to the influential contributions of such scholars as Bazerman (1994), Miller (1984), Swales (1990) and Yates and Orlikowski (1992), who have thoroughly defined the concept and proposed models that could be successfully applied to comprehensive genre analysis.

Special heed should be paid to Bhatia (1993; 2005) who has initiated a practical analysis of a range of ESP texts, especially business and legal genres.

The goal and purpose are considered to be genre characteristics widely accepted by genre theorists, yet they were especially emphasised by functional systemic linguists, which is most illustratively rendered in the definition provided by Martin (1985: 250): “Genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them”. The most comprehensive definition of the concept of genre, though, has been provided by Swales who has also developed an analytical framework for genre analysis. According to Swales (1990: 58):

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action.

In his definition Swales (1990) emphasises the role of communicative purpose acts as the rationale for the genre. A given purpose of a genre imposes a particular, usually conventionalised, text structure as well as specific rhetorical strategies, both verbal and visual. This relation is illustrated in Swales’ three-level model encompassing *communicative purpose* – realised by – *move structure* – realised by – *rhetorical strategies*. In this model “communicative purpose” plays the decisive role in categorising a particular communicative event as a genre. “Move structure” stands for a conventionalised structure of a text that is composed of a number of functional elements that altogether realise the overall communicative purpose(s) of the genre. Finally, “rhetorical strategies” realise the communicative purposes of particular moves contained in the text.

Even though Swales has focused on academic discourse, his framework for genre analysis has played the role of a springboard for research on professional genres. In this vein, one of the most remarkable contributions has been provided by Bhatia (1993, 2005). Similarly to Swales (1990), in his definition of the concept of genre Bhatia (1993: 13) also assigns the central role in understanding and identification of a genre to the “communicative purpose”:

[i]t is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s). (Bhatia, 1993: 13)

The centrality of the “communicative purpose” and its “privileged” position in genre studies has also been stressed by Orlikowski and Yates (1994), Anderson (1998), Akar and Louhiala-Salminen (1999). More recently, however, certain criticism has been voiced by Askehave and Swales (2001) who pointed to the difficulty in applying communicative purpose as the primary criterion.

More recently, addressing the need to develop a flexible apparatus accounting for the intricacies of the study of real-life professional texts, scholars have proposed the notions of: genre-mixing (Bhatia, 1997), embedded genres (Bhatia, 2004), or Fairclough’s (1993) concept of hybrid genre (cf. Yli-Jokipii, 2006: 199).

The genre-based approach has contributed to the development of organisational studies. The importance of organisational genres is best illustrated by Yates and Orlikowski’s words:

[o]ur genre approach to organizational communication takes into account the inherently situated and dynamic nature of organizational processes. Adopting a concept from rhetoric and using the premises of structuration, we have interpreted organizational communication, not as a result of isolated, rational actions, but as part of an embedded social process that over time produces, reproduces, and modifies particular genres of communication. We expect that this concept of genre will provide new and productive ways of understanding communicative action in organizations. (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992a: 323)

Furthermore, Swales and Rogers (1995) perceive genre development as both constructing and reflecting organisational goals and identities.

The importance of genres “in sustaining the institutional structure of contemporary society”, represented by any type of government, business organisations, educational institutions and the media, has also been emphasised by Fairclough (2003b: 32). The aforementioned institutions altogether play a significant role in the “governance” of society understood as any form of activity within an institution or an organisation aimed at controlling any other form of social life. Genres of governance include a whole range of promotional genres that aspire to sell commodities, brands, organisations or individuals (ibidem: 33). The omnipresence of promotional genres in social practice is a consequence of new capitalism and the colonisation of all aspects of social life with a market-orientation (Wernick, 1991; Fairclough, 2003b; Kong, 2014). Additionally, Fairclough (2003b) points to one of the properties of governance genres related to sustaining scalar relation between the local and the global as well as different institutions and organisations, for example, between academia and business.

The pervasiveness of the promotional genre has also been addressed by Kong (2014), who points to the use of advertisement-like language and style across genres that were not previously associated with promotion or adver-

tising (e.g. the majority of professional academic genres). Advertising, in fact, is seen by Bhatia (2004: 88) as “the most prominent instrument of colonization”. This colonisation, underlain by the natural need of individuals and organisations to expose their positive facets, has become particularly intense in the contemporary extremely competitive environment. As a result, corporate discourse has been dominated by informational and promotional genres, the boundaries of which are quite difficult to discern. Cook (2001: 33) even labels the discourse of advertising as “parasitic” not only upon other genres but also on its surroundings. Advertisements naturally occur within other discourses without any apparent reference or intent. For example, TV commercials are usually accompanied with other commercials within a block, or are broadcasted in the middle of a film or any other television programme. This may sometimes happen as the intentional manipulation of the advertiser or be the result of pure coincidence. Coincidental mixing of genres is advocated by Hasan (2000), who views hybridity as a rather unwanted and unnecessary phenomenon. As the scholar illustratively purports: “[r]egisters/genres are not peaches and plums that can be hybridised into nectarines” (Hasan, 2000: 43).

3.4. The emergence of cybergenres

In traditional genre theory the interplay between genre and medium seems to be ignored. Yet, as McLuhan already pointed out back in the 1960s, the characteristics of the medium affect the form and content of the message and its reception. This finds particular application in the case of communication via the web medium. Accordingly, Askehave and Nielsen (2005a: 3) notice that “the medium adds unique properties to the web genre in terms of production, function and reception”. As a result, the printed and digital equivalents of the same genre would have different properties. Lüders et al. (2010: 952), however, argue that the medium might either enable or constrain web genres. Thus, the Internet as a medium might significantly influence “the level of the genre, as in hypertextual news articles” or exert minimal effect on the form and content of the genre “as in the case of research articles in pdf-format available on the net” (ibidem: 952) that practically mirror their printed versions.

One of the most essential features characterising web genres is their hypertextuality that has a bearing on the reading mode. In a nutshell, hyperlinks connect the texts on the net and enable the reader to navigate between, changing the reading pattern from the traditional one (deemed linear) to the non-lin-

ear referred to as *hyper-reading* (Sosnoski, 1999: 135, referred to in Askehave and Nielsen, 2005a: 3). Some researchers, however, challenge the idea that hyper-reading is only constrained to the web medium. Finnemann (1999), for example, perceives hyper-reading as a particular mode of reading that can be applied both to traditional and digital texts. Simultaneously, texts published online might also be read in linear mode. For this reason, Finnemann (1999) renounces the linear/non-linear categorisation and posits hypertext as a type of text that stimulates at least two *modal shifts* in the process of reading, namely, “the reading mode”, similar to traditional reading, and “the navigating mode” that enables the reader to construct their own patterns of reading through individually selected sites. Accordingly, reading web texts activates two different capacities of the reader who shifts from sequential reading to the navigating mode.

Based on Finnemann’s concept of “modal shifts”, Askehave and Nielsen (2005) have revisited the Swalesian genre model, integrating the communicative purpose, move structure and rhetorical strategies, and supplemented it with the hypertextual mode. Thus, their two-dimensional genre model has assumed the bi-dimensionality of web texts that activate the reader to perform both reading and navigating. These two behavioural shifts are circular, i.e. the reader constantly changes the modes of reading. In the reading mode the text is *zoomed in* and processed similarly to the printed text. In the navigating mode the web user *zooms out* from the text and treats it as a medium. For this reason, a genre analysis of web text should be conducted at three levels in both modes. Hence, in the reading mode the analysis of *text* must embrace its communicative purpose, moves and rhetorical strategies, while in the navigating mode the analysis involves the characterisation of the *medium* “in terms of its communicative purpose, links, and rhetorical strategies” (Askehave and Nielsen, 2005: 4).

The proposed model assumes that the medium is an essential element of the genre as it influences its purpose and form. The interplay between the medium and the genre has been recognised by other scholars (e.g. Yates and Orlikowski, 1992: 310) who admit that the medium might affect the form of the genre. Elsewhere, however, Yates et al. (1999: 100) emphasise that the communicative purpose is determined by the genre, not the medium which is defined as an aspect of form. In spite of their reservations, in the same paper Yates and his colleagues (1999: 84) agree that the medium might be an important aspect of genre identification. Askehave and Nielsen (2005) suggest that this inconsistency might be related to a turn in genre research from printed genres to web-mediated genres that requires an adaptation of genre theory and methods of analysis. Recently, however, a discussion on web-mediated genres leans towards a greater appreciation of the influence

of the medium on genre characteristics. In fact, the capacities of a particular medium are seen as affordances, which frame, but do not necessarily determine, the final form and content of a message exemplified by Facebook (Eisenlauer, 2014).

One of the earliest descriptive models of digital or cybergenres was put forward by Shepherd and Watters (1998) who discerned three parameters to analyse them: (1) content, (2) form and (3) functionality. Based on their model, the scholars specified the following primary genres: the homepage, brochures, resources, catalogues and search engines. Even though the model has been applied in a number of studies, mostly from the fields of linguistics and translation studies (Schmid-Isler 2000; Alamán 2003; Bolaños 2003), nowadays it comes across as rather too simplistic due to the ongoing evolution of cybergenres.

Genres are continuously in a state of transition (Miller, 1984), and the affordances of the new medium, especially its evolving functionalities, have led to the emergence of new genres and adaptation of traditional genres to the virtual environment. This might be exemplified by the emergence of online press as well as corporate websites containing information formerly distributed in printed versions. The evolution of cybergenres is schematically presented by Shepherd and Watters (1998) in Figure 3.1 below.

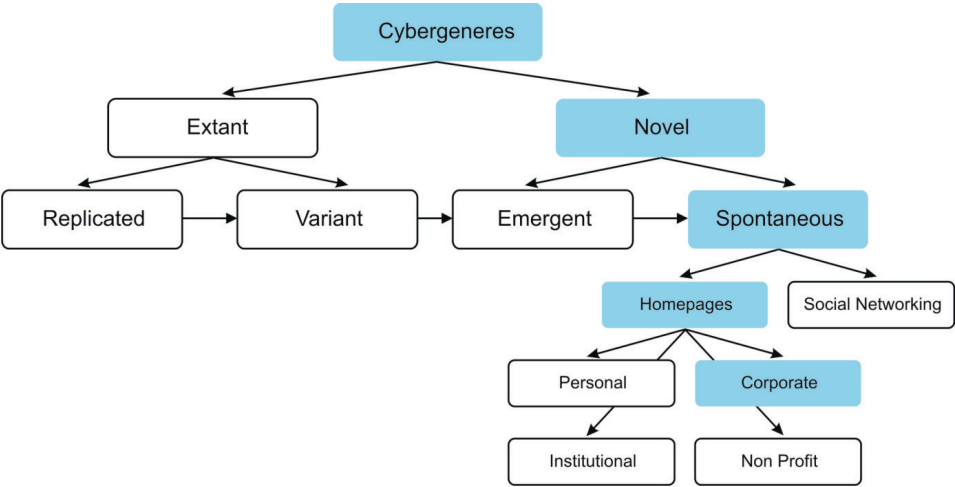


Figure 3.1 Evolution of digital genres from printed to online forms

Source: Shepherd and Watters, 1998; adapted from Jiménez-Crespo, 2012

Shepherd and Watters (1998) have classified cybergenres into two categories of subgenres, i.e. *extant* and *novel* subgenres. Extant subgenres have emerged from the genres existing in other media that have transformed into

a digital format. This process is best exemplified by cybernewspapers that have been transferred online and effectively use the affordances of the new medium (e.g. hyperlinks, multimedia, etc.). Novel subgenres, on the other hand, entirely rely on the new medium. This category embraces originally extant genres that have undergone deep transformation and are significantly different from their offline versions or genres that have been created online from scratch. Yus (2011: 62) exemplifies the first category with cybernewspapers that are now news portals (e.g. ElPais.com) and are very different from their offline versions (e.g. ElPaís newspaper) or their initial cyber version that involved exact transfer of the printed version online with no alternation (e.g. the now extinct El Pais.es). Homepages, along with social networking, have been alternatively qualified as novel-spontaneous genres. Their further classification discerns four subgenres: personal, corporate, institutional and non-profit homepages. Shepherd and Watters' model has been adapted for the study of cybergenres in the non-profit sector by Jiménez-Crespo (2012), but it also finds application for the study of cybergenres in the corporate setting.

A more recent contribution to understanding genres in the virtual context has been provided by Gamero (2001), who has approached genres from an interdisciplinary perspective and discerned the following five parameters to describe them: textual function, conventional items, communicative situation, sociocultural context and intratextual elements. As far as digital genres are concerned, Jiménez-Crespo (2012) points to the need of adding the parameter of functionality, defined as a characteristic enabling interactivity and interaction. In fact, as pointed out by some researchers (Shepherd and Watters, 1998; Crowston and Williams, 1999), functionality has been the most vital element that spurred the development of digital genres. Gamero's (2001) work seems especially applicable in the context of discourse studies as, in contrast to other models of cybergenres, it also takes into consideration linguistic and discursive aspects.

Another notion that comes across particularly relevant in a discussion on cybergenres is that of "genre ecology" coined by Erickson (2000) in reference to computer-mediated-communication (CMC) systems. The term also appeared in Spinuzzi and Zachary's (2000) paper on the interaction of genres within particular ecosystems where the scholars defined genre ecology as:

[a]n interrelated group of genres (artefact types and the interpretive habits that have developed around them) used to jointly mediate the activities that allow people to accomplish complex objectives. In genre ecologies, multiple genres and constituent subtasks co-exist in a lively interplay as people grapple with information technologies" (ibidem: 172).

As the scholars further purport, the study of genres, viewed as “dynamic, organic, and messy” forms, requires taking “a more robust, ecological perspective (...) that accounts for the dynamism and interconnectedness of genres” (Spinuzzi and Zachary, 2000: 173).

The notion “genre ecology” was further developed into a more comprehensive theory of genre coexistence and gradience by Kwasnik and Crowston (2005: 81f) who pointed to its particular salience for “digital environments” which, as Shepherd and Watters (1998) earlier noticed, enable the migration of traditional genres to cybervenues and generate brand new genres creating countless possibilities of genres’ mergers, divisions, transformations and evolutions (Kwasnik and Crowston, 2005: 81f). Heyd (2009: 244) epitomises genre ecology with the description of “neighbouring genres”, i.e. “horizontal genre relations rather than vertical structures of super- and subgenres”. This perspective finds particular application in the study of contemporary cybergenres which, due to enormous technological advancements in the last two decades as well as the growing activity of Internet users, have become more dynamic and intricate. I would even argue that nowadays Shepherd and Watter’s (1998) model, with its neatly horizontally and vertically compartmentalised cybergenres developed at the end of the twentieth century, presents idealistic assumptions rather than reflects the dynamically changing reality. The pace and quality of technological advancements that have been taking place over the last two decades and the growing activity of Internet users have resulted in deep transformations of the existing cybergenres as well as the emergence of new ones that are difficult to allocate within specific categories as the boundaries between particular cybergenres and their subgenres become blurred. Accordingly, I would rather avoid classifying corporate webpages as a typically novel subgenre that was created online from scratch (see Shepherd and Watter’s model). This decision would be motivated by the fact that it integrates traditional genres, transferred online practically untouched (e.g. downloadable pdf files), and new, constantly evolving genres, which are in a state of flux. This issue will be further discussed in the context of corporate communication in the following sections.

3.5. Transferring discourses to Internet corporate websites

Nowadays, the boundary between new and traditional media is often difficult to discern since mainstream media draw on electronic media to create their own stories and apply the same tools to keep in touch with their readers. For example, the news release, the traditional PR tool used to construct cor-

porate image and identity, was distributed to the media in order to inform the public about corporate events. The media actually played the role of a third party, legitimising the process of communication (Gilpin, 2008). Currently, however, electronic newsletters and online pressrooms have substituted their traditional equivalents, significantly streamlining and speeding up access to and distribution of information among wider audiences (Gilpin, 2010). In this sense, communication technologies act as “the ultimate enablers of global communication” (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta, 2011: 261).

From the perspective of Goffman’s (1959) theory of impression management, the primary goal of corporate webpages is to create and endorse a positive corporate identity in cyberspace and facilitate business interactions with a company’s stakeholders. Yus (2011: 47) perceives web pages as “‘public representations’ that, in a more or less faithful way, resemble the thoughts or assumptions that the author intends to manifest”. The interpretation of these intentions by the reader does not, however, automatically match the author’s intentions as any text is open to a variety of interpretations. As pointed out in chapter 2, impression management cannot be a process fully controlled by an organisation communicating a particular identity for the reason that it also involves the active role of the recipient whose impressions of a particular company are based on the interpretation of multiple, often fragmentary and fortuitous images that finally translate into a more stable reputation.

Access to global audiences has resulted in a more intense proliferation and exchange of information, which has also resulted in the deep transformation of corporate discourse, most clearly visible in the transformation of traditional printed genres to the Web. The new medium has offered new affordances such as multimodality, hyperlinking and interactivity that have significantly transformed the quality of online communication (Shepherd and Watters, 2004). It has also brought the emergence of English as “the chief lingua franca of the Internet” (Crystal, 2007: 117), used in the majority of business communication exchanges, especially among non-native speakers (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta, 2011). Globalised business environment has also posed new challenges to business organisations, which now have to face fiercer competition. Moreover, web-mediated texts are more accessible to a global, and thus potentially more diversified, readership. This naturally raises culturally sensitive issues and requires taking a diversity perspective (Gunnarson, 2009: 221-222). In these circumstances, the need for high accountability and corporate self-positioning as a trustworthy, reliable partner has become more important than ever.

The corporate brochure has been traditionally perceived as the most important PR instrument in building corporate image and accountability. It primarily aims at presenting the company as a reliable partner and it conven-

tionally takes the form of a company's self-presentation that is polysemiotic in nature (Askehave, 1998; Nielsen, 2001). Bhatia (2004) has classified it as a "peripheral member" of the colony of promotional genres as the corporate brochure is simultaneously promotional and informative. Nowadays, however, the role of printed brochures has diminished as their functions have been taken over by corporate websites. As Poppi (2011) notes, they have become virtual repositories of the promotional and informative contents created by companies and integrated into a common framework by means of hyperlinks. For these reasons, corporate websites might be classified as a macro genre within the broad family of cybergenres that has led to the transformation of traditional genres and emergence of new genres categorised, respectively, as (Petroni, 2011):

- web-migrated genres (e.g. company brochures, annual reports, press releases),
- web generated genres (e.g. homepages, FAQs, hotlists).

Providing unlimited space for attractive multimedia content, corporate websites offer tangible advantages over company printed materials in terms of availability, cost-effectiveness, as well as interactivity. In fact, they have, to a large extent, replaced traditional forms of corporate communication such as company brochures or leaflets. It must be emphasised, though, that the content of printed materials has not been simply transferred online. Even though at the beginning corporate webpages indeed took the form of a linear page resembling a brochure (MacManus, 2004), they soon adapted to the specificity of the new medium and the newly-emerged cyber-environment that requires, for example, more effort on the part of the user in reading from the computer screen, in comparison to formerly using paper. This also involves the modification of visual materials as well optimisation of text that consists in reorganising it into shorter paragraphs, the use of bulleted lists, as well as the use of headings and subheadings to facilitate text-navigation (Nielsen, 2000: 101, 103-104).

In contrast to a printed text which is characterised by linearity, websites do not display the whole content at one go but split pieces of information over subsequent pages. Such text exposure poses another challenge to the reader who does not only need to remember a particular location of a piece of text online but must also plan the next move and keep track of the visited pages. In other words, the online environment entails the creation of a mental image of the website content and organisation, which might be best facilitated by a consistent website design and navigation (van Berkel and de Jong, 1999: 29-30).

The origins of corporate websites are dated to the mid 1990s when they became “multimedia manifestations for corporate communication” (Goodman, 1998: 1-2). This trend continued over the next decade and in the twenty-first century corporate communication, with its main aim of corporate impression management, has been practically transferred online. As far as their content is concerned, the text is mostly expository since it provides information about the company and its products or services and publicises advertisements (Shepherd and Watters, 1998). Being the most “upfront”, visible and accessible representatives of the company, corporate webpages have become one of the most essential public relations tools that play a key role in communication between the company and the audience at large. As Breeze (2013: 148) observes, this contact is direct, unmediated by the press or television as in the case of advertising. In cyberspace, the webpage plays a role similar to that of the shop window in the “real” world that attracts the attention of potential customers and enables them to form their first, though often lasting, impressions. From the perspective of the visitor, a company website should be visually attractive, credible and easy to navigate in order to evoke positive impressions about the company (Pollach, 2005). Several studies (Heinze and Qu, 2006; Winter et al., 2003; van der Heijden and Verhagen, 2004) have shown that individual visual impressions of an organisation might be shaped not only on the basis of interaction with the webpage but also its content and layout.

However, in the age of information influx, offering a positive image and being informative will barely satisfy a demanding global internet surfer. Except for visual attractiveness and user-friendliness, a website must be properly tagged and positioned in the search engines to be reached. Once accessed, though, the website must be appealing enough to make a visitor stay and make purchase orders through it, or at least read its content. Based on their study of the 500 largest US companies’ websites, Heinze and Hu (2006) noted a remarkable increase in the use of the following features characterising corporate websites: product advertisement, product information, career opportunities, investor information, online sales, online account access, support contact and customer support. This trend, identified by the researchers in the years 1997-2003, concerned all types of business organisations but was particularly visible in online sales. Additionally, the sectors of retail trade and financial services did not only offer their users information about the company but enabled them to take some action in the form of online purchase or their personal account management. Thus, the major change in the use of websites involved an increase in interactivity and relevance.

3.5.1. Interactivity

Since the two concepts of interactivity and relevance are heavily used in reference to websites, they require a sound definition. As numerous critics point out (further discussion in Breeze, 2013), the very word “interactivity” covers different meanings, ranging from user-friendliness to a sense of reciprocity experienced by the user. Complete interactivity, however, does not stand for the relatively narrow concept of reciprocity; it enables bi-directional communication, engaging both parties who can create their own messages. For this reason, the majority of websites, offering rather limited solutions that enable the user to participate in communication, do not fall under the category of complete interactivity.

Dhokalia et al. (2000: 6-8) understand interactivity in terms of six features characterising a website:

- user control, which refers to the level of flexibility in navigating a webpage by the user who specifies its timing, content and sequence;
- personalisation, which involves adaptation of the content to the specific needs of the user identified in the process of registration or tracking or by offering different alternatives to be selected by users;
- responsiveness, which stands for the possibility to influence the content of a particular webpage by the user through their feedback provided in the form of surveys, FAQs, or emails;
- connectedness, which refers to the sense of being connected to other Internet users by asynchronous communications in other online media (e.g. forums, social media, etc.);
- real-time interaction, which enables the user to contact company representatives in real time (e.g. through chat rooms, messengers, etc.);
- playfulness, which denotes the combination of information and entertainment (“infotainment”), exemplified by the inclusion of animation or interactive games.

The inclusion of particular interactive features depends on the webpage design and its function as well as the profile of the company it represents and its target audience. Breeze (2013: 151) points to the increasing level of personalisation of corporate webpages, particularly those directly addressing the public, especially e-commerce companies using advanced systems for tracking their consumers (e.g. Amazon). Despite available technical affordances, other dimensions of interactivity still remain rather infrequent. Breeze hypothesises that this might be the result of the rise of social media (e.g. Facebook) that are

commonly used for real time communication while webpages are perceived as “more solid and monumental, relatively permanent over time, with rather ‘official’ character” (2013: 151).

3.5.2. Relevance

Various aspects of Internet-mediated communications are analysed in the light of Sperber and Wilson’s relevance theory (1986, 1995) that has elucidated the mechanism of language production and interpretation. As Wilson and Sperber (2006: 607) have more recently put it, “[t]he central claim of relevance theory is that the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise and predictable enough to guide the hearer toward the speaker’s meaning”. Thus, the major tenets of the theory stand in opposition to earlier models, viewing communication as a simple, almost mechanical process of coding and decoding information, e.g. Reddy’s (1978) conduit metaphor or the Process School models (for an overview see Fiske, 1997). The scholars (Wilson, 1994: 47) do not completely negate the idea of decoding information that accompanies the initial stage of any communication, including on-line communication, but assert that the schematic identification of words is followed by “a fallible process of hypothesis formation and evaluation” that finally leads to the understanding of an utterance. The resulting interpretation of communicative acts is subject to “the search for relevance [that] is a basic feature of the human condition, which communicators may exploit” (Wilson and Sperber, 2006: 608). “Relevant input” is understood as input that resonates with an individual’s background information or is congruent with their representation of the world and as such brings in “a positive cognitive effect” (Wilson and Sperber, 2006: 608). In a nutshell, effective communication to a great extent depends on the “optimal relevance” of the input that is “compatible with the communicator’s abilities and preferences” (ibidem: 612) and requires highly positive cognitive effects from low cognitive effort (ibidem: 609).

Yus (2011) emphasises the usefulness of relevance theory in understanding communication in the virtual environment. More specifically, the scholar (Yus, 2011: 45) applies the theory to address the questions raised by Schneider and Foot (2004: 16) that pertain to the type and dynamics of communicative actions established in cyberspace, the relationship between the webpage design and the user’s activity, the characteristics of the user’s experience generated by webpages, and relationships between page authors and other authors as well as their readers’ discourses and hyperlinks. Accordingly, Yus (2011)

proposes three perspectives to study webpages: the author's perspective (*intentio auctoris*), the textual or discursive perspective (*intentio operis*) and the reader's perspective (*intentio lectoris*).

1. *Intentio auctoris*

The role of the author of a webpage is to provide information to readers, coded as verbal, visual or multimodal, in a way that raises their interest and compensates for their cognitive effort. Therefore, the form and content must be carefully designed and selected so as to predict the reader's expectations and satisfy them. The intentions of the author are, however, difficult or even impossible to identify as the author is not present in the text, therefore not accessible to the reader, or, in Barthes's (1977) words, "dead". This might lead to "intentional fallacy" (Yus, 2011: 46) since the author's intentions and predictions concerning the readers' preferences and interpretations do not necessarily match. The resulting mismatch might be reduced by interactive tools that a contemporary webpage is typically equipped with. Individual users might, nevertheless, differ in their level of computer literacy, which might result in different patterns of webpage navigation and lead to completely different interpretations of its content. I would also argue that interactivity might play a role in e-commerce but it is of rather secondary importance in navigating relatively static sections of corporate webpages devoted to communicating corporate identity.

2. *Intentio operis*

Despite certain perceptions of text as "stable sources of meaning", Yus (2011: 47) emphasises the role of the reader's text interpretation that does not always overlap with the author's intention. As far as webpage content is concerned, such discrepancy might be minimised by the conventionalisation of the webpage genre. Referring to Nielsen's (2002) findings, Yus (*ibidem*) observes that the current stability of the webpage genre has arisen from the practices of webpage designers who developed the genre by imitating the form and content of accessible webpages as well as consulting multiple handbooks on webpage design and writing that flooded the market. The established frameworks of the genre and increased interactivity have undoubtedly facilitated the prediction of the reader's interpretations. This "cooperation" of authors and readers has laid the foundations for the formation and stabilisation of the webpage genre that, as any other genre, is constituted on the basis of "the bidirectional flow of authors' expectations on their audiences and that or those audiences' expectations on likely behaviour on the part of the authors they are reading, those items, or that family of genres" (Karlgrén, 2010: 34; cited in Yus, 2011: 49).

3. Intentio lectoris

Finally, Yus (ibidem) points to the transformation of the role of the reader from passive to active. Webpages are no longer read in a sequential, linear way but in modal shifts and through their “multi-medianess” provide “the texts with a rich polysemous potential where the web user is ‘invited’ to participate actively in assigning meaning in the process of text consumption” (Askehave and Nielsen, 2005: 125).

However, as Yus (2011: 50) observes, relevance theory is seldom applied to users’ interpretations of webpages. It is, in fact, more frequently applied to analyse the outcomes of search engines (e.g. *Google*) or information-retrieval systems. Thus, the evaluation of relevance to a great extent “depends on the estimation of relevance which also depends on how much information is made available in the new medium and how it combines with the user’s cognitive environments and with the search for relevance they are engaged in at a given moment” (Yus, 2011: 63). An abundance of information that cannot be effectively processed by the user leads to their “infoxication” (ibidem).

3.6. Generic and linguistic markers of corporate identity: “About us” pages

Corporate webpages to a large extent play the functions once performed by traditional printed genres. Yet, the complexity of their structure as well as an abundance of information might pose apparent difficulty to a researcher aiming at analysing their content. As van Duyne et al. (2007: 392) argue, any visitor to a corporate website is driven by the following three questions: who the company is, what it does and whether it should be trusted. The answers to these questions might be easily found on “About us” pages that provide assorted information on the company that is tailored to their stakeholder’s needs and interests. In other words, the section provides a corporate story that might be categorised as:

[a] comprehensive narrative about the whole organisation, its origins, its vision, its mission. However, the emotionally formulated core story is much more than just a vision or mission statement. By incorporating elements such as competencies, fundamental beliefs and values, it mirrors something deep within the organisation and provides a simple yet effective framework guiding the organisation in all its actions. (Larsen, 2000: 197)

In fact, the “About us” section that plays a role analogous to that of print-company brochures, seems to be the most relevant for corporate identity research. Available on most corporate webpages, it aims to present the company

to the general public, provides potential clients with some practical information and enables them to become familiarised with the company in a more personal way (Lam, 2009). For this reason, this section is viewed as a tool to build trust and loyalty towards the company and distinguish it from competitors (Tan, 2013).

A valuable contribution to the study of “About us” pages has been provided by Breeze (2013) who has scrutinised the FTSE top-100 companies. Despite certain differences across sectors, these sections contain a number of common themes, including company history, current developments, mission statements, senior staff profiles or references to social responsibility issues. As far as their discursive features are concerned, these sections often use numerical data, usually presented in a visually attractive form, in order to build a positive self-image. Another frequently applied method to strengthen positive auto-presentation involves references to external sources, such as rankings or awards that legitimise a company’s high self-evaluation. Additionally, in order to authenticate the external validation, hyperlinks to adequate sources are provided.

As Breeze (2013: 156) further holds, certain aspects of “About us” pages might be categorised as dialogic because they are intended to deflect any potential criticism and play a “legitimatory” function. For example, in 2012 – a year of crisis – companies tended to use economic discourse by making references, for example, to efficiency, profitability, or investments, in order to validate their economic performance. Yet, another visible concern involves social and environmental issues grouped under the umbrella term “sustainability” that dominate not only in “About us” sections, but might also be exposed in separate sizeable sections. In fact, “sustainability” has become the keyword in corporate discourse on the web that has to a large extent forced out “corporate social responsibility”.

1. Legitimation

Another discernible trend identified by Breeze (2013) is appealing to “good business practices”, “standards” or “codes” that additionally legitimise company operations and validate their quality. In contrast to promotional discourse that remains relatively stable over the years and rather resistant to external factors, legitimatory discourse is very sensitive to any current social concerns and moods. Thus, any increased interest of the public opinion in a certain issue will be echoed in corporate discourse. For example, if banking corruption is under the media spotlight, the banks tend to display their ethical business practices.

2. Positive image

Since the key goal of “About us” sections is to create and promote a positive image of an organisation, their overall tone is also immense-

ly positive and the lexis might be categorised as highly evaluative. As Breeze's (2013) work has shown, the attitudinal aspects of analysed sections could be classified into four categories proposed for webpages by Pollach (2005), namely: size and scope, leadership, agents of change and corporate citizenship. Labelled as "power words" by some scholars, the lexical elements might also be interpreted as entailing positive judgment and appreciation based on the framework of appraisal analysis, proposed by Martin and White (2004).

The creation and maintenance of positive image involves the projection of strong corporate identity and a skilful application of personalising and de-personalising strategies. As Breeze (2013: 160) observes, "companies step in and out of an agentive role as it suits their purposes". On the one hand, companies position themselves as agents with a certain personality expressed in the form of personal pronouns, especially the "we" pronoun that has been identified as one of the key features of corporate identity discourse (see e.g. Wasikiewicz-Firlej, 2012), and make the impression of being involved in a dialogue with their stakeholders. On the other hand, companies detach themselves from agency and any possible consequence – especially in the face of crisis or any other negative circumstances, as has been exemplified by Breeze (2013: 160) in an illustrative extract below, showing the company's reaction to cuts and redundancy: "The savings have been derived through improvements to our manufacturing operations, consolidation and streamlining of our support functions and increased efficiencies in R&D." (GlaxoSmithKline; cited in Breeze, 2013: 16).

3. Interactivity

One of the almost mandatory elements of "About us" pages is the "contact" section that usually contains the company contact data or encourages a potential user to contact the company by completing a specially designed box or a form. The user is also referred to other contents on the webpage by means of hyperlinks, phrased in the form of direct imperatives or questions. Although hyperlinks are seemingly used to assist a particular webpage exploration, they might also have a significant effect on forming the Internet user. As Breeze (2013: 161) observes, these links, especially on the webpages of manufacturing companies, might even change the role of the user from the "interested" public to the "consumer". This turn in the user's roles is exemplified by extracts from the webpage of the Unilever company. Typically, its "About us" section addresses the general public and projects information concerning the company's identity, i.e. who it is and what it does, and presents the list of its achievements. This auto-narration is usually phrased in the first-person plural.

In 2010 we launched the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan – a set of targets designed to help us deliver our objective of growing our business while minimising our impact on the environment. (Unilever, cited in Breeze, 2013: 161)

A different role – that of a potential consumer – is, however, offered elsewhere on the same page:

Whether you want fresh, soft clothes or sparklingly clean bathrooms, our global home care brands can help. (Unilever; cited in Breeze, 2013: 161)

Breeze (*ibidem*) also emphasises that this multiplicity of stakeholders' roles and their inter-changeability does not only characterise the discourse of corporate webpages, but might also be detected in other forms of corporate communications.

4. Multimodality

Another striking quality of "About us" sections appears in their visual attractiveness, based on the effective use of colour, photography and videos. Indeed, visual representation has become utterly important in contemporary corporate communication (see, e.g. Birkigt and Stadler, 1986; Cornelissen, 2008). Copious, highly professional, technically flawless photographs, are aimed to attract the potential visitor, yet their visual representations do not always seem to correspond with the text and play its illustrative function. The use of a variety of channels and a discernible turn towards visual attractiveness are aimed at a more explicit expression of corporate identity, frequently positioning the company simultaneously as human and responsible as well as dynamic and modern (Breeze, 2013: 161).

A selection of interactive sections creates an illusion that the user is offered a choice. In reality, however, the navigation patterns are to a large extent predetermined and constrained by the very structure of the webpage. Additionally, the *topoi* and discursive style are highly conventionalised and thus predictable. External sources are occasionally quoted in the text, usually in the "media" or "awards" sections, but direct hyperlinks to them are rarely provided. Hyperlinks are predominantly internal and for this reason the website is in a way a "closed system" (Breeze, 2013: 162).

Detailed recommendations concerning the form and content of the "About us" section have also been provided by business practitioners. For example, Graham (2013) asserts that the "About us" page plays a narrative function, constructing a story about the company's identity and business activity, and provides the following guidelines concerning its structure:

- (1) Introduce and explain how the company started.
- (2) State the origin of the business.
- (3) Tell the story behind the products: how they are made and designed.
- (4) Share creative inspiration for the company's products and management.
- (5) Present the company's or owner's background experience with the aim of establishing instant credibility.
- (6) Discover the companies' vision, dreams, and aspirations; and
- (7) Link work, values and beliefs with motivation (Graham, 2013, cited in Casañ-Pitarch, 2015: 71).

Graham's recommendations might be applied to the formation of a single text presenting the company which is in all regards acceptable (Casañ-Pitarch, 2015: 71). Another widely accepted and applied possibility is organising "About us" pages into separate sections under different headings. Lam (2009), for example, proposes ten sections that might be possibly incorporated. All of them will be briefly discussed below.

1. Organisational profile

The main aim of this section is to provide an overview of all activities the company is involved in and promote its positive image. Thus, it frequently presents the company's achievements and successes in order to make it more trustworthy in the eyes of the stakeholders. The language typically used in this section might be qualified as promotional and is also characterised, like other corporate publications, by a high frequency of the pronoun "we". Additionally, in order to enhance the attractiveness and understanding of the verbal message, visual devices such as tables or graphs are used (Fortanet, 2009; van Belle, 2002). Graham (2013) also recommends the inclusion of a paragraph on the history of the company as well as its mission statement and a presentation of offered products and/or services.

2. Contact information

The company contact details are usually a mandatory element of the "About us" page and nowadays, except for the company's telephone number and address, they also include links to social media, such as a Blog, a Facebook/Twitter account, etc. (Yus, 2011). This section might also provide a list of contact persons and some practical information concerning, for example, the opening hours of the company branches and their location. Easy, open access to such data appears essential from the perspective of the company's credibility and reputation and, ultimately, customers confidence and trust (Lam, 2009).

3. Disclaimers and legal information

The majority of websites contain a link to their Disclaimers and legal information, defining the scope of responsibility of the company and fair-use poli-

cy, also in reference to the content of the webpage (Lam, 2009). Defining these rules is crucial in protecting customers' identity and their online purchases transactions. Such measures are taken to minimise the risk of fraud and increase security and privacy which play a key role in building and maintaining customer confidence (Casañ-Pitarch, 2015).

4. Customers and partners

Providing a list of business partners and customers, accompanied by their references, is another widely accepted business practice that enhances the company's credibility and trustworthiness (Lam, 2009). In the virtual environment the webpage might be automatically directed to relevant sites by means of hyperlinks. This practice is, in fact, potentially mutually beneficial for the network of cooperating companies that share each other's prestige and strengthen the sense of professionalism and customer confidence.

5. Employment opportunities

Most companies provide information on available vacancies and internships as well as career opportunities. Publicising job advertisements on the Internet enhances the recruitment process and attracts a large number of candidates that enables efficient and quick selection (Lam, 2009).

6. Public relations

This section contains information strategic from the perspective of reputation management, which is disseminated by the company or other media. It usually includes press releases devoted to the company and its product or received awards. Since this section is not only targeted at the general public, but also journalists, the tone of the messages is informative rather than promotional to meet the standards of objectivism (Lam, 2009).

7. The annual report and investor relations

An annual report is a comprehensive document reporting on a company's activities and its financial condition throughout the preceding year required by most jurisdictions (Palmer, 2010). The document is addressed to shareholders and potential investors as well as the general public (Lord, 2002; Sydserf and Weetman, 1999) to guide their managerial, financial and consumer decisions. Except for general information on the company, typically available online in the "About us" section, the report also presents accounting statements that usually embrace balance sheets, profit and loss accounts, cash flow statements and notes to the financial statements (Palmer, 2010; after Casañ-Pitarch, 2015).

8. Community involvement

Contributing to the community is a vital aspect of corporate reputation management (see chapter 1). For this reason, companies publicise their involvement in charitable events and relevant policies regulating these processes in order to build a positive image (Lam, 2009). This section might be further divided into the following steps:

- *employment policies* focusing on the needs and rights of the company's employees,
- *health and safety* communicating, in a descriptive manner, policies implemented by the company to minimise risks and foster safety in the workplace (Busbin and Self, 2013; after Casañ-Pitarch, 2015),
- *environment policies* that Palmer (2010) recommends dividing into two further steps, separately presenting policies related to the company's impact on the environment and, respectively, the employees' awareness of environmental issues,
- *open relations* section which gives an account of social actions taken by the company to contribute to the development of its surrounding
 - mainly economic help (Perez et al., 2013; after Casañ-Pitarch, 2015).

9. FAQs: frequently asked questions

This section addresses the questions frequently asked by the public that are usually compiled on a separate subpage (Lam, 2009).

10. Site credits

The last section gives due recognition to webpage designer(s) and might be treated as a form of their promotion.

The number of items proposed by Lam (2009) is by no means exhaustive, hence the final selection of moves and steps structuring the "About us" genre is primarily dictated by the requirements and needs of a particular branch and company. For example, based on his genre analysis of "About us" pages of 64 banks, Casañ-Pitarch (2015) found out that not all ten moves were always present in the corpus under study. For the purposes of his analysis, Casañ-Pitarch (2015) categorised the moves into obligatory (those identified in more than 50% of the analysed pages) and optional ones (present in 30% to 49.99% of the analysed pages). Obligatory moves embraced, respectively, the following sections: "Presentation", "History", "Corporate Governance", "Board of Directors and Managers", "Community Involvement", "Contact", "Locations", "Social Networks", "News", "Investors Relations". Optional moves included "Group Members", "Sponsorship", "Awards", "Products and Services", "Suppliers", "Social Networks".

To the best of my knowledge, Castañ-Pitarch (2015) was the first to categorise “About us” pages as a separate genre. Referring to the terminology proposed by Bhatia (1993, 1995, 1997, 2004), the scholar has dubbed the subsequent sections of the genre “moves” that are further composed of steps, which might be either obligatory or optional. Castañ-Pitarch’s (2015) viewpoint is advanced in the present work and his terminology will be herein adopted for further analysis of the “About us” genre.

3.6.1. The mission statement as the core carrier of corporate identity

Nowadays, the mission statement is perceived as the most powerful carrier of organisational and institutional identity. The very term is defined and understood in a variety of ways and “the boundaries of the genre have never stabilised” (Koller, 2011: 106). Basically, though, it addresses two questions about the company: “who it is and what it does” (Falsey, 1989: 3). The nomenclature of the genre is not uniform since texts qualified as mission statements are also dubbed a mission, credo, our philosophy, vision, our commitment, or other (Stallworth-Williams, 2008; Swales and Rogers, 1995). Therefore, Collins and Porras’s metaphor comparing mission and vision statements to “a muddled stew of values, goals, purposes, philosophies, beliefs, aspirations, norms, strategies, practices, and descriptions” (Collins and Porras, 1996: 77; cited in Czerniawska, 1997: 185) still illustratively reflects the current status quo.

As far as generic categorisation is concerned, in this work the mission statement is seen as a micro, web-migrated genre, whose main purpose is to communicate a company’s nature, legitimise its existence, present plans and visions for the future, and pronounce its core priorities, values and beliefs (Stallworth-Williams, 2008: 96). Some scholars (e.g. Bartkus, Glassman, and McAfee, 2000: 29) put forward a very narrow definition of the genre, viewing it “solely as a communication tool”. In this work, however, the mission statement is seen as a carrier of culture, ethos and ideology, manifesting an institution’s most salient values, “promoting corporate culture and ethos and (...) tying the workforce to that culture and ethos” (Swales and Rogers, 1995: 228). Additionally, the mission statement also plays an important function in the management domain: by providing a sense of identity for an organisation, it also offers a sense of identification for the workforce. It acts as a signpost showing the right direction or an ethical watchdog that instigates a sense of loyalty among the workforce and specifies norms regulating their behaviour (cf. Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2012).

In spite of the fact that mission statements have been traditionally associated with business organisations, they have also been developed by all sorts of institutions as well as individuals. The first mention of mission statements in reference to a business setting began to appear in the 1970s in US management literature and since then they have been extensively adopted on a global scale by either for-profit or not-for profit organisations (Koller, 2011). Since the 1990s they have also been mushrooming in the educational sector. This phenomenon has been interpreted as a consequence of the ongoing redefinition of purposes of education and its management, shaped by national, the EU and global policies.

Tracing the history of the genre, Falsey (1989: 15) clearly illustrates that mission statements can be formulated by institutions, individuals or governments and suggests that the oldest mission statement might be found in the New Testament of the Bible:

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (Mathew 7: 12)

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. (Luke 6: 31; cited in Falsey, 1989: 15)

In fact, in the United States – the cradle of the genre – one of the oldest mission statements was not formulated by a business-like organisation but an educational institution, namely, Harvard University. The mission, written in 1636, reads as follows: “To advance learning and to perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to send an illiterate ministry to our churches when our present ministers shall lie in dust” (cited in Falsey, 1989: 15). Furthermore, Falsey (1989: 16-21) exemplifies the genre diversification by presenting the mission statements of individuals, such as Rockefeller’s creed, governments, nations or states. He concludes that the idea of creating a mission statement has a long tradition and is pervasive in all walks of life (cf. Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2013).

Organisations are advised to draft their mission statements for a range of reasons, e.g. to guide the strategic decision-making process, inform their audiences about their goals and motivate employees to achieve them, or simply serve as a public relations tool (cf. Stallworth-Williams, 2008: 98). All these aims, however, boil down to one universal and overriding goal: corporations with a mission statement are expected to be more successful than those lacking one. Empirical research studies have shown that their effective content correlated with financial success (Rarick and Vitton, 1995; Bart, 1999, Bart and Baetz, 1998; Bart et al, 2001). For example, as Bart and Baetz (1998: 845) concluded: “Significant positive differences in performance were found to be associated with mission statements which contained no finan-

cial goals, identified a firm's values/beliefs, defined a firm's purpose, and were relatively short".

Depending on the type of activity performed by an organisation, the mission statement addresses multiple audiences, or stakeholders, as applied in the organisational literature, who might include the company's internal environment, i.e. management and employees, and external audiences consisting of customers or clients, shareholders, and other residents of the areas, local or global, where it operates (Abrahams, 1995; Amato and Amato, 2002; Bart, 1999, 2000; Collins and Porras, 1991; Klemm, Sanderson, and Luffman, 1991). In fact, identifying the stakeholders appears one of the basic goals of constructing organisational identity. The form of addressing the audience is also key to understanding an institution's identity and its relations with its stakeholders.

The duality of the rhetorical positioning of an organisation towards both internal and external audiences has been emphasised by Koller (2011), who has observed that through their organisational practices companies on the one hand influence their business environment, but on the other construct their identity. In this context, the mission statement communicates the ideal corporate identity that enables the formation of collective identity. At the individual level it involves the employee's identification with the expressed ideal of corporate identity. Thus, corporate identity emerges in interaction between the sender and the recipient of the mission statement, simultaneously exerting its influence on and being affected by the organisation itself (cf. Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 29).

It must be emphasised, however, that professional identities and relations presented in mission statements should be interpreted as the representation of the *ideal* identity rather than the *actual* one (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Drawing on this idea, Koller (2011: 104) has assumed that the ideal identity is harmonised with individual vs. collective and personal vs. social aspects of identity. Following Augoustinos et al. (2006), Koller (2011) points to the fact that the building blocks of personal identity encompass individual experiences, characteristics or abilities, while social identity is developed through one's affiliation with particular social groups or categories and their characteristics. Personal identity, however, is regarded by Augoustinos et al. (2006: 25) as a fictitious construct since "all forms of self-construal must be social". The application of the identity matrix to the mission statement is helpful in understanding how "corporate discourse producers use a particular genre to suggest ideal individual identities for employees that are relevant at both the personal and social level." (Koller, 2011: 105).

As a message, a basic element of the communication process, the mission statement addresses multiple audiences, or stakeholders, in corporate terms.

Depending on the type of activity, the stakeholders might include the company's internal environment, i.e. management and employees, and external audiences consisting of customers or clients, shareholders, and other residents of the areas, local or global, where it operates (Abrahams, 1995; Amato and Amato, 2002; Bart, 1999, 2000; Collins and Porras, 1991; Klemm, Sanderson, and Luffman, 1991). In fact, recognising the stakeholders appears to be one of the core aspects of constructing identity.

The diversification of the genre is also seen in the form because the mission statement is usually designed as a single document, not exceeding one page in length, displayed in corporate folders or public relations materials, or more recently online, on corporate or institutional webpages. These messages, frequently taking the form of a short, catchy motto, might stand alone or as a part of a larger document, usually the corporate strategy. Despite the lack of a single definition of the genre, mission statements share a number of conventions regulating their form and content. A rich body of literature has been created to help all sorts of organisations compose their mission statements. One of the most frequently cited publications in this field are David's (1989, 2007) articles, encouraging corporations to include nine elements in their missions, namely: information about their customers or clients, employees, products or services, markets, technology, self-concept, desired public image, philosophy and strategies for growth and survival. Textual analyses show that these texts usually consist of general declarations and assertions (Swales and Rogers, 1995: 226). As a result, the verbs usually take the present, the imperative or the purposive imperative form. Modals rarely occur; if they do, they are usually un-hedged (will, must). Commonly used nouns include, for example, "goals, objectives and values". Adjectives aim at presenting the company in a positive way, often referring to its competitiveness or reliability, e.g. "competent, creative, enthusiastic, leading, profitable" (Swales and Rogers, 1995: 227).

Similar conclusions have also been drawn by Mamet (2005). Based on an analysis of over 300 corporate mission statements of British and American companies, Mamet (2005) has made an attempt to create a "model" mission statement. The scholar has pointed to the lack of conventionalised criteria for textual organisation of the genre that takes highly diversified forms. Its structure is typically modular or occasionally imitates other genres, e.g. slogans or prayers. Due to the fact that mission statements address a large audience, consisting of both internal and external stakeholders, they avoid using specialised vocabulary in order to facilitate the processes of text perception, understanding and remembering. The grammar structures are also carefully selected. Past forms are scarce while the dominating use of the Present Simple emphasises stability and regularity in completing declarations expressed in

the mission statement. A frequent use of the Future Simple indicates a visionary and declarative character of the mission and reveals tasks to be completed in the future as well as the willingness of the company to accomplish them. Tentative, conditional structures are avoided and strong verbs are preferred. Another characteristic feature of the genre is a frequent use of gerunds and nominalisations.

To sum up, referring to Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentation and his powerful metaphor of the theatre, mapping facets of social interaction to the stage, mission statements help actors/communicators construct a desired role and create a "front" that is credible and accepted by the audience.

3.6.2. Pronouns as key linguistic markers of corporate identity

According to Fairclough (1995: 203), any study of text and identity should specify participants or "voices" that appear in the text and the way they are constructed as well as the relations between participants. In business discourse the identification of the participants is one of the basic prerequisites of successful communication (Dijlts and Heynderickx, 2007: 234). At the linguistic level, pronouns constitute the most significant category of identity markers, considered a classic rhetorical device for building identity and creating a sense of affiliation. As Fairclough (1995: 145) contends, pronouns are "always worth noting" for the study of identity. Pronouns act as indexical markers that "anchor" language in the real world whose referents might considerably vary (Verschuere, 1999: 18). For this reason, understanding their role in the process of identity construction requires an analysis of their use in the local context.

For example, in the corporate context the *we*-pronoun is attributed the utmost significance for its institutional self-referencing potential, whereas the *I*-pronoun marks the presence of the individual speaker and *you* is associated with the audience. Additionally, pronouns provide information on the way an organisation perceives itself and unveil the positioning of the source of communication vis-à-vis the audience and showing their mutual relations (van de Mierop, 2006; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006).

The *we*-pronoun plays an integrative function, acting as a bridge connecting the communicator and the audience, "claiming group membership with that audience" (Beason, 1991: 331). For example, Cheney (1983) and Swales and Rogers (1995) support the idea that the use of the first-person-plural pronoun facilitates the process of integration of employees with their company. On the basis of his study of 10 in-house company magazines, Cheney makes the following remark:

The assumed 'we' is both a subtle and powerful identification strategy because it often goes unnoticed. Uses of this strategy allow a corporation to present similarity and commonality among organizational members as a taken-for-granted assumption. To the extent that employees accept this assumption and its corollaries unquestioningly, they identify with their corporate employee. (Cheney, 1983: 154)

Drawing on Kenneth Burke's "rhetoric of identification", Cheney (1983: 146-147) asserts that the organisation begins this process by communicating its own identity, as expressed through values, goals or objectives, which might be further completed by the organisation's members who adapt them as their own and start acting for the benefit of the company. The mission statement as the main carrier of corporate identity definitely facilitates employees' identification as it is "rhetorically designed in order to ensure maximum employee buy-in" (Swales and Rogers, 1995: 223).

The scope of identification might be, however, extended to external stakeholders such as, for example, suppliers, clients, customers or investors (Bartkus et. al., 2000: 29). This, in fact, makes the meaning of *we* ambiguous and poses certain difficulty to its interpretation, since *we* might be both *inclusive*, applied to demonstrate a sense of unity with the audience, and *exclusive*, emphasising affinity and identification with an institution (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 115).

The problem of ambiguity of *we*-form has also been raised by Dieltjens and Heynderickx (2007: 235), who point to the fact that the pronoun might refer to a different number and combinations of communication participants (e.g. two senders, one sender and the receiver(s) and/or third parties, etc.) that theoretically amount to twenty-seven possible combinations. Moreover, along with the inclusive vs. exclusive *we* well-described in literature, the scholars (ibidem: 236-238) discern four other most common categories of ambiguous *we*-form, including:

- *Distributive and collective we*

Morphologically the distributive vs. collective meaning is impossible to tell between. Such a distinction might be only made only on the basis of the interpretation of the contextual elements.

- *Generalising we*

The generalising *we*-form does not refer to specific persons, either sender(s) or receiver(s). It is always inclusive and might have a persuasive effect, consisting in the use of unsubstantiated generalisations (e.g. "We all know..." ibidem: 237). It might also take the form of a question, often with an ironic or derogatory intention.

- *Muting*

The muting principle stands for the use of one pronominal formula in place of another one (e.g. the use of *we* instead of *I* or *you*). In general, the sender

- does not explicitly mark their presence in text but withdraws to the background so the use of self-referential structure is substituted by the *we*-form.
- *Change of perspective*
In the corporate context the *we*-form is definitely more preferable than the *I*-form¹⁶. Even though the form often passes unnoticed by the reader, its frequent use enforces the user's approval of the message. The form is particularly important from the perspective of corporate identity as it "represents the corporate culture, the company image and the positive identity of the team. There is no place for individuality, unless at the highest hierarchical levels" (ibidem: 237). Any change of perspective within the use of the same morphological form leads to ambiguities as the referents might embrace the management, the company, everyone in the company or the audience (you).

Semantically, the *we*-form cannot be interpreted purely as a plural form or multiplied *I*-form. Its semantic equivalents include all other pronouns (e.g. *I*, singular and plural *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *we*, *they*) and their multiple combinations (e.g. *we* as *I* + other than *I* or *we* as *we* + everyone, etc.). Another aspect that should be taken into account in the organisational context is the hierarchy that is also reflected in the use of the *we*-form. It translates into the interpretation of the *we*-form depending on the position of the receiver in the company's structure. In other words, as we ascend the corporate hierarchical ladder, the number of possible interpretations increases as *we* might represent the board, all levels of management, employees and labourers. The interpretation of the message also depends on its content and the position of the receiver in the hierarchy and their position in relation to the sender. Finally, *we* might be also used metaphorically as an equivalent of the company or an organisation. Accordingly, Dieltjens and Heynderickx (2007: 244) dub it "a kind of pictogram that in fact can replace the company name".

In sum, the *we*-form should be treated as an integral and significant component of corporate communication strategy. It evokes a sense of community and affiliation with an organisation or its aims and values in readers even though the very presence of the form in the text often goes unnoticed.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to present the mechanisms of communicating corporate identity in cyberspace with a special focus on the affordances of the new media and their influence on the form and content of corporate communi-

¹⁶ A similar observation has also been made by Garzone (2005), who analysed CEO letters.

cation narrowed to the scrutiny of the genre of the corporate webpage, or more specifically its "About us" section, dubbed the key carrier of corporate identity. The generic specification of online corporate communication practices is deemed crucial for the undertaken ecolinguistic study on corporate identity discourse (see chapter 5), where the "About us" page is the basic unit of analysis.

The initial sections discussed the notion of corporate communication which was characterised as predominantly self-referential and enabling organisations to "maintain themselves and conform their identities" (Cheney and Christensen, 2001: 252) rather than exchange information with their environment. In spite of the fact that organisations attempt to present their communication with selected audiences as bi-directional, this "dialogue" appears declarative and illusionary, since its real aim is the maintenance of identity and continuity. Despite corporate declared engagement in bilateral honest communication, in the process of communicating corporate identity the audience does not really have equal status with an organisation as a source of a persuasive message with a clearly defined goal. I also pointed to the fact that the aims and functions as well as mechanisms of corporate communication do, in fact, overlap with those commonly associated with public relations. Nevertheless, the former term has been introduced to substitute the latter which has gained negative connotations and began to be interpreted as propaganda or manipulation.

Recent technological advancements, especially the development of the Internet, have opened new avenues for communication, including corporate communication. This cyber-revolution has been welcomed with enthusiasm by some scholars (e.g. Habermas, 1989; Grossman, 1995), who have expected a positive impact of the Internet on civic society perceiving it as a truly democratic medium. The perspective taken in this chapter is, however, more reserved. Contrary to expectations, new media provided new arenas for communication for the existing empowered actors rather than inspired truly open and democratic communication. As far as corporate communication is concerned, in cyberspace it still remains carefully planned, controlled and subdued to the needs of the company rather than encouraging an honest dialogue with stakeholders. Therefore, the approach to technology taken in the present volume might be characterised as leaning towards social constructivism rather than technological determinism. In other words, technology obviously has a profound impact on human life but it does not fully determine the use of a particular invention (e.g. the Internet), which might be adapted by society in a creative and often unpredictable way.

The following sections took a genre-based approach to corporate communication in cyberspace, emphasising the interplay between genre and cyber-

media offering new affordances that frame the form and content of online interactions. Special heed was paid to hypertextuality and interactivity of web genres that have emerged as a result of the transformation of traditional genres, dubbed *extant* by Shepperd and Watters (1998) and *web-migrated* by Petroni (2011), or genres originally created in the virtual environment (referred to, respectively, as *novel* or *web-generated*). The discussion on the categorisation of cybergenres took the wider perspective of “genre ecology” accounting for horizontal relations between neighbouring genres rather than hierarchical, vertical, relations. The focal target of analysis was the corporate website, nowadays the most important corporate communication tool, categorised as a macro-genre in the family of cybergenres and its “About us” pages, classified as a subgenre with its own moves and steps, considered essential in the construction of corporate identity in cyberspace. Even though specific structures of the “About us” section might vary across different webpages, its main functions embrace the legitimisation of the company’s existence and activity as well as trust establishment between the company and its stakeholders.

The closing sections pointed to the most important generic and linguistic aspects concerning the construction of corporate identity and discussed, respectively, the form and content of the mission statement, a web-migrated micro-genre, considered the main carrier of corporate identity, and the use of pronouns as the key identity markers in corporate discourse.

Ideological Aspects of Corporate Identity and Discourse: Towards Ecological Discourse Analysis

Introduction

As established in chapter 1, the current volume takes up a challenge for analysing discursive construction of corporate identity from the ecolinguistic perspective. Despite being a relatively new, yet promising discipline, ecolinguistics is rather compartmentalised and marginalised from mainstream linguistics. So far, most of the discourse studies within ecolinguistics leaned towards CDA – the approach that has dominated in discourse studies for a couple of decades. Even though the scopes of interest of ecolinguistics and CDA might to some extent overlap, they are not concomitant with each other. For this reason, it seems well-substantiated to delineate clear methodological and theoretical boundaries between the approaches. This challenge will be addressed in the following chapter that will also discuss the ideological aspects of the discursive construction of corporate identity. Accordingly, the first sections are devoted to the notion of discourse – central in social sciences and humanities. Then, the discussion will focus on another essential, yet nebulous, notion of ideology. The chapter will also outline the main assumptions of CDA and compare and contrast them with those of Ecological Discourse Analysis, recently proposed by Alexander and Stibbe (2014) and Stibbe (2014).

4.1. The notion of discourse

Contemporary humanities and social studies are often centred on the interpretation and analysis of discourse. The very use of the term *discourse* has indeed become overloaded and confusing. For this reason, it seems well-substantiated to review selected definitions of discourse pertaining to this work. Since the body of literature as well as the number of approaches to discourse are plentiful, their review will be, by definition, selective and limited.

One of the commonly cited definitions of discourse has been provided by Emil Beneviste:

The sentence, an undefined creation of limitless variety, is the very life of human speech in action. We conclude from this that with the sentence we leave the domain of language as a system of signs and enter into another universe, that of **discourse as an instrument of communication**, whose expression is language (Beneviste, 1971: 110; emphasis added).

Discourse is contrasted here with language and positioned primarily as “an instrument of communication”. The definition also explicitly specifies the structural boundaries of discourse that embrace any form of utterance beyond the sentence level. Indeed, the cluster “beyond the sentence” has been widely accepted as a point of reference by discourse analysts to mark the symbolic border between language and discourse (e.g. Thornbury, 2005). Emil Beneviste firmly sets discourse in the domain of communication. In his definition the term is used in reference to any utterance that engages the hearer and the speaker who intends to influence the other. The very categorisation of discourse is broad indeed, as it incorporates its spoken and written mode, as well as a wide spectrum of genres ranging from “trivial conversation” to “the most elaborate oration” (ibidem: 208-209). The communicative aspect of discourse has also been emphasised by Campbell (2004: 108), who defines it as a “system of language, concepts, and rules of logic through which people communicate”.

Positioning discourse in the domain of communication is, however, only one of the ways of representing the concept. Bloor and Bloor’s (2007: 6-7) taxonomy below points to a multiplicity of uses of the term:

1. Discourse is used in the broadest sense in reference to all forms of human communication.
2. Discourse is applied only to spoken communication.
3. Discourse is contrasted with text, where discourse stands for “the whole act of communication involving production *and* comprehension, not necessarily entirely verbal” and text understood as “actual written and spoken data”.
4. Discourse also refers in an abstract sense to all communication processes that take place in a particular institutional context (e.g. the discourse of science, legal discourse). It embraces a whole range of communicative events that include different genres and modes of communication.
5. Discourse or “a discourse” is used in a sense similar to that of a genre to signify a particular written or spoken text, the use of which has been conventionalised (e.g. a sermon, a lecture, etc.).
6. Multimodal-discourse denotes discourse that involves the reliance on more than one mode of communication.

The diversity of approaches to discourse is accounted for by Wodak and Meyer (2009) by the existence of three different traditions: the German and Central European tradition embedded in text linguistics and related to rhetoric; the Anglo-American tradition that defines discourse as both written and spoken texts; and the Foucauldian tradition, which views discourse as an abstract form of knowledge, understood as cognition and emotions (Jäger and Maier, 2009).

The above ideas are contained in Gee's (1999) concept of **discourse** and **Discourse**, denoted by the use of lower-case **d** and upper-case **D**. The former refers to language-in-use (i.e. talk and text), while the latter, integrates social relations, identity, contexts, worldviews, patterns of talk and behaviour, the system of thought and knowledge that are meaningful to a particular "social network" (Gee, 1996: 13). These categorisations correspond with Chilton's (2004) *language_L*, *language_{L'}*, *discourse_D* and *discourse_d*. Certain similarities might be also discerned in Cameron's (2001) use of the term "the linguists' discourse", which refers to language above the sentence and language in use, and "the social theorists' discourses(s)", standing for practice(s) constituting objects.

Van Dijk's (1997) perspective on the concept of discourse is also multifaceted as he discerns its linguistic, cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions. At the linguistic level DA scrutinises its syntactic, semantic, stylistic and rhetorical aspects. The cognitive dimension of discourse involves an analysis of the interlocutors' processes of production, reception and understanding. The socio-cultural aspects of discourse are understood in terms of social action situated in a particular context (time, space and participants). Van Dijk (1997) to a large extent epitomises context with cognition as it involves familiarity with certain social situations and institutions as well as knowledge of the use of language related to them. For this reason, van Dijk purports that each context regulates a particular discourse and each discourse is reliant on a particular context.

One of the main scholars who stimulated discourse studies was Michel Foucault (1972, 1984)¹⁸. Referring to his own use of the term discourse, Foucault makes the following remark:

I believe I have in fact added to its meaning: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. (Foucault, 1972: 80)

As Fairclough (2003b: 123) observes, Foucault views the analysis of discourse in terms of the analysis of statements understood as text and utterances as its fundamental components. The analysis, though, does not involve

¹⁸ Foucault's developments will be discussed in more detail in section 4.1.2

a detailed study of texts but is rather oriented at identifying the rules that regulate texts and utterances. The very term *discourse* is used as an abstract noun for “the domain of statements” as well as a concrete countable noun (“a discourse” or “several discourses”) in reference to “groups of ‘statements’ or for the ‘regulated practice’ (the rules) which govern such a group of statements” (Fairclough, 2003b: 124).

Fairclough (2003b: 124), however, perceives discourses “as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world’”. Thus, in his view different discourses reflect different perspectives on the world that are taken on the basis of relations people have to the world which, in turn, are shaped by a range of individual and social factors, including their personal and social identities, social position as well as a wide range of social relations. Discourses might be seen as means used by people to construct and modify particular types of human relations, including those of separation, dominance, cooperation or competition. The scholar also emphasises that discourses are not only reflections of the real world but also projections that are often far from reality and aimed at transforming the world in a given way (ibidem).

Drawing on Foucault, Fairclough pointed to the two following aspects of discourse:

1. the constitutive nature of discourse – discourse constitutes the social, including ‘objects’ and social subjects; 2. the primacy of inter-discursivity and intertextuality – any discursive practice is defined by its relations with others, and draws upon others in complex ways. (Fairclough, 1992b: 55)

Similarly to Foucault, Fairclough assumes the discursive construction of the social and expresses his interest in the internal and external relations of discourse structures. Fairclough (ibidem), however, extends Foucault’s writing by incorporating a detailed linguistic analysis and reference to ‘real’ texts in context. In his view, discourses interact with each other and are in fact constituted in that process of interaction. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough purport (1999: 4), concepts might be enacted or “talked” into existence and determined by discourse. For this reason, participants in a particular discourse act as constructors of certain ideas in society. In a similar vein, discourse conveying unaccepted ideas is negated. In the case of disagreement, the winner is the actor that manages to gain acceptance for his rhetoric and ideas, and eventually plays a decisive role in shaping the definition of the concept and its implementation into social practice.

Understanding discourses as different ways of representing the world indicates that they are repetitive and stable over time and, most importantly, shared by certain groups of people. The scale of their repetition, stability over

time and commonality, and thus the range of their representations, might significantly differ (ibidem). The perception of discourse as “a shared way of apprehending the world” that “enables those who share it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts” has also been proposed by Dryzek (1997: 8). This perception also resonates with an ecolinguistics definition of discourses provided by Stibbe: “*Discourses* are standardized ways that particular groups in society use language, images and other forms of representation” (Stibbe, 2015: 22).

4.1.1. Text vs. discourse

Discourse, like any other term, might also be defined by what it is not, in opposition to another term. One of the most frequent juxtapositions is that of discourse vs. text. Some scholars (e.g. Crystal, 1987; Stubbs, 1983) treat text and discourse as almost synonymous. Although Crystal (1987: 116) identifies discourse with “naturally occurring spoken language” and text with its written form, he admits that the boundaries between these two terms are blurred and that they both “can be used in a much broader sense to include *all* language units with a definable communicative function, whether spoken or written”.

Hawthorn (1992) differentiates text from discourse on the basis of interactivity by claiming that text might be non-interactive in contrast to discourse that is interactive. The transactional character of discourse is also emphasised by Leech and Short (1981: 209; cited in Hawthorn, 1992: 189), who view it as “linguistic communication seen as a transaction between speaker and hearer, as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose”. Text is defined as “linguistic communication (either spoken or written) seen simply as a message coded in its auditory or visual medium” (ibidem).

In Widdowson’s view (2004), texts also take either a written or a spoken form and must be referred to in linguistic terms and interpreted through the prism of their intended meaning. By contrast, discourse, seen as text in context, is defined in terms of its outcomes. As Widdowson puts it (2004: 8), discourse “is the pragmatic process of meaning negotiation”, and text, its product. Hence, both text and discourse are interrelated and text cohesion depends on discourse coherence.

Fairclough (2003b: 3), however, defines text as “any actual language use”. The very term language is used in its most common sense in reference to verbal language or in reference to particular languages. The use of the notion of discourse involves a specific approach to language use as a part of social life interrelated with other elements. As such, it might be used as a general

abstract noun or as a count noun in reference to particular “discourses” representing a given worldview (e.g. the Third Way discourse of New Labour; Fairclough, 2000b). In their earlier writings, Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 276) also point to the social aspects of language and its role in meaning-making, perceiving it as a form of social action that is “socially constitutive” and “socially shaped”. Fairclough promotes the notion of *semiosis* that is not only restricted to linguistic communication, but might also be applied to other forms of communication (e.g. the visual form) and generalised across different understandings of the notion of discourse. Semiosis participates in the process of representing the world and constructing identity, reflecting a variety of perspectives of particular “groups of social actors” (Fairclough, 2009: 164). The assortment of perspectives is also emphasised by social constructionists who see discourse as “highly selective and socially constitutive” (Kong, 2014: 4) and define it as:

[a] set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events... Surrounding any one object, event, person etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the world, a different way of representing it to the world. (Burr, 1995: 48)

Texts, on the other hand, understood as “the semiotic dimension of events” (ibidem), might manifest certain differing discourses and ideologies (Weiss and Wodak, 2002). The latter ideas resonate with Michel Foucault’s (2002: 54) proposals viewing discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”. Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 261) also observe that the realisation of discourses is not limited to linguistic means and emphasise, for example, the role of visual *semiosis*. Accordingly, text might be treated as “the only evidence for the existence of discourses, one kind of concrete realisation of abstract forms of knowledge” that are simultaneously “interactive and influenced by sociolinguistic factors” (Hidalgo Tenorio, 2011: 186). The process of constructing an individual’s identity in society involves the incorporation of discourses dominant in a particular community of practice. The domination of such discourses is understood in terms of their control and the organisation of the form and content as well as the distribution of conveyed messages, involving a specification of the addressors and addressees of communication. Thus, as Hidalgo Tenorio (ibidem) notes: “Social practices are meaningful and coherent in that they conform to discourse principles”.

Discourses, as carriers of ideologies, shape both the individual and social consciousness that affects people’s behaviour. Therefore, through constant repetition and recapitulation of particular ideas and utterances discourse perpetuates knowledge (Jäger and Maier, 2009), in addition to mirroring, form-

ing and enacting a certain social reality. It can also be defined by the actions undertaken by its participants and the power that is enacted and reproduced through them. Therefore, it is possible to discern a range of particular discourses, e.g. professional ones, or discourses of dominance and hegemony vs. resistant discourses.

4.1.2. Discourse as power and knowledge

Foucault's writings on power and subjectivity have particularly contributed to the understanding of the concept of identity in the context of organisational studies. Applying the term subjectivity rather than identity, Foucault (1970, 1980, 1982) deconstructs the nineteenth century concept of the individual as an autonomous, rational agent, viewing it instead as formed by power relations. Thus, the sense of self arises from dominant discourses or systems of thought that regulate our self-understanding and our relationship to the world. From the Foucauldian perspective a particular discourse produces certain "truths" about the "self". The "techniques of the self", however, do not only enable understanding, but might also act as "regimes of truth" that control and discipline us.

Foucault situates knowledge in language, viewing it, however, as discourse. Thus, the dominant, socially constructed discourse represents knowledge. In his essay "The discourse on language" Foucault (1972) adumbrates that discourse poses structural constraints that control the production of any utterance. Accordingly, individuals cannot enjoy a complete freedom of speech due to the rule of prohibition that excludes any discussion or mention of certain issues (e.g. sexuality). Additionally, based on the opposition between reason and folly, any deviation from normality is not accepted in the common discourse. Most important, however, appears to be the opposition between the "true" and the "false". As Foucault holds, nowadays the "will to truth" governs the former two principles and has shifted the accents in the understanding of discourse towards its meaning and reference to the world rather than focusing on its nature or performativity. Sheridan, Foucault's translator, puts it as follows:

In any society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed, according to a number of procedures whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers to master the unpredictable events. (Sheridan, 1980: 121)

This process is supported by the so called total institutions, including prisons, asylums, hospitals, barracks, factories, corporations, schools, that monopolise "true" knowledge and exclude from discourse any statements they

render “false” which provides them with power (Foucault, 1972). The institutionalised character of knowledge, understood as “the will to truth”, is clearly expressed by Sheridan:

The truth does not impose itself on a pure, receptive mind: it is sought after. Each of the great mutations of scientific knowledge, those of the early seventeenth or nineteenth centuries, for example may be seen as the new forms of the will to truth; new arrangements of the objects to be studied, new functions and positions of the knowing subject, new material instruments in the pursuit of knowledge. There is a whole institutional base on which the will to truth operates: the educational system, the distribution of information through libraries, learned societies, laboratories, the values set by different social systems on different forms of knowledge. (Sheridan, 1980: 123)

Foucault’s growing political commitment, especially his concerns referring to power, knowledge and institutions, was explicitly expressed in his renown monograph *Discipline and Punish*, originally published in 1975. In this landmark publication, Foucault describes the origin and application of “a new technology of power that makes possible and viable the accumulation of men which is functional to the accumulation of capital in the rise of the bourgeois order” (Vallencia-Villa, 1981: 360). The core idea here is that of discipline, a new technology of power, which is not only present in the penitentiary institutions but permeates all social structures. Accordingly, both formal and informal organisations, especially those of penitentiary, military or educational character, develop structures facilitating the execution of discipline that resemble the “panopticon” – a prison designed by Jeremy Bentham in the sixteenth century. The key element of the layout of the (in)famous prison was the centrally-located watchtower that enabled incessant control of prisoners. In Foucault’s view, however, the efficiency of the disciplinary system, did not lie in the surveillance capacities of the very tower, but in the self-discipline of prisoners who knew that they were observed and acted accordingly. Hence, the major function of this system was to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1995: 201).

Indeed, similar surveillance-disciplinary mechanisms are found in modern workplaces developing more and more sophisticated monitoring systems, including, for example, open-plan offices with their centrally located manager’s “watchtower”, internet and email censorship, detailed examination of employee’s efficiency, etc., which by their very presence induce employees’ self-control and compliance with the in-house rules.

Foucault, however, did not perceive power as an exclusively negative, repressive phenomenon that forces people to act against their will. He also pointed to its positive aspects, especially the productive potential:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault, 1991: 194)

Power as a major source of social discipline and conformity might also bring some positive effects. The "disciplinary power" of the total institutions (e.g. schools, prisons or mental hospitals) that emerged in the 18th century in Europe with their system of surveillance and assessment eliminated violence since people learnt how to control themselves and conform to the imposed norms. In Foucault's view, power underlies every aspect of social life – ranging from politics to everyday activities. Even though the scholar found the concept of power rather elusive and positioned it beyond agency or structure, he pointed to the capacity of norms to discipline ourselves without any external pressure.

Being himself an active critic of social and political reality, Foucault was convinced that action and resistance were possible. First of all, in his view people are able to identify and oppose existing norms and restrictions. Therefore, challenging power does not consist in pursuing "absolute truth" but "detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time" (Foucault, 1980: 133). Accordingly, both power and resistance are situated in discourse.

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it... We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. **Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart.** (Foucault, 1998: 100-101; emphasis added)

A reflection of the Foucauldian panopticon idea applied to workplace settings might be found, for example, in Zubhoffs' (1988) study set in a pulp mill where a computer system controlled workers' performance. Printouts from the Overview System were stored in employees' personal record files and influenced their career development. As a result, employees self-disciplined their behaviour and complied with the system.

The Foucauldian ideas might also be traced in the work of du Gay (1996a, 1996b) who studied the influence of "enterprise discourse" on the redefinition of organisational and employees' identities along the rules of the market. In his seminal work *Consumption and Identity at Work* du Gay (1996a) criticises enterprise culture and its effect on "the construction of work identities and the production of different work-based subjects" (du Gay, 1996a: 3). Based

on the study of several retail companies from the UK, du Gay illustrated how organisations stimulated employees “to act a bit more like they were in business for themselves” (du Gay, 2000: 174). Propagating the ideas of “market competition” and “entrepreneurship” the organisational discourse aimed to persuade employees to take more entrepreneurial attitudes, which involved more autonomy, responsibility and self-management on their part. As a result, at the time of organisational change such as, for example, “downsizing”, the responsibility for being made redundant was shifted from the employer onto the employee who was expected to interpret this undoubtedly uncomfortable situation as an “opportunity” to refurbish their career. Thus, employees’ identification with the promoted “enterprise discourse” tamed their possible resistance and resentment, reducing the possibility of any discomfort on the part of the organisation to the minimum. However, the very exposure to entrepreneurial discourse does not guarantee employees’ identification with it (Kenny et al., 2011).

Du Gay’s work has met with widespread criticism (e.g. Fournier and Grey, 1999; Reed, 2000; Thompson and Acroyd, 1995), especially on the grounds of its determinism and denial of the possibility of resistance. Newton (1998) questions the “fragility” of employees’ selves and their “vulnerability” to the managerial discourse. Du Gay’s perspective is not, however, utterly deterministic and leaves some room for an alternative interpretation of enterprise discourse and certain resistance:

While the official discourse of enterprise tries to produce particular meanings for and forms of conduct among employees that will in turn produce quality service for customers and a sale for the company, it cannot completely close off the processes of the production of meaning nor totally determine how particular norms will be enacted. (du Gay, 1996a: 160)

Fournier and Grey (1999) notice, however, that despite adopting Foucault’s view that “no discourse or mode of rationality is complete or has complete power over its subjects”, in *Consumption and Identity at Work* du Gay (1996a) “admits the impossibility of one form of government to capture the real, so that ‘government is congenitally failing operation’” (Fournier and Grey, 1999: 119). Therefore, it might be concluded that du Gay to a large extent escaped the Foucauldian determinism of power and accepted Lacanian approach opting for perceiving contradiction and resistance as ingrained elements in any social system.

In fact, Foucauldian determinism of power and rejection of resistance has attracted some criticism (e.g. Newton, 1998; Reed, 2000; O’Doherty and Willmott, 2001a, b). Similar reservations have also been expressed by Fairclough (1992b) who has noticed that the Foucauldian denial of deliberate resistance

and struggle stands in sharp contrast to framing theory that is based on agency (cf. Sandberg, 2006). Nevertheless, Foucault has undoubtedly provided a significant contribution to the study of identity and power in modern organisations. Power is, in fact, central in Foucault's writings and comes to the fore in any discussion of discourse. The Foucauldian perspective on power differs from the popular perception of power as a possession or abuse of somebody's rights shared by numerous liberal humanists or the Marxist approach embedding power in economic relations. Foucault has endeavoured to account for all the complexities and nuances of power, strongly rejecting the "repressive hypothesis" assuming that power involves the limitation of an individual's freedom or the imposition of subjugation to someone's will (Mills, 2004: 17). Foucault's approach to power might be aptly summarised by the following extract:

If power is no longer thought simply as a negative and repressive force but as the condition of production of all speech, and if power is conceived as polar rather than monolithic, as an asymmetrical dispersion, then all utterances will be potentially splintered, formally open to contradictory uses. (Frow, 1985: 206; after Mills, 2004: 17)

In other words, the dispersion of power leads to a production of a variety of discourses that might be contradictory or competitive to each other as in the case of the dominant discourse, often supported by institutional funding, and alternative, marginalised discourses (Mills, *ibidem*). The conflictual aspects of discourse have been particularly strongly emphasised by the French Marxist linguist Michael Pêcheux who purports that discourse is always underlain with ideological struggle (Pêcheux, 1982). In the present volume, this conflict is exemplified by the struggle for dominance between neoliberal and economics discourses vs. environmental discourses.

4.1.3. Speech community vs. discourse community

In literature on communication in the professional setting the notion of "discourse community" proposed by Swales (1990) seems to have repulsed Hymes's (1962) concept of "speech community". Swales (1990) recognises three differences between the two concepts. Firstly, he notes that a community is formed not only by oral speech, but also a wide array of semi-otic resources. Another difference concerns the sociorhetorical rather than sociolinguistic character of a discourse community that integrates people on the basis of their common goals which make them construct certain patterns characterising a particular community rather than vice versa. In other words, people sharing particular linguistic features tend to form a particular

community. Finally, a discourse community has a *centrifugal* character as it categorises people into certain groups, while speech communities, dubbed *centripetal*, assimilate people “into the general fabric” (Swales, 1990: 24). Discourse communities might be exemplified by membership based on “persuasion, training or a relevant qualification” in contrast to speech communities integrating individuals on the basis of “birth, accident or adoption” (Swales, 1990: 24). Thus, membership in a particular speech community is specified by rules whereas belonging to a discourse community is regulated by the commonality of goals and individual features. In the contemporary postmodern world the traditional “rule-based” belonging to a speech community seems too restrictive as it does not take into account individual rights and memberships.

Furthermore, Swales (1990: 24-27) specifies six features that characterise a particular discourse community.

1. *A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.*
2. *A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.*
3. *A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.*
4. *A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.*
5. *In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.*
6. *A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursive expertise.*

Swales’s (1990) definition of a discourse community is particularly adequate in reference to groups set in the educational context, but it does not embrace certain aspects related to the function of the community (cf. Kong, 2014: 37). The most frequently raised criticism of this concept is targeted at the assumed harmony in a community, as well as other communities, and ignorance of “sources of internal tension in the community” (Canagarajah, 2002: 64). Kong (2014: 37) emphasises that the concept was developed for the English for Specific Purposes practitioners who aim at preparing learners of English as a foreign or a second language to enter a certain profession from the position of a novice. The very status of a novice vs. an expert is not defined by Swales (1990: 58); Swales simply limits his divagations to a situation where a complete novice enters a homogeneous English-speaking discourse community. In the contemporary world, such a scenario is by all means possible but it does not take into account a plethora of various other possible

alternative versions and completely ignores the complexity of professional communication (cf. Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2014).

Based on the principles of the halo effect, the positive valence of the word “community” might be undeservingly stretched to all contexts. This problem was signalled by Williams back in the 1970s.

Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term. (Williams, 1983: 66)

Therefore, neither the perception of community members as static and homogenous, nor an assumption that communities do not influence each other seems to be substantiated. For this reason, in this monograph, the term “community” is applied in a more metaphorical sense in reference to a group of people united by common goals and sharing certain similarities but simultaneously being very different. What comes to the fore in the professional context, is the competition between particular communities and their pursuit of hegemony¹⁹. This resonates with Bourdieu’s (1989: 38) perception of profession as “a space of competition and struggle”. Accordingly, any analysis of professional discourse must take into consideration this struggle for hegemony that is clearly seen in various professions’ attempts to spread their disciplinary knowledge and find practical application.

Canagarajah (2002) points to a certain paradox of a simultaneous drive to reproduce professional knowledge and control its distribution and interpretation. This is particularly visible in the academia that, on the one hand, puts special emphasis on the spread of knowledge and, on the other, is primarily concerned with taking credit for its origin. Using Foucault’s (1972) words, Canagarajah (2002) refers to knowledge paradox as “fraternities of discourse” whose “function is to preserve or to reproduce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, without those in possession being dispossessed by this very distribution” (Foucault, 1972; cited in Canagarajah 2002: 225). Foucault (1972: 155) also argues that discourse features contradictions and disharmony and dubs it “a space of multiple dissention”.

In Bourdieu’s view (1989), a particular professional community is seen as a “field” which is “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between

¹⁹ The very concept of hegemony is understood in the light of Fairclough’s (1992b: 92) definition, positioning it as “a focus of constant struggle around points of greatest instability between classes and blocks, to construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/subordination, which takes economic, political and ideological forms”.

positions objectively defined in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions" (Bourdieu, 1989: 39). Accordingly, professional discourse can be interpreted "as a result of the relational negotiation of knowledge of different disciplines" (Kong, 2014: 39). Bourdieu (1992) recommends taking the following steps in such an analysis:

First, one must analyze the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power. Second, one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field is the site. One must analyze the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favourable opportunity to be actualized. (Bourdieu, 1992: 104-105)

Thus any type of organisational discourse, including corporate discourse, reflects the individuals' reaction to power and how they take stances. As Bourdieu (1992) puts it:

The field of positions is methodologically inseparable from the field of stances or position-takings, i.e. the structured system of practices and expressions of agents. Both spaces, that of objective positions and that of stances, must be analyzed together... in a situation of equilibrium, the space of position tends to command the space of position-takings. (1992: 105, italics in original)

4.2. The concept of ideology

Despite an impressive number of definitions and a large body of literature aiming to elucidate the concept of ideology across disciplines, it still remains elusive and nebulous. The aim of this work is not, however, to provide a comprehensive literature review but to uncover the mutual relations between discourse and ideology based on selective sources.

As Garzone and Sarangi (2007: 13) purport, nowadays the very word "ideology" evokes rather negative connotations. Despite the lack of linguistic and etymological evidence, this negativity derives from the historical use of the word *idéologie*, which was introduced by the French philosopher A. L. C. Destutt de Tracy (1801) in reference to "a theory of ideas" that followed the thought of Condillac and Locke opposing metaphysics and supporting empiricism. Free of any negative connotations, the theory of ideas was to be transformed into a natural science within the rein of zoology and as such deprived of any subjectivism or evaluative position (Garzone and Sarangi, 2007: 13; after Williams, 1977: 56; Koerner, 2000: 253; Eagleton, 1994: 5). The term owes its negative connotation to Napoleon who publically criticised

Destutt and his republican acolytes (*idéologues*) for giving preeminence to abstract ideas rather than political reality. This criticism might be interpreted as an ever-pervading conflict between intellectuals and experts, i.e. cultivation and formulation of knowledge vs. its practical application (Merton, 1957: 209).

Woolard (1998) discerns four recurring themes in the contemporary understanding of ideology. The first one, most common, views ideology as ideational or conceptual and related to mental phenomena and the representation of beliefs and ideas. Thus, some scholars use the term in a way similar to that of Destutt de Tracy focusing on ideational facets of phenomena dubbed ideological rather than their social or critical aspects. Thus, ideology is seen as “the more intellectual constituent of culture” (Woolard, 1998: 5) or a set of notions held by members of a society that are often explicitly verbalised. The discursive dimension of ideology reverberates, for example, in the writings of the sociologist Alvin Gouldner (1976) or John Thompson (1984: 85), who perceive it as “that part of consciousness which can be said”.

However, French structuralists and poststructuralists swerved away from perceiving ideology in terms of consciousness or subjective representations and adopted Althusser’s (1971) notion of lived relations, firmly anchoring it in the context of the social order. Accordingly, Eagleton (1994: 18) defines ideology as “a particular organization of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in society”.

As Woolard (1998) notes, scholars also hold different views on the very coherence of ideology as a system of signification. Hill (1998), similarly to Eagleton (1994), contends that ideology constructs a relatively coherent system of meanings while others deem it fragmented and internally contradictory. For example, Volosinov (1973: 92) does not restrict the use of the term ideology to structured systems of signification but refers to the “lowest stratum of behavioral ideology” that is deficient in coherence. In a similar vein, Therbon (1980: viii) compares it to “the cacophony of sounds and signs of a big city street than... the text serenely communicating with the solitary reader or the teacher... addressing a quiet, domesticated audience”.

Another, most commonly recognised strand negates the universality of ideology and strongly embeds it in the material and practical reality of human life. Thus, ideology is seen as representing the interests of a particular social group rather than an independent individual. The third approach, evolving from the second one, explicitly points to the relatedness of ideology to social, political and economic aspects of power. This strand recognises ideology as “ideas, discourse, or signifying practices, in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power” (Woolard, 1998: 7). In this sense, ideology might act to maintain the dominating power or contest it. However, in some more radi-

cal views ideology is seen as the attribute of only those in power who exercise it to sustain “asymmetrical relations of power” and maintain “domination... by disguising, legitimating, or distorting those relations” (Thomson, 1984: 4). From this perspective, cultural representations or practices of subordinate groups do not qualify as ideological. The conceptualisation of ideology as being subservient to power is also shared by Fairclough (1995b: 14):

I understand ideology as ‘meaning in the service of power’ (Thompson, 1984, 1990) – ideologies are propositions that generally figure as implicit assumption in texts, which contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of dominance.

The fourth conceptualisation of ideology, in fact very similar to the third one, is centred on distortion that mainly arises from the protection of interests and power of the dominating group. Distortion is, in fact, focal in the Marxist tradition; it originated in Marx and Engels’s *The German ideology* where they formulated their criticism of “Young Hegelian” philosophers. Probably, their most recognised conceptualisation of ideology as illusion is that of “false consciousness” generated by the ruling classes defined as “producers of ideas” regulating their production and dissemination (Marx and Engels, 1986; after Garzone and Sarangi, 2007: 14). Accordingly, ideology understood as false consciousness, firmly enrooted in the material structure of the capitalist society, is realised through discourse that is used, often in a manipulative and deceptive way, to ensure the position of the ruling classes. Ideology seen as distortion is also contained in Marx and Engels’s metaphor of *camera obscura*, which represents the world upside-down (Marx and Engels, 1986) and, as a result, misinterprets it.

Despite the fact that the concept of ideology did not stem from Marxism, it might be nevertheless regarded as one of the key terms in the broadly understood Marxist tradition. A representative collection of the most important Marxist-oriented works is contained in a volume edited by Eagleton (1994), featuring seminal contributions of e.g. Williams, Habermas, Gouldner, Elster, Geertz and others. Raymond Williams (1977), one of the most prominent British post-war thinkers, specifies three distinctive but most common versions of the concept:

- (i) A system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
- (ii) A system of illusory beliefs – false ideas or false consciousness – which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;
- (iii) The general process of the production of meanings and ideas. (Williams, 1977: 55)

As Williams (1977) further purports, senses (i) and (ii) can be successfully combined in order to legitimise and strengthen the dominant position of the ruling class and secure their interests. Over the course of time, surface-level

discursive practices transcend the “habitus” of a particular group and gain cultural and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991).

Based on psychological and sociological criteria, Geertz (1973) classifies the main approaches to the study of ideology into the “interest theory” and the “strain theory”. The Marxist-oriented tradition might be categorised as the “interest theory” that embraces idea-systems deriving from the social structure and accentuating the motivations of groups sharing such idea-systems, which are in turn dependent on their social class (1973: 201-202). The “strain theory”, on the other hand, departs from the idea of “chronic malintegration” of society that is characterised by insoluble antinomies (e.g. liberty vs. political order, stability vs. change, precision vs. flexibility, etc.) as well as discontinuities between norms in various sectors of society. For example, the existence of certain social organisations is legitimised by different goals: businesses are oriented towards productivity and profit while universities at generation and dissemination of knowledge. Such discrepancies naturally lead to certain social frictions that remain pervasive and impossible to solve. In this context, ideology is defined as a “patterned reaction to the patterned strains of a social role” (Sutton et al., 1956: 307-308) which plays four major functions that Geertz (1973: 204-205) dubs the “cathartic explanation”, the “morale explanation”, the “solidarity explanation”, and the “advocatory explanation” (Geertz, 1973). First and foremost, it relieves emotional tension by projecting itself onto symbolic adversaries. Secondly, ideology acts as a shield protecting individuals from the effects of chronic strain, by either rejecting or legitimising it in reference to higher values. Additionally, it helps to construct a social group or class and integrate it. Finally, it allows for the articulation of the strains and, by bringing them to light, attracts public interest.

Although the interest theory is nowadays commonly associated with ideology, in Geertz’s view it is too simplistic and fails to “cope with the complexity of the interaction among social, psychological, and cultural factors it itself uncovered”. The main demerit of the strain theory lies in “the virtual absence... of anything more than the most rudimentary conception of the processes of symbolic formulation” and the link between causes and effects of ideology “... is passed over in virtual silence” (ibidem).

4.2.1. Discourse vs. ideology

The Marxist tradition has particularly informed discourse and communication studies, especially those following the framework of CDA. As Garzone and Sarangi (2007: 17) put it, “ideologies in discourse are intended as patterns of linguistic use aimed at (re)producing unequal power relations between

producers and consumers of text and talk". In the critical perspective, ideology is seen as "a modality of power" rather than a certain worldview shared by particular social groups irrespective of power relations between or within such groups (Fairclough, 2003b: 9). Thus, the main concern of the critical discourse analyst is an identification of the ideological effects of a particular text – more specifically, how particular texts inculcate, sustain or change ideology (Fairclough, 2003b; Eagleton, 1994; Thompson, 1984; van Dijk, 1998).

Terry Eagleton (1994) views ideology as a discursive or semiotic phenomenon primarily concerned with meaning rather than a representation of particular ideas or patterns of behaviour. This perception resonates with Stuart Hall's (1997) concept of representation. According to Hall, the power to ascribe meaning to given events is an ideological power that cannot be qualified as neutral. Quite the opposite, it might be interpreted as a battlefield, where the victory of particular ideas depends on the politics of signification. In practical terms, it translates into the advantage of the dominant groups holding power that have access to resources, enabling them to expound on their interest in a more effective and convincing way in order to maintain their status (cf. Budinsky and Bryant, 2013: 210).

The relations between ideology and power resonate with particular strength in Fairclough's works. Fairclough (1992b: 67) actually epitomises ideology with meanings "generated within power relations as a dimension of the exercise of power". Defined as "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation", ideologies might be "enacted" in social action" and "(...) 'inculcated' in the identities of social agents" (Fairclough, 2003b: 9). Moreover, ideologies feature a certain durability and stability that permeate individual texts or bodies of texts and might be related to "discourses (as representations), with genres (as enactments), and with styles (as inculcations)" (Fairclough, 2003b: 9).

The contrast between discourse and ideology is addressed by Roger Fowler, a critical linguist, who dubs the former a system of representation of the world and the latter a representation of experience:

A 'Discourse' is speech or writing seen from the point of view of the beliefs, values and categories which it embodies; these beliefs etc. constitute a way of looking at the world, an organization or representation of experience – 'ideology' in the neutral non-pejorative sense. Different modes of discourse encode different representations of experience; and the source of these representations is the communicative context within which the discourse is embedded. (Fowler, cited in Hawthorn, 1992: 48; after Mills, 2004: 5)

Van Dijk posits discourse as a carrier of ideologies which "are largely acquired, spread, and reproduced by text and talk" (van Dijk, 2013: 175).

Apparently, the notions of discourse and ideology overlap in certain respects. Nevertheless, there are essential differences between them. First of all, Volosinov (1973) points to the generative nature of language and the changeability and adaptability of signs that are vulnerable to ideology but not synonymous with it. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) view ideology as discursively constructed and emphasise its key role in the construction of hegemony. Their perception of ideology stands in opposition to its Marxist definition as “false consciousness” because our accessibility of the real world is only possible through discursive systems of representation. In their view, ideology and objective discourse cannot be told apart as they both aim at disguising the political processes that legitimise a particular social order.

Some scholars, however, opt for a less restricted view of ideology leaning towards Williams’s (1983) definition of ideology as an element in the process of meaning making. For example, by taking a multidisciplinary perspective and relating ideology to cognition, society and discourse, van Dijk (1998) does not restrict the perception of ideology to the narrow context of power relations. First of all, in his view, ideologies are not bound to be “dominant” or “negative” as the theory of ideology accounts for a broader and more flexible interpretation of the notion. Such a perception, though, does not negate critical analysis of negative or dominant ideologies since the very aim of critical approaches is to unveil ideological foundations of dominance and power abuse (van Dijk, 2000: 8).

Moreover, dominant ideology does not involve its absolute acceptance as it is usually complemented by some form of resistance (Pennycook, 2007; van Dijk, 2008; after Holborow, 2012: 30). In fact, Gramsci (1971) contends that people may have contradictory beliefs: the ones that reinforce the status quo, and those that reject it. According to Holborow (2012: 30): “Contradiction lies at the heart of both the construction of an ideology and how it is received”. For this reason, ideology is vulnerable and responsive to real world-events since “it is not ideology that changes the structure but vice versa” (Gramsci, 1971: 376). In other words, people’s acceptance of particular ideology is not fixed as it is primarily motivated by real circumstances and events.

Van Dijk strongly rejects deeply enrooted pejorative connotations attached to ideology. As the scholar purports, ideologies are not held by the dominating groups in order to assure their privileged position but are also shared by the dominated, oppositional groups, as their main tool used for struggle and resistance. Additionally, ideology is not only restricted to the domain of power and dominance. It might also be related to certain professional, institutional or any other groups in society, dubbed by van Dijk “interest groups”, represented by their common “identity, activities, goals, norms and values,

social position and resources goals" (1995: 140). For this reason, van Dijk's interpretation seems particularly applicable to the use of discourse in professional settings.

4.2.1.1. Specialised discourse and ideology

In view of the most recognised CDA scholars, namely Fairclough, van Dijk and Wodak, discourse cannot be classified as either "ideological" or "non-ideological" since ideology is manifested in all types of discourse. The only difference in this respect pertains to the degree of such manifestations (cf. Garzone and Sarangi, 2007: 18). As Fairclough (1992b: 91) puts it:

[...] all discourse is not irredeemably ideological. [...] the fact that all types of discourse are open in principle, and no doubt to some extent in fact, in our society to ideological investment does not mean that all types of discourse are ideologically invested to the same degree.

The potential ideological orientation of discourse is also recognised by Lemke (1995) and Hodge and Kress (1993). Similarly, Garzone and Sarangi (2007: 20) note that "the acceptance of a notion of language and discourse as inherently ideological involves, for one thing, the idea that communication in discourse can never be totally neutral". At one end, ideology is almost epitomised with the notions of the culture or a particular worldview; while at the other, it "takes the form of group-specific social and political frames and systems of beliefs interwoven in discourse" (ibidem).

Following the assumption that all types of discourse are inherently ideological should naturally lead to the conclusion that discourse in professional settings, referred to herein as specialised discourse²⁰, is also underlain by a certain ideology(ies). This aspect has been emphasised by Volosinov who states that:

²⁰ The term "specialized discourse" has been adapted from Gotti (2003: 24) who defines it as "the specialized use of language in contexts that are typical of a specialized community stretching across the academic, the professional, the technical and the occupational areas of knowledge and practice". Some scholars use another competitive term (e.g. Gunnarson et al., 2007; Kong, 2014) – "professional discourse" – in reference to the use of discourse in broadly understood "professional domains". Such areas embrace a large spectrum of professional fields related to medicine, law, academia, science and social welfare that are characterized by "a unique set of cognitive needs, social conditions and relationships with society at large" (Gunnarson et al., 2007: 5). Kong (2014: 2), however, notes that the notion of professional discourse is also used in a narrow sense, when restricted to legal and medical contexts. Therefore, in order to avoid possible ambiguities, the author of the present volume has decided to use the term "specialized discourse" that is to a large extent synonymous with "professional discourse" understood as any use of language in broad professional contexts, including communication between laymen and professionals.

Each field possesses its own ideological material and formulates signs and symbols specific to itself and not applicable in other fields. In these instances, a sign is created by some specific ideological function and remains inseparable from it. A word, in contrast, is neutral with respect to any specific ideological function. It can carry out ideological functions of any kind – scientific, aesthetic, ethical and religious. (Volosinov, 1973: 14)

This stance is also shared by Garzone and Sarangi (2007), who point to specific ideological dimensions of specialised discourse. The authors refer to, often implicitly, values and norms shared or rejected by a particular group in society or a wider cultural circle that naturally leak into discourse. Nowadays our society has been mostly affected by a Western worldview, centred on capitalism and democracy as the only acceptable economic and political systems. As far as a particular ideology is concerned in this respect, special mention is owed to neoliberalism and New Capitalism that are of particular importance in the corporate setting and will be further elaborated on in the remainder of this chapter. In our contemporary, globalised, knowledge- and information-based society, language and discourse have gained key importance which is reflected by the central role of promotion and advertising, the use of new technologies and the WWW to communicate. Consequently, as Garzone and Sarangi (2007: 25) argue, “the new capitalist system is by necessity discourse-led”. Moreover, the economic domain has colonised other traditionally non-economic domains.

Another important element commonly ascribed to specialised discourse is its presumed objectivity, neutrality, impersonality and non-involvement (Gotti, 2003: 33-37). Gotti (2008: 9) observes that the perception of specialised discourse by the wider public is rather contradictory. On the one hand, it is criticised for being complex and obscure, “incomprehensible to the layman”, on the other, it exerts a persuasive effect on the audience (e.g. in advertising messages) and makes the messages come across as more objective and truthful. The presumption of objectivity evoked by specialised discourse is materialised into “scientific” ideology based on the absolute truthfulness and objectivity of scientific knowledge (Beaugrande, 1999: §4-7). At the lexical level, such discourse is characterised by monoreferentiality, lack of emotion, precision, transparency, conciseness, and conservatism (Gotti, 2008: 33-41). As far as the syntactic options are concerned, it involves the frequent use of the passive voice, depersonalisation, omission of phrasal elements, expressive conciseness, premodification, nominalisation, lexical density, complex and lengthy sentences (Gotti, 2008: 67-101). Garzone and Sarangi (2007: 23) observe, however, that in recent years linguistic research has revealed that these linguistic choices are also accompanied by a range of more sophisticated covert or less fre-

quent overt strategies intended to modify the author's commitment, control the audience's reaction and identify the author's attitude towards the content of their own discourse.

4.2.1.2. Corporate discourse and ideology

Organisational discourse, represented among others by corporate discourse, falls into the broader category of specialised discourse (cf. Garzone and Sarangi, 2007: 24). Thus, in this volume corporate discourse is understood as a subcategory of specialised discourse, narrowed to the corporate contexts and embracing "the overall communicative activity of the company on a variety of levels" (Breeze, 2013: 23). As such, it is comprised of a plethora of spoken and written genres as well as "discourses" (e.g. promotional, informative or legitimatory). Following Gee (1996: viii), these discourses are "ways of being in the world", representing accepted modes of behaviour, cognition, interaction, and communication. Put together, all these integrated forms of communication or "discourses" form a "discourse system" (Scollon and Scollon, 2001). A particular discourse system embraces everything that can be expressed in a given domain and involves sharing a particular ideological framework, socialisation of its members, favoured discourse (e.g. genres, strategies, lexicon), acting as "symbols of membership and a structured system of relationships, both in the domain and with outsiders" (Breeze, 2013: 23). In this vein, corporate discourse is not limited to texts or genres but is rather a discourse system that is dynamic and evolving. These qualities might be exemplified by the incorporation of social responsibility and sustainability discourses into a corporate communication agenda.

As far as the ideological foundations of Western corporate discourse are concerned, they are rooted, similarly to specialised discourse, in utilitarian ideology (Scollon and Scollon, 2001), individualism, empiricism, rationalism, democracy, materialism, technologism and consumerism (Breeze, 2013: 24). Garzone and Sarangi (2007: 24) discern, however, three more ideological facets underpinning corporate discourse:

[t]races of an organization's concept of its own authoritativeness; discursive patterns aimed at self-justification; and leakages from the broad ideological framework on which the existence of institutions themselves rests (...).

Based on the principle that "discourses structure both our sense of reality and our notion of our own identity" (Mills, 2004: 13), modern business organisations are nowadays forced by the public opinion to verify their identities and key goals by bringing in the issues of social responsibility and sustain-

ability, often at the sake of their profitability²¹. This explicates the escalation of legitimacy discourses that materialise in companies' efforts to present their alignment with public environmental concerns and thereby taking a green stand in order to prove their accountability. In general, corporate discourse is ideological, predominantly in the sense that it plays a self-serving function consisting in promoting a company and legitimising its existence and activity.

Based on the assumption that ideologies correspond to group identity (van Dijk, 1998: 120) and are shaped by group-schemata categories, especially "the principle of ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation", van Dijk (1995: 146) postulates that discourse meanings are influenced by ideologies that typically address the following set of questions:

Identity: Who are We? Who do (do not) belong to US?

Activities: What We do? What are Our activities? What is expected of US

Goals: What are the goals of these activities?

Norms and values: What norms and values do We respect in such activities?

Group relations: To which groups are We related: Who are our friends and enemies?

Resources: What are the resources We typically have – or do not have – (privileged) access to? (van Dijk, 1995: 146; van Dijk, 2013: 178).

In fact, van Dijk (2013: 187) proposes to employ the above categories as a general *ideology schema* that "organizes the fundamental beliefs of an ideological group and hence may also be seen as the structure of the overall self-image of the group as well as its relations to other groups". For this reason, van Dijk's ideology schema appears particularly relevant to analyse ideological aspects of corporate identity discourse.

The first category of *identity* addresses the questions of "who are We, where do We come from, what are Our properties what is Our history, how are We different from Others" and specifying the criteria of group admission for others (van Dijk, 1995: 148), strongly resonates with the key elements of corporate identity discourse contained in the corporate webpage cybergenre, represented by the following categories in the "About us" section: "Who we are" and "Our history". Typically, the tone of self-identity descriptions is overwhelmingly positive. As van Dijk (1995: 148) purports, ideological activity descriptions play a particular role for groups who define themselves by what they (e.g. professionals) do. For this reason, they are of utmost importance for any type of organisations that need to legitimise their existence by the tasks and activities they perform. Corporations explicitly inform the

²¹ See chapter 2 for a more elaborate discussion on this issue.

public about their scope of activity, usually in the “What we do” section of their “About us” page. Activities might have an ideological dimension if their goals are immensely positive. Goal-descriptions reveal how groups and their members perceive themselves and want to be perceived by others (ibidem). For this reason, they simultaneously play a role in communicating corporate identity and constructing the desired image.

Nowadays, corporate goals are rarely restricted to their business activity and companies tend to pathetically position themselves as benefactors to the whole of humanity (see Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2013). Such goals are contained in the “our aims/goals” sections as well as mission statements. Norms and values play a central role in the ideological discourse. They delineate a symbolic compass guiding the goals and actions of a particular group and might also be contrasted with the norms and values of the opposing group (ibidem). Norms and values descriptions play a particularly significant role in contemporary corporate discourse. They are usually expressed in “Our values” as well as CSR and corporate sustainability sections (see chapter 2). Another aspect of identity are the relations of a particular group with other groups (ibidem). In the corporate context it usually involves the stipulation of a company’s stakeholders, embracing internal (employees) and external (clients, suppliers, investors, the general public, authorities, etc.) audiences. Finally, ideological discourse also focuses on the access of a particular group to resources (e.g. status, jobs, housing, income, etc.). Van Dijk (1995: 149) asserts that:

Some social groups are primarily defined in terms of their access or non-access to resources, such as the rich and the poor, the unemployed and the homeless, and in general the Haves and the Have-nots. At this point, we may expect elaborate semantic strategies that aim to defend (or attack) privileged access (the right) to resources, that emphasize a natural control of such resources, and so on.

Corporations are usually in a privileged position in terms of their access to a range of resources, including the physical access to natural resources and a workforce, economic resources, and, in the more symbolic dimension, access to power and knowledge. In fact, in the twenty-first century corporations have gained unprecedented welfare and importance compared to that of whole countries. Maintaining this position in the face of fierce global competition involves strenuous efforts materialised not only in actions but also through intense discursive practices aimed mainly at communicating a company’s identity and legitimising its actions and existence. In this context, the ideological underpinning of corporate discourse might be almost taken for granted. Hence, van Dijk’s ideology schema seems particularly relevant to the study of the ideological aspects of corporate identity discourse.

4.3. Critical Discourse Analysis

Investigating ideological aspects of discourse lies at the very core of CDA, along with the concepts of power, dominance, inequality and resistance. The manifold philosophical and linguistic foundations of CDA are grounded in certain tenets of social theory as well as psychology, discourse analysis, text linguistics, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics. The roots of CDA are indeed varied. One of the most important tenets for CDA, at least for some of its representatives, is Marxism and its critique of capitalism, especially the exploitation of the working class, historical dialectical method, definition of language and the positioning of ideology as the “superstructure of civilization” (Marx and Engels, 1986). CDA has also been informed by the Frankfurt School critical theory and its rejection of any form of domination, the Gramscian concept of hegemony (1971) and Hallidayan systemic-functional linguistics. Additionally, CDA has been influenced by Habermas’s (1991) theory of communicative action and the works of Foucault, Bourdieu, and Giddens (cf. Huckin et al., 2012). Such a wide spectrum of the field’s theoretical underpinning might be simultaneously interpreted as its blessing and a curse. Some authors consider CDA’s heterogeneity and openness a strength (e.g. Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Weiss and Wodak, 2002), while others express their reservations, which might, in fact, apply to any eclectic framework, e.g.: “Lack of coherence, indiscriminate mixing of incompatible concepts, unsystematic application of methods, and so on” (Breeze, 2011: 502).

Critical linguistics, originated in the UK in the 1970s and developed by such prominent scholars as Gunther Kress, Roger Fowler, Bob Hodge, and other followers of M. A. K. Halliday, might be considered the predecessor of CDA. CDA, however, took a broader perspective by incorporating the developments of social, cognitive and rhetorical theory into its scope of study. The development of CDA was primarily benchmarked by the milestone publications of Norman Fairclough, especially his *Language and Power* in 1989, as well as the foundation of van Dijk’s *Discourse and Society* in 1990 – the field’s flagship journal. The emergence of the new domain was finally signed and sealed in Amsterdam in January 1991 by the organisation of a symposium on the part of its founders, i.e. Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Gunther Kress, Teun van Dijk, and Theo van Leeuwen (cf. Huckin et al., 2012; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). In the course of time, CDA evolved in a range of different directions and some of its founding fathers (e.g. Kress and Scollon) later followed an alternative path in their academic investigations.

CDA is nowadays a firmly established and recognisable, yet multifaceted, approach to language study or a “program” (Wodak, 2011: 50). What differentiates CDA from other approaches is its special focus on power and social

relations, based on the unequal distribution of power that are reflected and shaped by language. Accordingly, Norman Fairclough, one of the field's most prominent theorists and practitioners, defined CDA as:

[d]iscourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor in securing power and hegemony. (Fairclough, 1995a: 133)

Fairclough's (1995a) definition is constructed on the premise that discursive practices are constitutive of and are constituted by social practices, which corresponds with the views expressed by e.g. Foucault (1972), Reisigl and Wodak (2009), Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). The CDA's scope of interest is specified in a similar vein by Ruth Wodak, another leading CDA researcher, who defines it in the following way:

CDA [is] fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use. (Wodak, 2011: 53)

Luke (2002) points to the embeddedness of CDA in linguistics and social sciences that requires at least a two-fold analysis of any text, focusing on its linguistic and broader social aspects.

CDA involves a principled and transparent shunting backwards and forth between the microanalysis of texts using varied tools of linguistic, semiotic and literary analysis, and the macroanalysis of social formations, institutions and power relations that these texts index and construct. (Luke, 2002: 100)

In the light of the above definitions, CDA studies linguistic and semiotic aspects of texts from a larger socio-political perspective in order to account for the possible power abuse and its legitimisation induced by these texts.

Van Dijk (2015: 466) defines CDA as "discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context". Accordingly, the scholar dubs CDA *dissident research* as it involves the engagement of the researcher who discloses any form of social inequality and takes a stand against it. Due to this overt involvement on the part of the researcher, van Dijk sees CDA as "a *social movement* of politically committed discourse analysts". Van Dijk's definition of CDA accentuates the political agenda of the researcher that underlies, drives and, finally, shapes their research and takes little notice of its theoretical and methodological aspects.

A greater emphasis on the methodological aspects of CDA and applicability of research results might be identified in van Leeuwen's (2006) definition presented below:

Critical discourse analysis is founded on the insight that text and talk play a key role in maintaining and legitimating inequality, injustice and oppression in society. It employs discourse analysis to show how this is done, and it seeks to spread awareness of this aspect of language use in society, and to argue explicitly for change on the basis of its findings. (van Leeuwen, 2006: 294).

In the editor's introduction to a voluminous collection of the field's most remarkable papers, Wodak (2013) refers to the definition of CDA provided by the University of Texas that draws on postmodern theory and deconstructionism.

[...] rather than providing a particular method, Discourse Analysis can be characterized as a way of approaching and thinking about a problem. In this sense, Discourse Analysis is neither a qualitative nor a quantitative research method, but a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research methods. [...] Expressed in today's more trendy vocabulary, Critical Discourse Analysis is nothing more than a deconstructive reading and interpretation of a problem or text [...]. Discourse Analysis is meant to provide a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and ourselves and, therefore, enable us to solve concrete problems [...]. (Discourse Analysis, The University of Texas; cited in Wodak, 2013: xx).

Even though the above definition of CDA would be challenged by some CDA researchers, it points to an important dimension of CDA positioned as a meta-approach to a vast array of problems – not exclusively limited to linguistic ones – that might be characterised as “quite intuitive”, “unsystematic” and “solely hermeneutic” (Wodak, 2013: xx). The postmodern embedding of CDA is seen in overt references to Derrida's deconstructionism and the flagship terms of postmodernism, such as, e.g. relativity, fragmentation, hybridity of the world, which might only be subjectively interpreted through the prism of the surrounding social reality and the dominant discourse.

The above overview of CDA definitions is by no means exhaustive, mainly due to space limitations. The author is, however, fully aware of the multitude of approaches within CDA contributed by Fairclough (1995a), Fowler (1991), van Dijk (2001), the Viennese “discourse historical school” developed by Wodak (2007), a French school of CDA traced in the developments of Pêcheux (1982) and works inspired by Bakhtin (cf. Wodak, 2011). The diversity and complexity of the field is also well illustrated by the recent collection of CDA papers contained in four capacious volumes edited by Wodak (2013), embracing the field's seminal articles (vol. 1), as well as new developments exemplified by methodological considerations (vol. 2), case

studies (vol. 3) and current debates (vol. 4). Yet, in present volume the term CDA will be used in its general-inclusive sense in reference to any work within the CDA paradigm.

One of the most essential tenets of CDA is its problem-orientation that requires interdisciplinarity and eclecticism. The interdisciplinarity of CDA has been emphasised, for example, by Tischer, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter (2000: 146) who consider it as a discipline primarily dealing with “social problems” rather than “language or language use per se, but with linguistic character of social processes and structures”. Hence, CDA to a large extent blurred the boundaries of the once separate disciplines of linguistics, traditionally investigating text and interactions at a micro level, and sociology, studying social change and practice (cf. Fairclough, 2003b). CDA, in fact, combines the interactional and structural aspects of social life (cf. Fairclough, 1995a). The “constitutive problem-oriented interdisciplinary approach” of CDA does, in fact, distinguish it from Discourse Studies (Wodak, 2013: xxi).

Furthermore, CDA involves unveiling ideologies and power by means of “*retroductable* investigation of semiotic data” that embraces written, spoken or visual discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 3). Furthermore, CDA research exposes the researcher’s standpoint and interest as well as reflection pertaining to the research process with a simultaneous observance of the scientific methodological regime. It must be stressed here, though, that CDA has never been a single theory of methodology. Quite the contrary, due to the heterogeneity of its theoretical and methodological approaches, CDA is seen as a program (Wodak and Meyer, 2009) or “a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis” (van Dijk, 1993: 131). As van Dijk (2001: 96) has put it, CDA is “a critical perspective that might be in all areas of discourse studies” or “discourse study *with an attitude*” rather than a uniform perspective in the study of discourse. Van Dijk does not even attempt to expose CDA’s objectivity but emphatically confirms its social engagement: “CDA does not deny, but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical positions. That is, CDA is biased – and proud of it” (ibidem).

CDA has undoubtedly secured its position as one of the dominating paradigms for scrutinising the ideological aspects of discourse. Nevertheless, despite its promising and copious offerings, it has also attracted certain criticism related to its theoretical underpinning and methodological flaws. A comprehensive summary of the most frequently raised criticism has been provided by Breeze (2011), who has discerned seven problematic aspects of CDA that should be taken into account by CDA researchers. Accordingly, Breeze (2011 520-521) argues that CDA criticism is particularly targeted at the following elements:

1. Political commitment of CDA researchers that must always be taken into account in interpreting their work.
2. Eclecticism that mystifies the underlying theoretical framework.
3. Lack of methodological rigour that might be summarised in the following words: "The framework may be sound, the method appears promising, but in practice much CDA research has deep methodological flaws" (Breeze, 2011: 520).
4. Too little focus of researchers on the language data.
5. Inadequate theory of text reception by the audience that is often taken for granted by the researcher rather than verified.
6. Focus on the macro context at the cost of the features of immediate context ignored that leads to inappropriate pragmatic interpretations or their irrelevance to participants.
7. An overwhelmingly negative slant of CDA research focused on identifying ideological aspects of discourse aimed at legitimising the unequal distribution of power in society that might be seen as advancing "a deterministic vision of society" (Breeze, 2011: 521).

The voiced criticism has also pointed to the need for identifying and promoting discourses dubbed emancipatory or pertaining to positive aspects of human social activity (Breeze, 2011; Martin, 2004). Apparently, it would be rather naïve to think that discourse in general can be devoid of any ideological dimension. Following Beaugrande (1999: §8), Garzone and Sarangi (2007: 26) purport that an ideology, similarly to a scientific theory, might be replaced by another one. Alternatively, all ideologies might be substituted with "an ideology that gives salience to the ecology of communication" (*ibidem*). As the scholars conclude:

This is why the unveiling of ideological threads in all forms of specialized and institutional communication – written or oral, face-to-face, or indirect, individual or organizational – is so important, as the idea that the advancement of ecological practices and behavior remains a priority. (Garzone and Sarangi, 2007: 26)

Garzone and Sarangi's call has been to a large extent echoed in ecolinguistics that, among others, attempts to promote ecologically beneficial discourses. In fact, I posit that ecolinguistics offers a new paradigm of discourse analysis that rebuts substantial criticism targeted at CDA, especially on the grounds of its political orientation bias. As far as the understanding of ideology is concerned, it resonates with van Dijk's perspective, which does not limit it to the constraints of the power-domination paradigm, but sets it in the context of the struggle of competing discourses.

4.4. Ecological Discourse Analysis

As has already been shown in section 1.5.3, ecolinguistics and CDA are both oriented towards identifying injustice, hegemony and inequality in discourse. These problems are primarily concerned with the uneven distribution of power and resources in society that underlies the neo-Marxist perspective. CDA, however, ignores ecology-related issues, which became particularly important in the second half of the 20th century. Thus, an ecolinguistic perspective is much broader than CDA as it goes beyond the socio-cultural foundation of society and assumes its ecological embedding (cf. Stibbe, 2010; Biersack, 2006). Such an orientation of ecolinguistics is naturally reflected in its approach to discourse studies, centred on identifying the impact of the discourses on ecosystems understood as “the system which supports life” (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014: 104). Even though discourses and their impact on ecosystems are essential in ecolinguistics, the discipline itself is not concomitant merely with “discourse analysis” as it studies discourses within a particular ecological framework. In order to contrast the newly-emerged field from DA or CDA, Alexander and Stibbe (ibidem) put forward the term “Ecological Discourse Analysis” that accounts for the specificity of discourse analysis embedded in the ecolinguistic framework.

Stibbe (2015: 111-119) has discerned five areas of discourse studies that have become core to ecolinguistics. Primarily, the interest of ecolinguistics is not only limited to the impact of discourses on the relations between people, but is also inclusive of the treatment of “the larger ecological systems that life depends on” by humans (ibidem: 118). Secondly, discourse analysts investigate how certain linguistic means shape worldviews or “cultural codes”, defined by Gavriely-Nuri (2012: 80) as “a compact package of shared values, norms, ethos and social beliefs... [which] constructs and reflects the community’s ‘common sense’”. This might be exemplified by the omnipresent code positioning economic growth as an attainable target for societies. Thirdly, particular worldviews or ideologies are analysed from the perspective of the assumed ecological philosophy or ecosophy that is either made explicit or implicit. In the light of Stibbe’s (2014: 119) definition:

An ecosophy is informed by both a scientific understanding of how organisms (including humans) depend on interactions with other organisms and a physical environment to survive and flourish, and also an ethical framework to decide why survival and flourishing matters and whose survival and flourishing matters.

Furthermore, ecolinguistics attempts to detect and highlight discourses that are qualified as ecologically destructive (i.e. violate the principles of the accepted ecosophy) or, vice versa, identify and endorse discourses that

comply with the ecosophy and are potentially capable of safeguarding and maintaining “the conditions that preserve life” (ibidem). Finally, ecolinguistic discourse studies also have a deep practical dimension as they aim to raise critical language awareness by pointing to the role played by language in deconstructing or protecting the environment (ibidem).

As mentioned earlier, ecolinguistics analyses discourses within a particular ecological framework but it is not limited to the study of environmental discourses. It actually takes a broader perspective and analyses the multifaceted impact of discourses on ecosystems. Ecological frameworks or “ecosophies” (Næss, 1995) might be interpreted as a set of philosophical assumptions accepted by the researcher and made explicit to the audience that is able to identify the criteria applied by a discourse analyst. These assumptions typically embrace values pertaining, e.g. to the value of life, as well conditions securing that the expected outcomes of the assumed values will occur, e.g. biodiversity (ibidem).

Stibbe (2015: 11) asserts that a selection of a particular framework lies in the hands of each ecolinguist and reflects their individual value system and preferences concerning an array of relationships between humans and other organisms and the environment. Due to the potential diversity of individual ecosophies embracing “norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements *and* hypotheses concerning the state of affairs” (Næss, 1995: 8), prescribing a particular “adequate” ecosophy seems futile.

Despite the possible multiplicity of tenets underlying an ecosophy, Stibbe (ibidem: 12) identifies three spectra that particular frameworks align with: (1) anthropocentric vs. ecocentric; (2) neoliberal vs. socialist, localist, or anarchist or other; (3) optimistic vs. pessimistic. The spectra tend to form specific patterns that group a neoliberal outlook with anthropocentric and optimistic orientations, in contrast to radical approaches slanted towards ecocentrism and pessimism. The extreme polarisation of these orientations might be exemplified by two different frameworks. At one end of the spectrum, Stibbe (ibidem) discerns “cornucopianism” as the most politically conservative framework promoting human centredness and ingenuity translating into technological advancements, which are believed to overcome environmental problems. Accordingly, it promotes unlimited speedy progress that is expected to bring positive outcomes exclusively to humans (e.g. Lomborg, 2001; Ridley, 2010). This approach dramatically differs from the “sustainable development” approach (Baker, 2006) at the other end of the spectrum that endeavours to integrate economic growth, environmental protection and social justice. There also exist some more radical approaches, e.g. social ecology (Bookchin, 2005), which find parallels between environmental problems and “oppressive social hierarchies”, i.e. point to analogies between the exploita-

tion of nature by humans and the exploitation of humans by each other. In a similar vein, ecofeminism (Adams and Gruen, 2014) recognises resemblances between the exploitation of the planet by humans and male domination of the female as sources of environmental crisis.

Arne Naess (1973) viewed ecosophy as a profound personal concern and responsibility for the planet and identification with nature. Gary Snyder, the American poet and ecocritic, has created his own ecosophy by integrating and extending deep and social ecology (Messersmith-Glavin, 2012). Quite a different ecosophy was, however, developed by Guattari (2008), who ascribed agentive roles both to humans and nonhumans that might play the roles of subjects, objects or be placed somewhere in-between. Such a destabilisation of roles leads to instability of identity and relationships. Leaving the comfort zone that might inspire creating something new, e.g. a new sociopolitical system, which could replace predatory capitalism, affecting all walks of life, Guattari argues that all registers are interrelated and sees a connection between the production of material goods and social and cultural production. Greenhalgh-Spencer (2014: 325) observes that in Guattari's (2008) view "our world is produced through the interaction of discourse, human practice and materialities". For this reason, his ecosophy puts strong emphasis on evaluating and analysing the material aspects of the world, including technology, as elements that both form humans and are formed by them.

Inspired by Naess (1995), Stibbe (2015: 14) has expressed his ecosophy in one word: *Living!* The core values and assumptions in his ecosophy encompass: valuing living, the wellbeing of all species, the now and the future, care, environmental limits, social justice and resilience. The tenets of Stibbe's (2015) ecosophy draw primarily on: (a) deep ecology in taking its ecocentric perspective; (b) social ecology in its orientation toward social justice; (c) sustainable development in taking into account future generations; and (d) Transition and Dark Mountain Project in identifying and reacting to expected environmental change (ibidem 13-15). Stibbe (ibidem) also resorts to the ethics of care originating in feminist ethics (Peterson, 2001) and Plumwood's (2012: 81) "ecological animalism" promoting "respectful use" of nature. Additionally, Stibbe (ibidem: 15) emphasises the need for scientific evidence that should underlie the adopted ecological philosophy. As far as his own ecosophy is concerned, the scholar points to several studies (e.g. Alcamo and Bennet, 2003 UNEP, 2012; Stocker, 2014) providing evidence of environmental limits and ecological damage that need to be addressed and require reduction in consumption to prevent further destruction. Failing to undertake such measures will inevitably lead to ecological disaster:

[w]e know that we are rapidly exhausting what the earth can offer and that if the present growth and consumption trends continued unchecked, the limits to growth on the planet will be reached sometime within the next century. (Jhally, 2000: 5)

Additionally, Stibbe's (ibidem: 15) argument assuming that "care for other people and other species" is "strongly based on *intrinsic* or 'larger-than-self'", has been supported by Crompton's (2010) paper pointing to a correlation between intrinsic values and pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour, as well as a correlation between *extrinsic values* (e.g. pursuit of enrichment, status) and behaviours negatively affecting the environment.

The ecosophy underpinning this book to a great extent draws on Stibbe's (2015) ecosophy inspired by Næss (1995) and his concept of deep ecology. Therefore, it is ecocentric rather than anthropocentric. Due to the focus of the current work on the corporate setting, it also draws on and accentuates the perspective of "sustainable development" advanced by Baker (2006, 2016) that promotes a new environmentalist approach to social change. The sustainable development perspective might be dubbed realist as it aims at "creating an ecological society that lives in harmony with nature" and reconciles "economic activity, social progress and environmental protection" (Baker, 2006: 5). Accordingly, Baker (2006: 9-10) discerns three pillars of sustainable development that encompass:

- *The social*: this relates to human mores and values, relationships and institutions.
- *The economic*: this concerns the allocation and distribution of scarce resources.
- *The ecological*: this involves the contribution of both the economic and the social and their effect on the environment and its resources.

Importantly, Baker's (2006) model of sustainable development assumes that human well-being does not necessarily involve environmental destruction. It must be stressed here that this approach primarily focuses on society but it also addresses environmental concerns in modelling social changes through economic changes. The concept of sustainable development is dynamic and aims at "promoting" rather than "achieving" a certain status quo of social, political and economic development that is prone to be transformed over time (ibidem). Accordingly, the fundamental pillars of the assumed ecosophy are as follows:

- Reconciliation of the ecological, social, and economic dimensions of development.
- Orientation at the present and the future within the global perspective.
- Advancing a form of development that promotes social justice and economic inclusiveness.

- Focus on “the common future of the humankind” rather than upon “individual advancement”.
- Recognition of the planet’s “ecological capacity” and biophysical limits to growth that challenges exploitation of resources and enforces new sustainable consumption patterns (cf. Baker, 2006: 5).

The assumed ecosophy challenges the current “predatory” capitalism but cannot be considered as entirely anti-capitalist. It rather promotes its more “sustainable” version. Criticism is targeted predominantly at discourses of capitalism – particularly the neoliberal ones – that are seen as carrying ideologies violating the principles of ecosophy. It must be stressed here that a need for transformation and a turn towards a more inclusive economy and financial integrity has also been voiced by Christine Lagarde (e.g. 2016), the managing director of the International Monetary Fund – the institution commonly considered the stronghold of neoliberalism. The problem of rising socio-economic inequalities instigated by contemporary capitalism has been highlighted by Thomas Piketty (2014) in his best-selling book *Capital in the twenty-first century*.

In sum, the ecolinguistic analysis of ideology aims at investigating its effects on “the ecosystems that support life” (Stibbe, 2015: 24). Thus, it is by no means limited to the analysis of environmental discourses as it takes a wider perspective and scrutinises a range of discourses that affect society at large. The criteria specifying whether such outcomes are positive or negative are not objectively determined, since the analyst evaluates them in reference to their own ecosophy. From an ecolinguistic viewpoint, the most harmful discourses that should be resisted, are the hegemonic, pervasive discourses, violating the principles of the assumed ecosophy. In Stibbe’s (ibidem) nomenclature, which has also been followed in the present volume, such discourses are deemed *destructive*. The scope of interest of ecolinguistics is, however, not only limited to destructive discourses. It also investigates discourses that have an *ambivalent* or *beneficial* impact on ecosystems (ibidem).

4.4.1. Destructive discourses

From the perspective of ecolinguistics the most important discourses that should be opposed are those that pass on ideology that is firmly enrooted in the public sphere and contributes to ecological destruction. Stibbe (2015: 24) dubs such discourses “destructive” and his nomenclature will be adopted herein. The term embraces, in particular, discourses of economics, consumerism and advertising that convey messages violating the principles of ecosophy and bear a negative influence on life and sustainability.

The primacy among numerous destructive discourses should be given to *economics discourses* (Stibbe, 2015). Economics has indeed reached the status of a fetish in the modern world that acts as “the prime interpreter of society to its members, providing them with the concepts in terms of which they were able to define and legitimate their relationships to each other, to society and to nature” (Gare, 1996: 144). Economics discourses rarely make any direct references to nature but they might influence the character of man-nature relations that are typically based on human supremacy and the “legitimate” exploitation of natural resources.

For this reason, as already discussed in chapter 1, economics discourses have remained within the scope of ecolinguistics²², especially its critical strand, since the early days of the discipline. For example, Halliday (2001) criticises language that represents economic growth as the primary aim of society by contrasting language representations of unlimited growth with the finite resources of the planet. In a similar vein, Goatly (2000: 278) perceives growth as the main threat to the well-being of the planet and metaphorically refers to it as “cancer”. Chawla (2001: 119) points to the omnipresence of discourses that promote unlimited production and consumption, represented as indispensable elements of satisfaction and a sense of well-being that “is measured in terms of an uninterrupted growth of consumer goods and permanently rising levels of production and consumption”. The main premise underlying advertising messages is that personal satisfaction might be achieved through consumption. Apparently, the discourse of advertising instigates excessive consumption contributing to the continuing degradation of the environment. Thus, from the perspective of ecosophy developed by Stibbe, the discourse of advertising, or rather a group of advertising discourses narrating particular stories about the world, might be considered as most harmful to “sustaining life” on Earth.

Among stories bearing a particularly negative influence on the planet are those conveying a message encapsulated in the following statement: “PURCHASE OF A PRODUCT IS A SHORTCUT TO WELL-BEING” (Stibbe, 2015: 25). Such stories are constructed in accordance with a false assumption that activities or things capable of providing real satisfaction might be easily substituted with products. For example, sports cars are presented “as a substitute for freedom, junk food and soda as a substitute for excitement, ‘brands’ as a substitute for social identity, and pretty much everything as a substitute for

²² The negative impact of certain discourses, including neoliberal discourses, is also recognized by CDA scholars. For example, Fairclough (2006: 5) views them as lacking “practical adequacy” and points to their potential use “to create and sustain unjust or undemocratic positions and relations of power”. Thus, in the CDA perspective the negative effects of such discourses predominantly pertain to sociopolitical rather than ecological issues.

sex, itself a proxy for the intimacy that is so lacking in modern life.” (Eisenstein, 2013: 26). It must be noted that promises of satisfaction are realised not only verbally, but also visually (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 186). Alternatively, the purchase of a product might be positioned not as a substitute, but as the direct way leading to wellbeing (Stibbe, 2015: 26). For example, by the use of a lexical set associated with love, perfume shows a path to a loving relationship: “fragrance of love”, “journey of love”, “magic romance” (Gargan, 2007; cited after Stibbe, 2015: 27).

Stibbe (2015) also observes that the messages conveyed by advertisements are strengthened by lifestyle magazines and aspirational TV programs that stimulate excessive consumption and the purchase of unnecessary goods. They promote certain masculinity and femininity ideals and persuade the audience that their own sense of identity is based on possession or consumption of particular products (Slater, 2007; Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2006, 2015). Ideological aspects of advertising were extensively discussed by Williamson already back in the late 1970s (Williamson, 2002). The most frequently recurring theme is gender identity in advertising with a special focus on the exploitation of the female body (for literature review see Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2011, 2015). Selected ecolinguistic analyses also focus on the exploitation of animals in advertisements (e.g. Stibbe, 2015).

4.4.1.1. The discourse of neoclassical economics

Among hegemonic discourses that have a particularly negative effect on the environment special heed should be paid to the discourse of neoliberalism, criticised for “representing globalization, trade liberalization, and international competitiveness as inevitable and unstoppable phenomena, to which other things (such as workers’ rights and the environment) must be sacrificed (Fairclough, 2006)” (Stibbe, 2010: 412). Yet, the discussion on destructive discourses would be incomplete without a scrutiny of the concept of neoliberalism that has become one of the key words in the contemporary world. It has, indeed, dominated public discourse, especially its political and academic domains. In the majority of writings on neoliberalism (e.g. Bourdieu 1998a, b, 2001; Chomsky, 1999; Touraine, 2001), the concept is used pejoratively and identified with the expansion of global capitalism, consumerism, and the decline of the welfare state (Thorsen and Lie, 2007). A particularly severe criticism of neoliberalism and its effects has been provided by Giroux (2014):

I think that as a mode of governance, it is really quite dreadful because it tends to produce identities, subjects and ways of life driven by a kind of ‘survival of the fittest’ ethic, grounded in the notion of the free, possessive individual and committed to the right of individual and ruling groups to accrue wealth removed from matters of ethics

and social cost. (...) That's a key issue. I mean, this is a particular political and economic and social project that not only consolidates class power in the hands of the one percent, but operates off the assumption that economics can divorce itself from social costs, that it doesn't have to deal with matters of ethical and social responsibility, that these things get in the way. And I think the consequences of these policies across the globe have caused massive suffering, misery, and the spread of massive inequalities in wealth, power, and income.

Giroux's words pointedly expose the negative aspects of neoliberalism, which violates the key principles of ecosophy and poses a real threat to socio-economic sustainability.

Ironically, despite its dominance in the contemporary world the very term is rather reluctantly used by neoclassical economists and free marketers. Accordingly, providing a comprehensive definition of neoliberalism appears quite a challenging task as the term appears rather nebulous and is perceived differently across disciplines. For example, Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005: 1) in their edited volume *Neoliberalism – A critical reader* claim that it is "impossible to define neoliberalism purely theoretically", even though they simultaneously announce that "we live in the age of neoliberalism" (ibidem). The problem with providing a definition arises from a multiplicity of phenomena the concept embraces, ranging from purely abstract ones, such as the empowerment of the financial sector, to the fairly concrete, represented by, for example, privatisation. Still, as Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005: 1) purport:

[i]t is not difficult to recognise the beast when it trespasses into new territories, tramples upon the poor, undermines rights and entitlements, and defeats resistance, through a combination of domestic, political, economic, legal, ideological and media pressures, backed up by international blackmail and military force if necessary.

The roots of neoliberalism might be traced back to the nineteenth century economic theories based on classical liberalism, which were promulgated by Adam Smith and his intellectual followers (Clarke, 2005). As an economic theory, neoliberalism replaced in the late 1970s the doctrine of Keynesianism that dominated in the period of 1945-1970 and promoted state intervention in the market. In response to a deep crisis, neoliberalism criticised state intervention for being inefficient and endorsed the concept of free market that involved advancing the ideas of deregulation, privatisation of the public sector and restraining state intervention. The new doctrine promoted "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills" (Harvey, 2005: 2) that could be developed in the context of "strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Holborow, 2015: 16). The idea of a "self-regulating market", one of the key notions of classical liberalism, was also adopted by neoliberals (Munck, 2005) and put forward as the main argument against state interventionism that could dent the logic of the economic efficiency of the market. As

Harvey (2006) further argues, neoliberalism resulted in profound socio-economic changes since it replaced former social relations with corporatisation, commodification, and privatisation of the public sector and its assets. Within the neoliberal framework the state is expected to create appropriate conditions enabling such practices, securing private property rights and streamlining the functioning of free markets. In Jameson's (1991: 63) view, "the rhetoric of the market" plays a crucial role in the "ideological struggle (...) for the legitimization or delegitimization of left discourse", which in the British context was materialised in the deprecation of the welfare-state ideology contested by neoliberal Thatcherism.

Theoretical foundations of neoliberalism are rooted in the 1950s in the Chicago School and draw on the idea of monetarism, developed by the Nobel prize winner Milton Friedman, that consisted in controlling money supply by the government. In the 1980s monetarism, accompanied with changes in fiscal laws aimed to spur consumption, evolved into Reaganomics or Thatcherism (Lapavitsas, 2005; after Holborow, 2015: 15). By the mid 1990s neoliberalism, once a marginal economic theory, had become the official economic policy of the majority of Western democracies. The neoliberal turn led to the expansion of the financial sector, the rise of credit and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people, overlapping with extensive economic growth and advancing globalisation. Neoliberal globalisation has not, however, brought about the expected outcomes: its main beneficiaries remained only the richest countries and a small number of developing economies (2009a, b). Additionally, Hardt and Negri (2000) point to the loss of sovereignty on the part of the states and the new form of boundaryless hegemony in the "deterritorialized" space. Sklair (2010) labels this phenomenon "transnationalism", perceiving capitalism as a "globalizing" rather than international system, deprived of any particular national bonds. According to Peet (2007), neoliberalism supports the interests of the newly-formed global finance capital and creates a global space and conditions that enhance the unlimited growth of its profitability. Despite declared philanthropic intentions, the benefits are not contributed to the society but remain accumulated in the hands of corporations.

A particularly valuable input to the discussion on neoliberalism has been provided by Thorsen and Lie (2007), who take a more moderate stance on the issue and draw primarily on the ideas developed by Blomgren (1997) and Harvey (2005). Following Mises (1962), Nozick (1974) and Hayek (1979), Thorsen and Lie (2007: 14) define neoliberalism as "a loosely demarcated set of political beliefs which most prominently and prototypically include the conviction that the only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual, especially commercial, liberty, as well as strong private property

rights". This position also involves the minimal intervention of the state at both the national and international levels. Thus, free market and free trade, the main pillars of neoliberalism, stir up the creativity and entrepreneurship embedded in humans and contribute to their "individual liberty and well-being, and a more efficient allocation of resources" (ibidem: 15). In this vein, the most valuable individuals are those who actively participate in free markets and accept the risks related to such participation. Thus, individuals are solely responsible for their freely-taken decisions and their possible consequences. Such an approach involves a certain moral acceptance of social injustice, which is a result of freely-made decisions. For this reason, unsuccessful individuals who demand state protection are seen as "morally depraved and underdeveloped" failures, almost perceived as advocates of a totalitarian state (ibidem: 15). For Giroux (2014), such an approach is seen as "the antithesis of real democracy because it feeds on inequality; it feeds on privilege, it feeds on massive divisiveness, and it feeds on a theater of cruelty".

4.4.1.2. Neoliberal discourse and "new capitalism"

In contrast to Blomgren (1997), Thorsen and Lie (2007) do not view neoliberalism as "a complete political philosophy or ideology", but rather as "a loose set of ideas of how the relationship between the state and its external environment ought to be organized" (ibidem: 15). However, Holborow (2012), one of the most recognised scholars exploring neoliberalism in the context of applied linguistics, understands neoliberalism as an economic theory, a new form of capitalism, and a discourse and an ideology (2012: 15).

Holborow also displays the discrepancy between the theory and practice of neoliberal ideology and deconstructs its cornerstone myth of curbed state intervention that was shattered after the crisis of 2008. Paradoxically, the governments across the US, the UK and the Eurozone supported their financial institutions with extremely large amounts of money (estimated in 2009 to reach \$14 trillion; see Watkins, 2010), negating the imperative principle of the free market economy and taking the role of the main financier and patron of capitalism. The theme of state interventionism is also present in the writings of Naomi Klein (2007), who points to the involvement of neoliberal Western powers in hostile takeovers of new markets and their local infrastructures by corporations and protecting corporate capital at home. These inconsistencies have unveiled a huge gap between the reality and the neoliberal thinking – especially the firmly rooted doctrine of the free market that has almost gained the status of "a natural law" (Holborow, 2012: 18).

As Holborow (2012) notes, neoliberalism is viewed differently through the lens of "new capitalism" – a new form of capitalism that has evolved from

the recent technological revolution that prompted in-depth socio-economic transformations (Fairclough, 2002). The emergence of “new capitalism” and its relations with discourse have been elaborated on in a special issue of *Discourse and Society* on “Language in New Capitalism” (2002, vol. 13, issue 4). In the editorial, Fairclough (2002) pointed to the phenomena of “re-structuring” and “re-scaling”, originally proposed by Jessop (2000), as the main characteristics of the ongoing transformations. A “re-structuring” is understood as a “colonization” of different domains of social life by economy – higher education being the most illustrative example. On the other hand, a “re-scaling” involves modifications in “the scales of social life” and their effect on all aspects of social life at different levels of its organisation, commonly recognised as globalisation, which is understood “not [as] a simple replacement of, for instance, a national or local economic dynamic by a global one, but a shift in relation among global, national and local economies” (Fairclough, 2002: 163).

Yet, the main premise of Fairclough’s argument is that nowadays, in the new capitalism order, language, understood broadly as *semiosis*, has begun to play a far more important role than in the former capitalist system. The present capitalist system rests on knowledge and technology and is dependent on new communication technologies. Additionally, “the economic success of products, companies, nations and even individuals” is determined by brands and branding (Klein, 2000) as well as media representations (Fairclough, 2002: 164). Consequently, Fairclough (2002: 164) argues that new capitalism is not only knowledge, but also discourse led since “knowledges are produced, circulated and consumed as discourses (economic, organisational, managerial, political, educational and so forth)”. As he further purports:

[d]iscourses are dialectically materialized (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001) in the ‘hardware’ and ‘software’ of organizations, enacted as ways of acting and interacting, and inculcated (through a variety of processes including, e.g. ‘skills training’) as ways of being, as identities. New ways of acting and interacting include new linguistic (and more broadly semiotic) forms – new genres; and new ways of being are partly semiotic – new styles. So that transformations of organizations (workplaces, universities, local government, etc.) under the pressure of restructuring and re-scaling are partly, and significantly, semiotic and linguistic transformations. (Fairclough, 2002: 164)

As a result, in the newly-emerged knowledge-based society, “know-how” and “know-that”, understood as aspects of knowledge, are simultaneously seen as genres (“know-how”) and discourses (“know-that”) that have been commodified. Therefore, *semiosis* has become dependent on the economic processes involving profitability and manipulation. This in turn has led to the “technologisation of discourse” (Fairclough, 1996), exemplified by the remodelling of semiotic aspects of workplace practices through “application

of expert knowledge" (Fairclough, 2002: 164). By understanding neoliberalism as discourse-generated, Fairclough (2006: 163) also considers "neoliberal globalization" discursive both in content and form, since it involves changes in social relations and identities as well as an emergence of new genres and forms of communication.

As far as the chronology of ecolinguistically significant globalisation processes is concerned, Stibbe (2010) discerns its three waves. The first one, hailed as the "movement of people", involved physical translocations of oral peoples to different regions, where their language was not adapted to or, in other words, lacked adequate lexical, grammatical and narrative resources to provide sustainable coexistence with the newly settled locations. This naturally resulted in environmental degradation.

The second wave emerged along with the transformation of oral cultures into literate ones. The writing system enabled the transmission of discourses as well as value systems contained in narratives and stabilised them within populations, which were able to preserve them irrespective of possible physical moves or changes in the environment. On the other hand, this easiness of transferring language and thought resulted in the proliferation of several languages of the most powerful populations and extinction of innumerable local languages and cultures as well as the ecological knowledge contained in them (ibidem: 410).

The third, contemporary wave of globalisation, is located in the movement of discourses. As Fairclough (2002: 164) points out, globalisation does not only bring about the emergence of English as a global language, but it also affects the "order of discourse" that translates into "the social structuring of semiotic diversity".

Discourses such as the discourse of 'new public management' (or neoliberal political discourse) circulate and are dialectically materialized, enacted and inculcated globally, although this is a process of restructuring difference rather than a homogenization, for globally circulating discourses are open to diverse local appropriations (Salskov-Iversen et al., 2000). The potency of globalizing tendencies in semiosis is a matter of how they are positioned within relations of power. (Fairclough, 2002: 164)

Further, Fairclough (ibidem) points to the asymmetrical power relations between the social forces behind dominating discourses (e.g. global English, neoliberal discourses) representing corporations, governments or powerful institutions, and those opposing them.

Elsewhere, Fairclough and Graham (2002: 189; in Holborow, 2012: 19) interpret globalisation and the rise of the information society as the currently emerging form of capitalism. In this new system, the key roles are played by discourse and language. Discourse and communication are also considered the pillars of social life and deemed important by Castells (2000). As he puts

it in his later work, “[p]ower in the network society is communication power” (Castells, 2009: 53) and “communication networks are the fundamental networks of power-making in society” (ibidem: 426).

Neoliberalism, as an economic theory and a new form of capitalism, cannot be analysed solely by narrow ideological constraints. Nevertheless, its certain ideological aspects might be discerned. First of all, as noted by Holborow (2012: 29), similarly to ideology, neoliberalism provides a one-sided representation of the world that suits its ends. Secondly, despite putting on the mask of universalism, in reality it represents the particular social interests of the dominating class and its capital. Like any other ideology it might be simultaneously accepted and rejected. Furthermore, the sensitivity of ideology to real-world events was illustrated by the fierce criticism of neoliberalism after the financial crisis in 2008 that acted as litmus paper for social moods. These characteristics undoubtedly show the bonds between discourse and ideology as well as substantial differences between them (ibidem: 31). As Holborow (2015: 127) has put it recently: “(...) language and ideology are coextensive; both develop in concrete social situations, both involve social dialogue, and both affect social consciousness”.

4.4.1.3. Neoliberalism and public institutions

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), especially from the public sector, have been traditionally perceived as “pinnacles of learning” (Osman, 2008: 57) whose reputation and prestige attracted secondary school graduates struggling for admission. For this reason, universities rarely had to resort to promotional activities, relying solely on “the word of mouth”. Nevertheless, an increase in the number of private HEIs and the accessibility of education have led to fierce competition in the tertiary education sector and poised new challenges to HEIs, forcing them to follow the rules of the free-market economy and take on a corporate style of management. A greater emphasis on learning outcomes, students’ orientation and labour-market driven educational offers have also enforced the redefinition of HEIs identities and purposes. For instance, in the United Kingdom the transformation of higher education was instigated by the 1988 Education Reform Act and the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act that brought market orientation to education and imposed state control on them by the Department for Education and Employment (cf. Connell and Galasiński, 1998: 458). As a result, post-secondary education institutions were obliged to monitor the quality of teaching and research through an internal system of quality assurance, increase the number of students, become customer- rather than provider-oriented, and be financially efficient (Peeke, 1994; after Connell and Galasiński, 1998: 459).

This phenomenon of the commercialisation of educational services, and as Fairclough (1993) argues, the whole public sector, is visible globally and is frequently induced by government policy and its financing rules, requiring HEIs to operate like business organisations offering commodities to consumers. For example, except for obtaining grants from the government, HEIs are required to raise funds from the private sector. One might also observe a change in the power relations: students are treated as customers whereas the higher education institution plays the role of a commodity provider. Academic staff need to focus more on the quality of teaching, adjusting it to the needs of a more demanding “customer” (Connell and Galasiński, 1998). These changes have obviously affected the discursive practices in the academic setting and have led to, using Fairclough’s (1993) term, *marketisation* of academic discourse.

In a wider sense, marketisation of academic discourse is a result of the commercialisation of culture, which might be defined as “promotional” or “consumer” (Wernick, 1991; Featherstone, 1991). These terms pinpoint the centrality of consumption rather than production in contemporary society and the general functioning of the whole society to the market-based rules (Fairclough, 1993: 141). In reference to discourse, the idea of promotional culture is interpreted as “the generalization of promotion as a communicative function” (ibidem). From this perspective, discourse is ascribed the function of selling various commodities, ideas, organisations or individuals. As a result, boundaries between different orders of discourse are reshuffled and genres permeate each other. One of the most aggressive genres is consumer advertising invading the public and professional spheres, including academia, which is not traditionally associated with the promotional discourse. This “colonization” of (self)-promotional discourse leads to the hybridisation of traditional genres, the redefinition of self-identity of individuals and institutions, often at the cost of authenticity (ibidem.).

An illustrative example of marketisation of discourse in the public sphere is the omnipresence of mission statements in higher education. Possessing a mission statement is often a predicament imposed on HEIs by an accrediting agency, legitimising their existence and contributing to their institutional success (cf. Morphew and Hartley, 2006: 457). Thus, mission statements are often revisited and reformulated by institutions, helping to redefine their identity and goals in a dynamically changing educational environment. This phenomenon was first explicated by Fairclough (1993) in reference to the British educational setting. More recently, it was also addressed by Wąsikiewicz-Firlej (2013) in her paper focusing on the global academic context and by Pérez-Gómez (2015), who discussed changes in academic discourse in Spain.

In sum, neoliberal ideology might be articulated in language in manifold ways. First of all, language might be “repackaged discursively as a commod-

ity" (Holborow, 2015: 127) that translates into the positioning of the linguistic skills of an employee or a job candidate into a *commodity* that a potential employer might appreciate and make use of. Education turns into *human capital* seen as a long-term *investment*. Another frequent manifestation of neoliberalism in discourse is the personalisation of markets. Finally, one of the most sanctified groups of keywords is related semantically to *entrepreneurship*, which is extolled and presented as a desirable quality. It must be noted that such a positioning appears extremely beneficial for the authorities and employers as it relieves them from the burden of responsibility for their citizens' and employees' socio-economic well-being.

4.4.1.4. Resisting destructive discourses

A sceptic view of capitalism and critique of neoliberalism are engrained in ecosophy or green philosophy (Lee, 1993; Carter, 1993). Yet, the identification and analysis of ecologically destructive discourses poses certain challenges to ecolinguistics pertaining to its role in resisting those discourses. In this context, special heed should be paid to Fairclough's (1992a) *Critical Language Awareness* (CLA) and its application in the educational setting. It entails exposure to and analysis of materials that have a manipulative character, such as advertisements or economic discourses, in order to unveil the ideologies they convey. The best remedy to resist destructive discourses is to become aware of their very existence and their possible effect, which is especially relevant to those who have a direct influence on social life (e.g. economists and politicians), and develop critical thinking skills. Stibbe (2014, 2015) remains optimistic in this respect, arguing that people do not want to play a role in the process of ecological destruction and social injustice and, if aware, are willing to change. This mechanism might be exemplified by changes in highly ideologised animal production, which has become more transparent and ethical, showing more care and respect for animals, both at the level of discourse and practices (Stibbe, 2014: 121-122). Fairclough's concept of Critical Language Awareness has been adapted to ecolinguistics by Lankiewicz (2013) who proposed his model of Critical Ecological Language Awareness (CELA) that was later applied to the FL educational context and transformed into Teacher Critical Ecological Language Awareness (TCELA; Lankiewicz, 2015a).

Critical Language Awareness might also be employed by the public as a tool to exert pressure on key stakeholders who refuse to discontinue using destructive discourse or performing destructive practices. The public, in fact, has real power to exert such pressure, either as citizens with their voting rights or consumers who make specific purchasing choices. The agency of citizens in identifying destructive discourses and taking action to prevent

or minimise their effects has been frequently undertaken by Chomsky. For example, the prominent linguist and activist (Chomsky, 1966: 257) pointed to “the responsibility of the intellectuals to speak the truth and expose lies”. Chomsky (1985) has also emphasised that the very identification of ideological aspects of discourse is the first step in forming critical citizens who are aware of the consequences of their own actions.

We live entangled in webs of deceit, often self deceit, but with a little honest effort, it is possible to extricate ourselves from them. If we do, we will see a world that is rather different from the one presented to us by a remarkably effective ideological system, a world that is much uglier, often horrifying. We will also learn that our own actions, or passive acquiescence, contribute quite substantially to misery and oppression, and perhaps eventual global destruction. (Chomsky, 1985: 1)

A significant contribution to the development of Chomskyan “webs of deceit” is undoubtedly owed to the mass media that are in charge of channelling particular issues to the public. The mechanisms of their functioning have been presented in Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) famous book *Manufacturing consent* where the scholars proposed the “propaganda model”:

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda. (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 1)

“Systematic propaganda” is in fact part and parcel of corporate communication. According to Carey (1995), who pioneered research of corporate PR, the aim of corporate spin-doctors is to evoke public reaction that is “intense and shallow”. Similarly to other manipulative messages, the only weapon against corporate propaganda is critical thinking. In sum, as Alexander (2009: 8) vividly purports: “as critical citizens, we must learn how to decipher the bullshit”. Hopefully, as Chomsky (1979: 3) puts it: “[f]or the analysis of ideology (...), a bit of open-mindedness, normal intelligence, and healthy scepticism will generally suffice”.

4.4.2. Ambivalent discourses

Discourse analysis in ecolinguistics has not only been limited to the analysis of discourses that have a negative impact on the environment. In fact, a large part of research in this vein, has studied discourses of environmentalism, ecology, sustainability, environmental protection, as well as green advertising. Despite their unquestioned positive impact, these discourses are also

deemed problematic. As Stibbe (2015) contends, irrespective of their positive aims, ecologically-oriented discourses are constructed by the same society that produces destructive discourses. For this reason, even discourses underpinned with positive intentions are unlikely to be resistant to certain political or economic interest. For example, there is a rather low probability that discourses fiercely calling for the reduction of consumption are funded by government obsessed with economic growth figures and its political support or published by a newspaper or a magazine creating a consumption-friendly atmosphere. In other words, truly eco-centric aims are distorted by short-term interests. Consequently, Stibbe (2015: 29) dubs mainstream “green” discourses “ambivalent discourses” since they simultaneously include contents that have positive and negative influence on the environment.

Ecolinguists have undertaken a number of analyses of ambivalent discourse that, as noted by Stibbe (2015: 29), embrace the discourse of environmentalism (e.g. Benton-Short, 1999; Harré et al., 1999); corporate greenwash (Alexander, 2009; Ihlen, 2009); natural resources (Meisner, 2007; Kurz et al., 2005); zoos (Milstein, 2009); and sustainability (Kowalski, 2013).

In this context special heed should be paid to the concept of “greenspeak” developed by Harré et al. (1999: vii) that is used “as a catch-all term for all the ways in which issues of the environment are presented, be it written, spoken or pictorial form”. “Greenspeak” is also defined as: “(...) the whole gamut of linguistic means employed in raising awareness of environmental issues in a range of discourses both radical and conservative” (ibidem: 2).

Our approach to language and communication is, in a loose and at this point a non-technical sense, ecological. By ‘ecological’ we mean having functional relationships with and being part of a wider ecology. We take the perspective that the ecological aspects of language, its personal, cultural, social and temporal embeddedness in and dependency on other aspects of intentional and normatively constrained human activity are constitutive of its existence and to a significant extent determine its nature. (Harré et al., 1999: 1-2)

Harré et al. (1999) use the term “greenspeak” in reference to discourses that evoke rather negative connotations and resemble “Orwellian overtones of ‘newspeak’” (Stibbe, 2014: 123). In his recent publication Stibbe (2015: 29) discerns three main strands of criticism in the analysed discourses. The first strand of criticism is targeted at representing elements of nature as resources for exploitation and commodification, in a way similar to that of the destructive discourses of agribusiness. The second strand aims at the representation of solutions to environmental problems as small-scale endeavours undertaken by individuals that typically involve a more reasonable use of resources (e.g. cycling instead of driving, recycling, frugal use of water) rather than hindering the excessive consumption of the society that is the real source of

the problem. According to the principles of ecosophy, a desired decline in overall human consumption to prevent ecological destruction would simultaneously require a large-scale relocation of resources in order to provide social equity and fight against poverty. Therefore, environmental discourse should take into account both aims (Stibbe, 2014: 123). Finally, Stibbe (2015: 29) notes that emphasising the role of individuals in sustaining ecosystems leads to the dispersion of responsibility for ecological destruction by uncovering the real agency.

As Mühlhäusler (2003: 14) observes, the agency is also diffused by the objectification of environmental problems that “can... be studied in isolation from its makers or its effects and, as already has happened, it can become a commercial commodity”. The criticism is also targeted at discourses that call for the protection of narrow groups of species, usually those with a particularly attractive appearance (Thompson, 2010) as well as representing nature in an instrumental, commodified way (Stibbe, 2012a).

4.4.2.1. Environmental political economy and green capitalism

Environmental political economy provides an alternative worldview that takes into consideration the relations between social behaviour and the environment (Mosco, 2009). This approach questions our social and individual values and criticises consumerism, globalised capitalism as well as market-based society (Kassiola, 2003) – the values that have a negative impact on the environment and lead to unsustainable development of the society.

According to Budinsky and Bryant (2013), contemporary society is mainly driven by advertising discourse and capitalist ideology, which enhance infinite consumption and lead to environmental catastrophe. A recent rise of green consumerism, promoting the consumption of environmentally friendly goods, seemingly offers solutions to environmental concerns. Budinsky and Bryant (2013: 208), however, perceive the consumption of “green” products as a “lesser evil” that “still operates within a neoliberal agenda that is more concerned with making a profit than with saving the environment”.

One of the most common practices performed by companies to boost their image is greenwashing, defined by TerraChoice, an environmentally friendly marketing and consulting agency, as “the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service” (TerraChoice, 2009: 1). Practices of greenwashing include “hidden trade-offs, no proof, vagueness, irrelevance, fibbing, the lesser of two evils, and most recently added to this list, the worshipping of false labels” (Budinsky and Bryant, 2013: 209; after TerraChoice, 2007, 2009, 2010). In fact, Laufer (2003) has demonstrated that numerous top world com-

panies qualified as Fortune 500 companies have applied various greenwashing strategies, primarily based on distorting information about the company or its rivals. In Laufer's view (2003), greenwashing embraces three elements of deception: confusion, fronting and posturing.

Corporations have been forced to show concern for environmental issues by public opinion under the pressure of which they have developed a new ideology of green capitalism. This ideology, however, addresses corporate rather than environmental concerns, as it delegates responsibility for the well-being of the planet to consumers who might contribute to it by buying eco-friendly products (Budinsky and Bryant, 2013: 2010). Thus, again the environment is treated as a commodity and individuals are solely responsible for its condition while the actors empowered to make a significant change are corporations and governments. Budinsky and Bryant (2013: 210) also point to the fact that such an approach, delegating agency to individuals rather than corporations, advances the "neoliberal agenda" since it positions "individuals as consumers rather than as citizens or community members". A similar view is also shared by Kahn (2009).

The whole process of community disintegration is further strengthened by the neoliberal discourses of advertising and public relations that promote individualism and devalue the collective good. This concentration on the individual discourages long-term thinking and marginalises the public discussion on environmental problems (Jhally, 2000: 5).

The alienating effects of the process of consumption were already discussed by Fromm (1955) back in the 1950s. Fromm (1955) holds that the process of consumption brings alienation because purchasing goods requires money – an abstract representation of people's work and effort. Furthermore, our alienation is strengthened by the fact that "we are surrounded by things of whose nature and origin we know nothing" (Fromm, 1955: 130). In consequence, we are ignorant of the processes of production and do not duly respect products nor their producers since we are related to a product only through consumption. This disconnectedness from products results in dissatisfaction with what we get and enhances further consumption and the constant pursuit of consumer satisfaction.

Despite its seemingly environmental concerns, green capitalism contributes to the exploitation of natural resources and consumption that are legitimised by its "green" appeal. As Dryzek (1997: 11) notes: "[p]owerful actors who see established or emerging discourses as threatening their vital interests can attempt to override developments at the level of discourse... and can sponsor their discourses of environmental concern more conducive to their own interests". An individualist slant of advertising deconstructs social bond and negates the very idea of society (Jhally, 2000: 4). Jhally argues that

at the ideological level capitalism appeals to negative human qualities, such as greed and selfishness, and silences the positive ones including compassion, caring, and generosity. Furthermore, it encourages consumption and self-centredness at the cost of the community well-being (Jhally, 2000).

Budinsky and Bryant (2013) argue that the issues of political economy, ideology, and representation are all within the scope of interest of CDA and its underlying principle assuming the frequent construction of hegemonic discourses by powerful and prosperous groups. This is most illustratively exemplified by discourses of advertising that “encourage individualism, greed, and consumption, all of which undermine collective social issues, such as those related to the environment” (Budinsky and Bryant, 2013: 223). Respectively, green consumerism also resonates with the neoliberal agenda by promoting economic growth, which, in the end, contributes to further environmental destruction and exploitation of rapidly shrinking natural resources. Thus, corporate initiatives to encourage consumers to buy green products, understood as a form of consumer ecological activism, exert the reverse effect as they boost consumption and completely ignore its side-effects. For this reason, green consumerism must be primarily seen as targeted at generating corporate profits rather than supporting sustainability. The scholars (*ibidem*), however, do not entirely reject the idea of green consumerism. By making a reference to Vasil’s (2009) study, demonstrating that the vast majority of Canadians (90%) have indeed become more environmentally friendly, Budinsky and Bryant (2013) do admit that higher levels of environmental awareness and making more selective and green purchases must be qualified as positive phenomena. Their main point, however, is that green consumerism is not a sufficient step towards greater sustainability and it must be accompanied by a drastic reduction of total consumerism and the implementation of alternative means of transport to bring tangible results (Budinsky and Bryant, 2013: 224).

4.4.2.2. Place of ecology in public discourse

Beder (1997) points to the fact that, ironically, ecological and environmental discourses have not been dominated by environmentalists and eco-activists but by corporations (corporate environmentalism). A similar observation has also been made by Alexander (2009) who interprets the capture of environmental discourse and ecological thinking by corporations and fitting them into the framework of economic discourse and thinking as an attempt to legitimise further environmental degradation and inoculating public opinion against its effects. In his analysis of speeches delivered in 1997 by John Brown, the chief executive officer (CEO) of BP, one of the world’s top corporations, Alexander (2009: 41) demonstrates how “the discourse of market economics

colonises and serves to narrowly frame critical and oppositional discourse on the environment and ecology”.

This process was, however, identified much earlier, back in the 1970s, by O'Neill (1972: 20) who pointed to the growing empowerment of multinational corporations that were emancipated from government control and became more and more capable of shaping “the national ecology and psychic economy of individuals”. As O'Neill further purports (1972: 20): “The corporate economy stands between the state and the individual. Its power to determine the life-style of modern society must be recognised as the principal subject of political economy”.

Despite enthusiastic declarations, the newly emerged “eco-identity” (Livesey, 2011) of multinationals has not been met with enthusiasm by corporate management due to the additional costs generated by corporate communications aimed at publicising an environmentally-friendly image. In Alexander's view (2009: 56), companies have been actually “forced to jump on the ecological bandwagon” by the pressure of the public that have become more ecologically aware. This newly-emerged interest of corporations in environmental issues manifested by the presence of ecology-related themes and lexis has been labelled by Fill (1998: 12) “surface ecologization” of discourse. The phenomenon evokes rather negative associations as it stands for discursive practices aimed to distract attention from environmental problems and the corporations that are primarily responsible for them. Additionally, positioning companies as environmentalists might be confusing to the public as it often involves some semantic changes in the applied ecology-related concepts. It might be illustrated by the case of “sustainable development”, one of the core terms in ecology. As Alexander notes:

The re-positioning of multinational corporations as promoters of ‘sustainable development’ has proceeded so rapidly and with so much PR flak and smoke screening that today no one really knows, nor do they care, what the concept means. (Alexander, 2009: 67)

Alex Carey (1995: 133-134; quoted in Alexander, 2009: 40) also points to the “widespread social and political indoctrination, an indoctrination which promotes business interests as everyone's interests”. This orientation resonates with the neoliberal ideology that has dominated public discourse since the 1990s, positioning the free market and business as the only remedies to our problems and signposts for the future. Incessant repetition of the message about the centrality and sovereignty of business by the media and political actors engraves it in the public consciousness (Alexander, 2009: 40). Undoubtedly, business organisations have colonised the discourse of social and environmental responsibility and have “the upper hand in the CSR discourse” (Jonker and Marberg,

2007: 27). Burchell and Cook (2006: 126) argue that business, hopefully, cannot be considered the winner yet, since discourse is shaped simultaneously by domination and resistance. Alexander (ibidem: 27) takes a rather optimistic approach since he believes in the agency of consumers who “as thinking citizens” might make informed purchasing decisions and in this way have a real impact on the companies and enforce their ethical behaviour.

4.4.3. Beneficial discourses

So far ecolinguists have primarily focused on scrutinising destructive and ambivalent discourses in order to unveil the ideologies that they convey and mechanisms of their discursive construction. Naturally, in an unsustainable society discourses enhancing pro-ecological attitudes and practices, labelled “beneficial discourses” by Stibbe (2015: 30), are scarce, which translates into a very poor supply of relevant research studies. The purpose of such analyses would be to promote beneficial discourses, usually superseded by dominating destructive discourses, and to pave their way to the mainstream.

One of the few examples of beneficial discourse analysis are the writings of Vandana Shiva – a famous environmental activist and physicist. The fact is that the lion’s share of her texts criticises the discourse of global corporations that apply linguistic engineering to “colonize and destroy traditional agriculture in the Third World” disguised as “the modernization of agriculture” (Alexander, 2009: 112). Her fierce criticism is particularly targeted at Monsanto, one of the world’s most powerful and simultaneously most hated companies, infamous for its involvement in the development of large-scale GM agriculture and its strict seed patent infringement policy (Shiva, 2000a, b; 2002 in Alexander, 2009: 112; also see Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2017a). Nevertheless, as Stibbe (2014: 117) notes, Shiva also attempts to identify and promote alternative discourses that propose a different organisation of the world and the distribution of resources that is based on “abundance and sharing, diversity and decentralisation, and respect and dignity for all beings” (Shiva, 2004: 110).

The idea to promote discourse has been developed by Martin (2004) who has proposed the term Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), later taken up by Macgilchrist (2007) and Barlett (2012). Martin (2004) identifies two aspects of CDA; the more recognised one that he dubs *realis*, might be characterised as deconstructive since it aims to reveal the subservient relationship of language and the meaning making process of power. This tradition derived from the critical linguistics of East Anglia and was further transformed by Fairclough and Wodak who have provided the most renowned contributions to this field of study, dealing with inequalities related to gender, generation, ethnicity or class. The

other face of CDA oriented more towards constructing rather than deconstructing social actions, dubbed *irealis*, has not entirely realised its potential yet. An illustrative characteristic of the relationship between the *realis* and *irealis* aspect of CDA has been offered by Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard (1996):

Discourse is a major instrument of power and control and Critical Discourse Analysts [...] feel that it is indeed part of their professional role to investigate, reveal and clarify how power and discriminatory value are inscribed in and mediated through the linguistic system. CDA is essentially political in intent with its practitioners acting upon the world in order to transform it and thereby help create a world where people are not discriminated against because of sex, colour, creed, age or social class (Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1996: xi).

Making a shift toward a more productive rather than deconstructive analysis is also promoted by Kress:

Critical language projects have remained just that: critiques of texts and of the social practices implied by or realised in those texts, uncovering, revealing, inequitable, dehumanising and deleterious states of affairs [...] if critical language projects were to develop apt, plausible theories of this domain, they would be able to move from critical reading, from analysis, from deconstructive activity, to productive activity [...] CL or CDA have not offered (productive) accounts of alternative forms of social organisation, nor of social subjects, other than by implication (Kress, 1996: 15-16).

The term, however, raised certain criticism, especially on the part of critical discourse analysts. For example, Wodak (in Kendall, 2007: 17) contends that the term “critical” is equivalent to “negative”, for criticism also involves offering alternative solutions and recommendations. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the vast part of research in CDA involves raising awareness of discourses resulting in oppression and exploitation, with its final end of “empowering people to resist the discourses that oppress them” (Stibbe, 2015: 31). As far as ecolinguistics is concerned, its role is “to analyse alternative discourses (...), being as critical as when examining destructive discourses, and promote them if the stories they tell align with the ecosophy of the analyst” (Stibbe, 2015: 42).

One of the first comparative studies juxtaposing beneficial and destructive discourses was conducted by Goatly (2000: 285) who contrasted the discourse of newspapers with romantic poetry. The findings of his study showed a huge discrepancy between the representation of nature in *The Times* and Wordsworth’s poems. *The Times* depicted nature as passive and limited to fragmented narrations on weather and disease or reflected in the interest in frequently commodified, domestic animals (ibidem: 301). In Wordsworth’s discourse nature plays a more active role and its components are animated (e.g. a river murmurs, brooks prattle, etc.).

Chawla (2001) locates the source of beneficial discourse in traditional and indigenous cultures that have managed to sustain their ecosystems. The motif

of harmonious relations between humans and nature strongly reverberates in traditional Japanese poetry analysed from the ecolinguistic perspective by Knight (2010) and Stibbe (2012). Another example of beneficial discourse is Native American literature investigated by Bringhurst (2008: 26) through the prism of what he calls “Ecological Linguistics”.

Stibbe (2015: 33) identifies a need to promote beneficial discourses understood not as a specific text but “a way of writing or speaking that tells a useful story”, i.e. a certain set of linguistic features such as pronouns, grammatical structures, presuppositions, representation of participants, etc. In contrast to specific genres, which remain niche and for this reason have a rather limited impact on society, discourses have the power to permeate the boundaries of different genres and be incorporated into different areas of human activity. Stibbe (*ibidem*) believes that the incorporation of beneficial discourses into the mainstream discourse may have a tangible impact on the surrounding. It might be argued, however, that beneficial discourses have already colonised corporate discourse – “green” narration is used by the majority of the main players in the global market game to enhance their image as eco-friendly companies. This phenomenon, however, raises well-grounded doubts concerning the real intentions and goals behind these declarations. The main premise underlying this work is that beneficial “green” discourses have already been adopted by the corporate world and in a way become the mainstream discourse of narrating corporate identity. Even though their possible positive impact is not entirely questioned, it is deemed rather limited and obscure and for this reason their use is hypothesised to be instrumental.

It must be remembered that corporations are not, despite their claims, charitable organisations. Their primary aim legitimising their very existence is making profit. This aim, however, is not nowadays explicitly expressed; quite the contrary, it seems to be completely veiled. Nevertheless, companies will resort to any socially acceptable measures to pass as legitimate in order to streamline their operations and boost their image. For the time being, environmental discourses have paved their way to the mainstream, which explicates why companies incorporated them into their narrations – to meet social expectations.

4.5. Critical Discourse Analysis vs. Ecological Discourse Analysis

Even though CDA has always been concerned with social issues, recently Stibbe (2014) has proposed to apply this approach to the analysis of discourses that affect the ecosystem or the natural world (Frayne, 2015). Stibbe (2014:

118) argues that an ecolinguistic approach to CDA is relevant where “the focus is on discourses that have (or potentially have) a significant impact not only on how people treat other people, but also on how they treat the larger ecological systems that life depends on”.

This might evoke certain reservations (e.g. Frayne, 2015) concerning the application of the same theoretical and methodological frameworks to environmental issues and social issues. I postulate, however, that in the contemporary world ecological issues cannot be analysed and interpreted in isolation since they are tightly intertwined with social, political and economic factors. As George (1990) puts it in her work on food resources and debt: “[t]here are no ecological problems, only the social and political problems that invariably underlie and cause ecological damage” (George, 1990: 225; cited in Alexander, 2009: 21).

EDA shares a range of principles and aims of CDA as, to a certain extent, they both investigate how discourse constructs and conveys ideologies that help to usurp, maintain or legitimise social power and hegemony. CDA primarily criticises political, economic and cultural ideologies and assumptions that contribute to any form of injustice or inequality based on gender, class, ethnicity, economic status or any other social factor (cf. van Dijk, 1993). Thus, the dialectical notion of discourse inherent to CDA, positioning discourse as both exposing and constructing social structures, assumes linguistic premises of social change and justice (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 61). In Fairclough’s view:

Critical social research focuses upon the issues, problems, inequities, dangers and possibilities which face people living within a particular economic and social order, with a view to imaginable and achievable outcomes which maximize social justice and freedom. As the economic and social order changes, so do the problems and possibilities. (Fairclough, 2002: 165)

From the relational perspective, CDA studies the impact of one group of humans on another group of humans, while EDA centres on ecological impacts translated into the relations between humans and other species and ecosystems. The similarity of goals shared by sustainability and critical social theory, including the rejection of any form of domination, underlies *Critical ecologies: The Frankfurt School and contemporary environmental crises* edited by Andrew Biro (2011). This collection of essays authored by prominent scholars representing critical theory and environmental politics embodies the sense of interdisciplinarity promoted by the Frankfurt School and accentuates the relevance of its ideas when applied to the analysis of contemporary problems.

In Frayne’s (2015) view, the scopes of interest of CDA and ecolinguistics overlap when it comes to the concept of environmental justice and addressing environmental issues from the perspective of social justice. The scholar (ibidem),

however, expresses his reservations concerning further similarities between the approaches by referring to Stibbe's (2014) words pointing to the insufficiency of CDA's social aims in an ecological context: "freedom and democracy do not automatically lead to sustainable levels of consumption, and peace in society that exceeds environmental limits will be short lived" (2014: 120).

Stibbe (*ibidem*: 1) purports that similarly to CDA, ecolinguistics might play a role in stimulating social change through its awareness raising potential by inspiring "self-directed social movements", defined by Stewart (1999: 91) as being "created, led and populated primarily by those who perceive themselves to be dispossessed and... struggling primarily for personal freedom, equality, justice, and rights". CDA aims at unveiling the mechanisms of transformation of "commonsense assumptions" into dominating discourses that "sustain power inequalities" (Fairclough, 2001: 71). In fact, ecolinguistics might also act in this way by pointing to the role of ideological underpinning of global capitalism in the destruction of ecosystems that "oppressed communities depend on for their well-being and survival, and providing evidence and materials that self-directed social movements from these communities can use in working towards social change" (Stibbe, 2014: 119).

While CDA takes the perspective of "those who suffer most from dominance and inequality" (van Dijk, 1993: 252), ecolinguistics embraces not only humans but also other forms of life that remain voiceless and unaware of the source of their oppression (e.g. animals, plants, rivers, etc., as well as future generations). Thus, except for taking the perspective of self-directed social movements, ecolinguistics also represents "other-directed social movements" that "are struggling for the freedom, equity, justice and rights of others rather than selves" (Stewart, 1999: 92). Ecolinguistics goes beyond the simplistically constructed relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, as it also takes into account the reverse effects that the actions of the oppressors might have on themselves or future generations. Accordingly, raising language awareness does not only pertain to the oppressed, but concerns wide audiences who should be informed about the impact of their actions on humans, non-humans and future generations.

By and large, all critical studies involve adaptation of a certain philosophy that acts as a signpost directing societies and providing criteria for DA. In CDA, this is usually a set of values centred on hegemony, dominance, power, oppression, exploitation or inequality, which are rejected and need to be opposed (van Dijk, 2008). Actually, the concentration of CDA on the negative aspects of discourse has attracted certain criticism on the part of critical scholars who opt for the analysis of more positive or potentially transformative discourses (Martin, 2004; Luke, 2002; after Breeze, 2011: 494). In fact, Martin's (2004) call for PDA corresponds with Stibbe's (2014) concept of beneficial dis-

courses that exert a positive effect on the environment and as such should be proliferated and promoted. Likewise, Gavriela-Nuri (2012: 38) crosses the boundaries of traditionally understood CDA by proposing a “cultural CDA” and putting forward a wider framework, or “ethical philosophy” (Stibbe, 2014: 120), founded on “culture of peace” that advances “values, attitudes and behaviours based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all-inclusive human rights, tolerance and solidarity”. Similarly to PDA, research within this framework aims simultaneously at unveiling discourses that act against its particular ethical philosophy and at specifying discursive means that endorse its “culture of peace” (Gavriely-Nuri, 2012: 83). Stibbe (2014: 120) finds this approach effective owing to the fact that it explicitly and openly expresses the researcher’s stance since “the analyst is, in essence, comparing and contrasting dominant discourses with their own ethical philosophy of how they see an ideal society”. In a similar vein, ecolinguistic discourse analysis would involve the application of a particular “ecosophy” on the part of the researcher.

As I signalled in chapter 1, ecolinguistics as a relatively new discipline is still compartmentalised and needs a larger body of research to stabilise its theoretical and methodological frameworks. Yet, I contend that it offers a new perspective to critical discourse studies that seems particularly valid and adequate to investigate the discursive construction of the contemporary world. I agree with Stibbe (2014), who purports that compared to CDA ecolinguistics extends the scope of analysis as it is potentially interested in a wider repertoire of discourses and provides new data offering valuable fresh insights. Furthermore, it proposes an explicit and comprehensive theoretical framework – ecosophy – against which discourses are analysed. The current work might be seen as a contribution to the development in the field, which addresses the need to refine the theoretical and methodological tools applied to investigate “the discursive formation of identity to examine how ecological identities are forged in language” (Stibbe, 2014: 125). Methodologically, it draws on the principles of the newly-emerged EDA proposed by Alexander and Stibbe (2014).

4.6. Conclusion

The ultimate aim of this chapter was to elucidate the main theoretical and methodological assumptions that informed EDA applied to investigate corporate identity discourse. These considerations were driven by a need to scrutinise ideological aspects of corporate discourse and their role in the construction of corporate identity and working out a platform for discourse analysis

anchored in ecolinguistics. This required the verification of the key concepts of discourse and ideology and their embedding in ecolinguistics, accompanied by the specification of adequate methods of analysis.

The chapter opened with a discussion on the concept of discourse that attempted to point to a multiplicity of definitions and approaches to discourse as one of the core terms in the social sciences and humanities. However, in the present work, discourse is primarily seen “as an instrument of communication” (Beneviste, 1971: 110). In this volume, the understanding of discourse and its role in society has been particularly strongly influenced by Foucault and Fairclough. Therefore, I have put to the front the constitutive nature of discourse and its centrality in shaping and regulating human relations in society, especially those involving dominance and resistance. Other central assumptions have involved the perception of discourse as a form of representing the world by particular groups, engrained in CDA (e.g. Fairclough, 1992b) and shared by ecolinguistics (e.g. Stibbe, 2015), and as a carrier of power and ideology (cf. Foucault, 1998) that lie at the very core of identity construction. Following Frow (1985: 206), power was not seen as a solely “negative and repressive force” but as a factor resulting in the production of a variety of discourses that is spurred by ideological struggle (Pêcheux, 1982). In organisational contexts it might actually play disciplinary and integrative roles that often translate into efficiency.

In the critical tradition the very term “ideology” is strongly related to power or even interpreted as “a modality of power”, rather than a particular worldview (e.g. Fairclough, 2003b: 9). Yet, the understanding of ideology in this monograph leans towards van Dijk’s (1998, 2013) proposal that offers a wider and more flexible interpretation of the term, devoid of its overwhelmingly negative connotations. Such an approach does not, however, exclude critical analysis of negative or dominant ideologies aimed at exposing the ideological underpinning of dominance and power abuse. Furthermore, following Gramsci (1971), Pennycook (2007), van Dijk (2008) and Holborow (2012), I interpreted ideology as a tool used both for struggle and resistance, which is sensitive and responsive to the dynamic changes in the real world and goes beyond the domain of power and dominance. This interpretation seems particularly applicable to organisational contexts where discourse as a carrier of ideology expresses, maintains and reinforces the identity of a particular group.

Further, drawing primarily on Fairclough (1992b), Garzone and Sarangi (2007), Lemke (1995) and Hodge and Kress (1993), I assumed ideological orientation of all types of discourse, embracing among others, specialised and corporate discourse. As far as the ideological tenets of corporate discourse are concerned, they were specified as originating in utilitarian ideology (Scollon and Scollon, 2001), individualism, empiricism, rationalism, democracy, mate-

rialism, technologism and consumerism (Breeze, 2013: 24). By and large, corporate discourse was deemed ideological, predominantly due to its self-serving function that involves promoting a company and legitimising its existence and activity. Ideologies were also posited as related to group identity (cf. van Dijk, 1995). In fact, van Dijk's (1995, 2013) ideology schema, addressing the questions pertaining to identity, activities, goals, norms and values and group relations, was accepted as a framework particularly relevant to the analysis of ideological aspects of the corporate identity discourse.

The next section was devoted to the overview of CDA posited primarily as an interdisciplinary approach to or a programme of the study of discourse (cf. Wodak and Meyer, 2009; van Dijk, 2001) that has secured its position as the dominating paradigm for exploring ideological aspects of discourse. Yet, guided by criticism targeted at CDA and the specificity of corporate identity discourse embedded in a widely understood ecosystem rather than a specific social context, I turned to the newly-emerged ecolinguistic framework for the analysis of discourse dubbed Ecological Discourse Analysis (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014; Stibbe, 2014). The two approaches do, in fact, share a lot in common. They both trace how ideologies are constructed and conveyed by discourse to gain, legitimise and secure domination that leads to social injustice and inequality that is particularly resonant in sustainability and critical social theory. Both perspectives are, in fact, critical as they adopt a particular philosophy for discourse analysis to expose the existing social structures and call for changes eliminating any form of injustice or exploitation. Nonetheless, the ecolinguistic perspective is much broader than CDA as it is not limited to the socio-cultural-economic aspects of human relations. It assumes the ecological embedding (cf. Stibbe, 2010; Biersack, 2006) of any form of life and is interested in all types of relationships within the ecosystem. Accordingly, ecolinguistic discourse studies aim to identify how discourses affect the ecosystem understood as "the system which supports life" (Alexander and Stibbe, 2014: 104). As I clearly emphasised, such analyses are not limited to the study of environmental discourse but are targeted at a wide spectrum of discourses that might potentially affect any aspect of the broadly understood ecosystem. In other words, CDA and EDA take (if possible) the perspectives of those who are affected by dominance and inequality (van Dijk, 1993) and focus on "the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination" (van Dijk, 2001). Along with incorporating social, cultural and economic effects on particular groups or individuals, ecolinguistics is additionally concerned with the ecological consequences of human activity on the whole planet.

The ecosophy underlying the present volume draws on the concept of deep ecology developed by Næss (1995) that has also been enthused by Stib-

be's (2015) ecosophy. It has also been inspired by the perspective of "sustainable development" proposed by Baker (2006, 2016) and integrating the social, economic, cultural and environmental concerns, which seems particularly applicable for the analysis of the discursive construction of corporate identity that nowadays tends to incorporate ecological concerns. Following the categorisation proposed by Stibbe (*ibidem*), discourses have been classified as destructive, ambivalent or beneficial, depending on their compliance with the proclaimed ecosophy and effect on the environment. As far as ideological aspects of destructive discourses are concerned, special heed was paid to the concept of neoliberalism affecting the social, political and economic structures of the contemporary world that exert a negative effect on social and ecological sustainability.

In conclusion, the perspective offered by CDA seemed too narrow to analyse the discursive construction of corporate identity that nowadays has a certain ecological embedding. I propound after Alexander (2009) that overt ecological concerns expressed by corporations should be interpreted as surface ecologisation of discourse that serves corporate aims. In other words, resorting to "green" values is cynically used to meet the expectations of the company stakeholders in order to boost corporate image. For this reason, an analysis of discourse limited to the identification of the ideological aspects of the relations between the oppressed and the oppressor(s) would be rather insufficient in the case of corporate discourse, skilfully interweaving dominant neoliberal discourses and resistant to environmental ones, blurring the roles delineated by CDA. For this reason, EDA offering an explicit and comprehensive framework for the analysis of the discursive construction of the contemporary world will be applied to investigate the construction of corporate identity as specified in the Ecological Model of Corporate Identity proposed in chapter 2.

Research on Corporate Identity: A Corpus-Assisted Ecological Discourse Analysis

Introduction

Having delineated the theoretical framework for the understanding of the concepts of corporate identity, discourse and ideology, my aim in this chapter is to present a research project that endeavours to analyse the discursive construction of corporate identity, with special focus on its ideological underpinning, confronted with the assumed ecosophy. In accordance with the proposed Ecological Model of Corporate Identity, the discursively constructed corporate identity is understood as a concept deeply embedded in its environmental and anthropomorphic ecosystem. Therefore, the self-representation of the company, guided primarily by corporate goals, emerges from a particular socio-economic and ecological context and the corporate identity discourse might be, to a large extent, interpreted as a reflection of the dominating ideologies. Simultaneously, bearing in mind the real and symbolic power of corporations, it also exerts substantial influence on the ecosystem, especially the socio-economic relations in society and the physical condition of the Earth and its resources.

The main rationale behind the study is the need for a comprehensive large-scale study on the contemporary corporate identity discourse embedded in the ecolinguistic paradigm. As discussed in the opening chapter, ecolinguistics has a lot to offer for critical analysts studying the discursive construction of society, which, as I purport, seems rather incomplete without taking the “eco” perspective. Nonetheless, ecolinguistics as a discipline “has not stretched its muscles yet”, nor realised its full potential, which might be mainly accounted for its compartmentalisation. The current project might be therefore seen as an attempt to contribute to the field and incorporate the ecological metaphor to mainstream linguistics. Additionally, I also attempt to propose an analytical framework that might be

further applied and developed in ecolinguistic discourse studies. Except for certain methodological challenges, especially pertaining to a lack of an established analytical framework, the project has also been motivated by the fact that the construction of corporate identity discourse in cyberspace has not received sufficient attention and remains a lacuna in the field of ecolinguistics. The discussion on the issues has so far been undertaken in dispersed, small scale studies of a rather descriptive character and has often been concluded with the provision of prescriptive recommendations for corporate communication managers or web designers (cf. Breeze, 2013). The critical, not to mention eco-critical, perspective is under-represented or even barely existent. Corporate themes, especially those pertaining to corporate ecological commitment, resonate in selected works of Alexander (2009) and Stibbe (2015), which I have found particularly inspirational for this project. Yet, the previous projects might be qualified as case studies based on rather small corpora, lacking an overtly specified ecosophical framework or methodological procedures. In order to bridge these gaps, I have designed a large corpus-based study, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Accordingly, taking the ecosophy specified in chapter 4 as the point of reference, I will conduct a corpus-based, computer assisted EDA which allows to verify intuitive hypotheses by “hard” linguistic data, owing to the triangulation of research methods. A detailed report on the research process and its results will be presented in the present chapter.

5.1. Main assumptions and objectives

The rise of environmentalism in the 1970/1980s, initially perceived as a minority movement, reached its climax in the 1990s, when environmental issues were on the political agenda of numerous governments and political parties in western democracies as well as the media. Altogether, this interest led to a noticeable rise in the awareness of the public concerning environmental issues and instigated common distrust in corporations. Within a decade, environmentalism gained public consent and became accepted as the masterframe in public discourse (Eder, 1996). Yet, this transition of the status of environmental discourse from a counter-discourse to mainstream discourse, referred to by Eder (1996: 207) as post-environmentalism, evokes rather mixed feelings. On the one hand, a multiplicity of voices contributing to the discussion on ecology might be interpreted as a sign of high ecological awareness and reinforcement of positive environmental discourses. On the other, it empowers those responsible for environmental destruction to play the main role in the debate and have a tangible influence on global ecosystems.

The consequent emergence of green movements in the 1990s and their representation in political parties and the media attracted the attention of the public to environmental issues and put in the “limelight” the largest business organisations, perceived as the chief architects of ecological destruction. Therefore, I posit that environmental issues have been incorporated into the mainstream discourse and the eco-social paradigm (see Jonker and Marberg, 2007) has become the dominating discourse pattern in capitalist democracies. This trend has not remained unanswered by corporations, which leveraged to take some action to become greener and demonstrate their ecological commitment. Initially, companies took a rather defensive approach, which, however, soon transformed into an offensive one due to the adoption of “the surface language and claims of the environmentalists” (Alexander, 2009: 32). In response to a huge wave of criticism and changing public expectations, corporations have decided to reconstruct their identity and project a new “green” image emanating an aura of social and environmental involvement. As a result, under public pressure environmentalism has colonised corporate discourse and corporations have begun to advance narratives on their new eco-friendly identities, conventionalised into the mainstream corporate discourse. Even though some researchers (e.g. Vasil, 2009) perceive the presence of green capitalism and environmental discourses in the corporate domain as a rather positive phenomenon, I follow Budinsky and Bryant (2013) in challenging this view and purport that first and foremost such discourse serves corporate ends and as such it reinforces existing power structures, at the cost of collective and environmental interests.

Therefore, I argue that corporations have become one of the main players in the global ecological debate and have appropriated environmental discourse in order to enhance their reputation. Yet, corporate discourse is underlain with shallow environmentalism that is cynically used as a symbolic legitimacy tool. Accordingly, the main assumption underlying the current study is that corporations construct their identity based on ecological appeals, which are used instrumentally in order to obfuscate capitalist goals lying at the very core of corporate activity and legitimise their actions in order to win social support and acceptance. These practices might be interpreted as corporate greenwashing, which functions to mask the hidden neoliberal agenda.

The main objective of the current study is to identify the discursive construction of corporate identity and unveil the ideological grounding of the corporate identity discourse that apparently attempts to bridge both environmental and capitalist interests. This goal is attained by examining how ideology is represented in the cybergenre of “About us” sections of corporate webpages, deemed the main carriers of corporate identity. The current project assumes ecological embeddedness of all human activity, including

that of business. This assumption underlies the proposed Ecological Model of Corporate Identity, which embeds the company in a widely understood ecosystem, integrating the environmental and anthropological dimensions. The relations between the company and its ecosystem are dynamic and multi-directional since the company simultaneously influences its ecosystem and is influenced by it.

Accordingly, the study addressed the following three main research questions (RQ) and two research subquestions (RSQ):

RQ1: What is the generic structure and communicative purpose of corporate “About us” website sections?

RQ2: How is corporate identity discursively constructed in “About us” website sections?

RSQ2a: What are the keywords employed to reflect the nature of corporate identity construction?

RSQ2b: What are the key themes in corporate self-constructed image online, as evidenced in the source data?

RQ3: What are the basic ideologies that ground corporate identity? Are they aligned with the principles of the assumed ecosophy?

The novelty of the present research project lies in the application of the ecolinguistic approach that is primarily concerned with analysing “the discursive formation of identity to examine how ecological identities are forged in language” (Stibbe, 2014: 125). The realisation of the research objectives within the ecolinguistic paradigm seems to be a challenging task since the methodology of EDA is still unsettled (see Alexander and Stibbe, 2014; Stibbe, 2015). Therefore, I will pursue with a mixed-method research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to optimise the analysis. Such an integration not only enhances the strengths of the approaches but also eliminates their weaknesses, allowing for the triangulation of research findings (see Dörnyei, 2007: 235). A detailed report on the applied methodology and research design will be provided in the subsequent section.

5.2. Method

The current study integrates both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. Accordingly, EDA employed to the textual content of company websites, limited to their “About us” sections, is supported by computer-assisted corpus analysis. The general methodological framework draws on Alexander and Stibbe’s (2014) and Stibbe’s (2015) contributions that advo-

cate the integration of the ecolinguistic perspective with Critical Discourse Studies. As far as CDA is concerned, the current work has been primarily informed by its most prominent theoreticians (esp. van Dijk, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2008 and Fairclough 1992b, 1995a, 1995b, 2003b; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). As a result, the methodology is a combination of various approaches, orchestrated with the aims of the study and the type of corpus.

The analysis is augmented by concordance and corpus analysis techniques in order to triangulate the results and apply a heuristic instrument that helps to overcome the perceived limitations of the qualitative approaches. Such a supplementation of discourse analysis with computer-assisted corpus analysis has been successfully used in the field of critical discourse studies (Baker et al., 2008; Hardt-Mautner, 2015; Orpin, 2005;) and in ecolinguistics (e.g. Alexander, 2009; Gerbig, 1996, 1997, 2000). As Alexander (2009: 7) puts it:

Using a computer-held corpus of texts with a simple concordance program, we can automatically ascertain a number of facts. We can know the total number of words (running words) and the total number of different words (word-forms) in a text. On the basis of these two measures we can, among other things, ascertain the degree of *lexical diversity* manifested in the individual texts.

Concordancers greatly facilitate analytical work by giving instant access to particular lexical items and their collocations, which might have been overlooked during perfunctory reading, and enhance qualitative analysis by providing additional evidence. Thus, computer generated data will be used to expose ideological stances in the analysed corpus. The value of corpus analysis in critical studies has also been appreciated by Norman Fairclough (2003), the canonical expert in CDA, who pointed to its usefulness in identifying the keywords and investigating collocations. It must be noted, though, that corpus analysis plays a complementary, supporting role to the critical interpretation of a particular text. As Fairclough puts it (2003: 6): "Such findings [corpus analysis] are of value, though their value is limited, and they need to be complemented by more intensive and detailed qualitative textual analysis".

Hardt-Mautner (1995) was one of the first discourse analysts who conducted a corpus-supported study to analyse a corpus of British newspapers articles on European political and economic integration. This successful matrimony of the qualitative CDA and the quantitative analysis was commented by the researcher in the following way:

[c]oncordancing effectively heralds a breaking down of the quantitative/qualitative distinction, providing as it does the basis for quantitative analysis without 'deverbalising' the data, that is, without transferring it, through human intervention, to the numerical mode. (Hardt-Mautner 1995: 24)

The combination of CL and DA has also been recommended by (P. Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008; Orpin, 2005), mainly on the ground of reliability, objectivity and replicability of quantitative analyses that are apparently lacking in qualitative discourse analyses. Corpora enable the researcher to avoid criticism directed at discourse analysis that dubs “an item important because the researcher says it is important” (Handford, 2012: 17; after Widdowson, 1998). Realising a bit reductionist character of the former statement, the fact is that the main assumption of CL is that frequency and recurrence are significant aspects of language (Stubbs, 2007) and computer-assisted corpus analysis identifies recurring elements with speed, accuracy and objectivity beyond the capacities of even the most determined and tenuously working researcher.

The major categories for analysis in this approach embrace items that:

- Are frequent.
- Are statistically significant (compared to a reference corpus).
- Are stylistically salient/culturally key.
- Have been shown to be important in other related studies (Handford, 2012: 17).

The first two types of analysis are of a quantitative nature and might be performed by means of corpus software. The last two, though, require an a priori specification of items to be scrutinised (Stubbs, 2001a; Tribble, 2002), such as metaphors or turn organisation (cf. Handford and Koester, 2010). The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches seems well-substantiated in analysing professional discourse, which particularly requires the understanding of the relationship between text and context (Kong, 2014), i.e. understanding the nature of actions and practices that are performed with language. Thus, following Handford (2012: 18), it might be argued that CL facilitated the identification of linguistic items that are embedded in a given context and induce certain actions or practices. As Handford puts it (ibidem): “[a]n item in a particular context has a situated meaning that reflexively constitutes particular discursive, professional and/or social practices”.

In the current study corpus analysis will be used more as a method of data analysis facilitating the core eco-critical analysis rather than an aim in itself. Following Stubbs (1994: 212), who recommended the combination of “the analysis of large scale patterns and across long texts with the detailed study of concordance lines”, emerging lexical items such as keywords or clusters will be the starting point for further scrutiny of their extended concordances or, if necessary, longer textual passages, with the ultimate goal of deconstructing the ideological underpinning of corporate identity and its alignment with the assumed ecosophy. Concluding, the combination of both approaches allows for the triangulation of the findings and results in a unique synergy effect: corpus technology offers an objective verification of “a researcher’s intuition” (Partington, 2003: 12), while the employed EDA offers criticism and interpretation of the findings.

5.3 Quantitative analysis: Elements of corpus analysis

5.3.1. Frequency

One of the basic tools of computer-assisted text analysis is the generation of word frequency lists that are very helpful in further data processing. In corpus studies a word-list is understood as a list of word-types (particular repeated word tokens) that appear in a given corpus. They are usually displayed together with their frequency and might be ranked and alphabetically ordered (Scott and Tribble, 2006).

Nevertheless, it must be noted that despite their undisputable usefulness such lists are not very telling when analysed in isolation. As Sinclair (1991: 31) puts it: “A frequency list of word-forms is never more than a set of hints or clues to the nature of a text”. Nevertheless, the frequency of the use of a given word, particularly in proportion to other lexical items, might reveal the emphasis the writer intends to put on specific issues. Lexical repetition might itself be an important purposeful rhetorical device (Alexander, 2009: 28).

It is worth noting that frequent items are not important per se: unusual items can have considerable force, frequent items can be uninteresting and the absence of something can be extremely important. Nevertheless, as a first step, quantitative analyzes of fully transcribed complete encounters allow for the texts to be prized open with an attractive degree of interpretative objectivity (Handford, 2012: 16).

Typically, computer-generated frequency lists might be alphabetically or rank ordered. Other orderings (e.g. reverse alphabetical order, sorting by true prefix or suffix, capitalisation, word-length) are by all means possible but less frequently applied. Alphabetically ordered frequency lists enable the reader to quickly find items they are interested in. Even a short glimpse at a rank ordered frequency list (e.g. British National Corpus – BNC) makes it clear that the most frequent items in a corpus are typically function words, such as *the, and, of, to, in*, etc., which are referred to by Scott and Tribble (2006: 12) as “the textual glue”. Corpus analysis tools are able to compute not only the frequency of single words, but also word-clusters that might provide further contextual information.²³

The most frequent items in a corpus (usually top 100 or 200 words) are referred to as *high-frequency items*. The majority of these items, as mentioned earlier, would be grammatical words such as prepositions, determiners, pronouns, conjunctions “whose role is to glue texts together by supplying grammatical information to a lexical warp of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs”

²³ The word *cluster* is typically used in WordSmith Tools as well as AntConc applied in this study. Biber et al. (2000) use the name *lexical bundles*.

(Scott and Tribble, 2006: 24). Medium-frequency items are usually lexical rather than grammatical items, typically represented by common nouns, verbs and adjectives. Finally, the least frequent items, which appear in a corpus only once, are referred to as *hapax legomena*. In BNC they constitute 40% of the list and are often non-English words, typos and mistakes as well as proper nouns (Scott and Tribble, 2006: 11).

5.3.2. Keyness

One of the most illustrative definitions of “keywords” has been provided by Marina Bondi (2010: 1) who has adapted Orwell’s famous maxim from *Animal Farm*: “All words are equal, but some are more equal than others”. Despite the fact that lexical items are ascribed an equal status, some words – keywords – play a particularly important role in the construction of meaning in text. Scott (2010) argues that the top positions of lexical items on the keyword list indicate the topic of a text but their specific ordering on the list is not that important.

The first attempts to identify particularly important words characterising a given community, occurring in a specific context and carrying culture-specific values, were taken in the 1930s by Firth (1935) who used the notion of “focal word” in reference to “sociologically important words” (cited in Tyrkkö, 2010: 81). The motif of “cultural keywords”²⁴ re-emerged four decades later in cultural studies in Williams’s work (1983) attempting to discern lexical items representing contemporary western culture. By integrating synchronic and diachronic perspective, Williams proposed a list of words such as *alienation, capitalism, family, fiction, hegemony, literature, media, tradition*, etc. connecting keywords and discourse communities and orienting his study towards “the analysis of historical and social macro-contextual factors” (Bondi, 2006: 2). Williams (1976) paid little heed to textual and generic aspects of his analyses and practically ignored methodological issues. An intuitive rather than data-based approach has also been taken by Wierzbicka (1999, 2006) who aims at discerning universal vs. culture-specific foundations of language. The framework developed by Wierzbicka integrates cognitive and interactional perspectives, putting a particularly strong emphasis on the role of values in shaping interaction and its strategies. The main demerit of her proposals lies in the selection of keywords and data that relies on the intuition of the researcher rather than well-defined methodological procedures.

²⁴ The term “cultural keyword” is also found in Stubbs’ works (1996, 2001b) in reference to lexical items that can be used to discern topics particularly significant in a given culture.

The approach to keyness taken in the present study follows that of Scott and Tribble (2006: 59) who see it as a predominantly textual quality and study it by means of quantitative computer-assisted methods, which have become central in CL. In this perspective keywords are not automatically perceived as keys to culture; they are rather seen as tools helping to interpret a text. In Scott and Tribble's (2006: 55) definition, keyness is seen as "a quality words may have in a given text or set of texts, suggesting that they are important, they reflect what the text is really about, avoiding trivia and insignificant detail". Accordingly, the scholars (Scott and Tribble, 2006: 59-60) view keywords as markers of *aboutness* as well as the style of a text, which might be explained by the fact that significantly frequent words make a particular text unique, signalling in this way its predominant topic. A typical list of keywords in a text consists of proper nouns, lexical words and grammatical words, but lexical items that are most indicative of aboutness of text (i.e. are helpful in identifying the topic of the text) include nouns, adjectives and lexical verbs (Scott, 1999). As Bondi (2010) argues:

Key-words, key-clusters and key-phrases are not always elements of the conceptual structure of a text. There may be elements of grammatical structure or elements of self-reference. These become useful points to the most frequent textual structures of a text as well as its most frequent metadiscursive phraseology (Bondi, 2010: 7).

Thus, using Sinclair and Mauranen's terminology (2006: 59-60), keywords might be categorised into "message-oriented elements" developing a particular topic or indicating the aboutness of a text and its communicative purpose, and "organization-oriented elements" that structure discourse.

The identification of particular keywords is based on the statistical significance of their frequency in a corpus when compared to the corresponding parameters of a reference corpus (Scott and Tribble, 2006). More specifically, keywords are usually identified from corpora by means of chi squared or log likelihood methods. When the difference in frequency of a particular lexical item is significantly higher, it is ascribed the status of a keyword and when its frequency is significantly lower an item is classified as a negative keyword (Scott and Tribble, 2006: 55-88). In order to make a distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches to keyness, Jukka Tyrkkö (2010: 80) discerns two conceptually different terms, namely the *keyword* and *key word*. The former refers to lexical items that have statistical keyness, and the latter is recognised as key by human readers. This terminology will be used hereinafter.

Discerning statistically significant keywords in a corpus is not an aim in itself for a discourse analyst, but it points to elements that require further analysis and interpretation on the part of a researcher. In practical terms,

computer-assisted identification of keywords greatly facilitates a researcher's work and provides more reliable, statistically significant text-based data for further investigation. It must be emphasised, though, that the statistical identification of keywords is not completely parallel to human cognitive text processing, which involves a comprehensive integration and understanding of linguistic, textual and cultural aspects (Tyrkkö, 2010: 81). As a result, statistical keywords rarely match lists of lexical items recognised as significant by humans. This concerns, in particular, grammatical keywords (e.g. pronouns, modal verbs, etc.) that "are both too frequent in text for a human to evaluate accurately and too transparent to take notice of" (Tyrkkö, 2010: 82). By contrast, the strength of human readers lies in their ability to make holistic observations and interpretations concerning texts and perceive keyness in a qualitative way (ibidem). As Bondi (2006: 7) puts it:

[w]ork on keyness in text easily lead to work on discourse, linking language use beyond the sentence to the study of social practices and ideological assumptions associated with language (thus involving the different definitions of discourse listed by Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton 2001: 1).

Bondi (2010: 3) and Groom (2010: 73) point to the value of keyword identification in the study of specialised discourses or positioning a text in a particular domain. In her view, one of the most challenging tasks is selecting representative corpora.

5.3.3. Concordances

In general, the aim of concordance analysis is "to identify patterns of unusually high co-occurrence" (Scott and Tribble, 2006: 33). Following Scott and Tribble's (2006) terminology, the term *node* stands for the searched word and *collocates* refer to lexical items that collocate with the node. The most popular concordancers (e.g. WordSmith or AntConc, used in this study) enable the researcher to find the most frequent items positioned to the right or left of the node, which are ordered by frequency. The clearest results are, however, offered by the "clusters" function that will be predominantly used in the current study. Clusters, discussed in the previous section, are not synonymous with multi-word units, easily recognised by native speakers, but simply the most frequently repeated strings in a corpus (Scott and Tribble, 2006). It significantly facilitates the researcher's work by providing instant access to the immediate context of keywords and their position in text. In the current study concordance and cluster analysis will mainly play the function of a springboard for further eco-critical analysis.

5.4. Qualitative analysis: Ecological Discourse Analysis

The main assumptions of EDA, compared and contrasted with CDA, have been presented in chapter 4. The critical aspect of EDA entails echoing CDA by exposing the significance of rejecting the unreflective acceptance of the façade of reality and postulating its critical interpretation (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005: 410-11). Like all critical studies, EDA is based on a philosophy that offers a particular ethical vision to be pursued by societies (cf. Stibbe, 2014). Such a philosophy, in ecolinguistics referred to as “ecosophy”, is used as a framework against which discourses are evaluated. The tenets of the ecosophy underlying the current study have been presented in chapter 4. To reiterate briefly, they are based on the following assumptions against which the corporate identity discourse will be studied:

- Næss’s (1995) concept of deep ecology, promoting an ecocentric perspective;
- sustainable development that attempts to bring together economic growth and sustainable development (Baker, 2006; 2016).

Following van Dijk (1995: 146) who postulates that “discourse semantics may be multiply affected by underlying ideologies (...) both at the microlevel of lexicalization, sentence meaning and local sentence coherence as well as on the macrolevel of topics and overall meaning”, the process of “unpacking” the ideological underpinning of corporate identity discourse will be undertaken at these two levels. Accordingly, at the first stage of the analysis I will analyse the keywords emerging from the corpus in order to discern the macro structure of discourse and identity, including the dominating themes. The macro structure of the analysis is delineated by van Dijk’s ideological schema (1995) that will organise further analysis into the following sections:

- 1) Self-identity descriptions;
- 2) Activity-descriptions;
- 3) Goal-descriptions;
- 4) Norm and value description;
- 5) Resources description.

The categories proposed by van Dijk (*ibidem*) are particularly applicable “when we examine discourses that generally function as modes of self-defence, legitimation, or explanation, or that have other self-serving functions we would typically expect a prominent presence of meanings that can be interpreted as expressions of such categories” (*ibidem*: 147). These qualities

characterise corporate identity discourse, which primarily plays self-serving, legitimising functions. It must also be emphasised here that ideologies are not only limited to “groups that are related by dominance, power or struggle” (van Dijk, 1995: 139) but are shared by any group or institution in society, reflecting “a group-relevant, self-serving selection of fundamental socio-cultural values”. Van Dijk (ibidem) emphasises a “polarizing structure” of ideology, which discerns between “US and THEM”. Elaborating on his thesis, van Dijk (1998) puts forward the concept of “ideological square”, which stands for the strategies of positive “in-group” presentation as opposed to negative “out-group” positioning. In discourse this strategy is realised in the binary form of a favourable representation of *Self* and *Us* versus unfavourable representation of *Others* and *Them*, by means of selective linguistic choices (van Dijk, 1998: 33). At the discourse level, this polarisation relies on the application of linguistic means expressing positive vs. negative evaluations, taking the form of “emphasizing our good properties/actions; emphasizing their bad properties/actions, mitigating our bad properties/actions; and mitigating their good properties/actions” (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005: 410). In the corporate context, however, van Dijk’s (ibidem) postulate assuming a “polarizing structure” of ideology and the binary opposition between “US and THEM” seems less relevant due to the strong focus of the corporate identity discourse on auto-narration and self-referencing rather positioning the organisation in opposition to other groups.

From the ecolinguistic perspective, however, van Dijk’s (1995) categories do not exhaustively account for the specific ideological struggle between the assumed ecosophy and neoliberalism, pivotal in this work. Therefore, in order to verify the hypothesis concerning the shift of the hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism, deemed particularly destructive for the environment and social equity (cf. Fairclough, 2006), towards sustainability, I recommend the incorporation of two additional categories:

- 6) Ecological identity;
- 7) Neoliberal themes.

At the micro level, the analysis is also to a large extent corpus-driven as it is based on the examination of words of potential interest in their immediate contexts by performing keyword-in-context (KWIC) searches (Stubbs, 2001b). The analysis proceeds by illustrating “how clusters of linguistic features come together in discourses to present a particular worldview, then judging the worldview against the ecosophy” (Stibbe, 2014: 121). Then, I run concordance searches for the most prominent keywords. Keyword clusters and concordances are critically analysed within thematical sections corresponding with

van Dijk's (1995) ideological schema and two additional categories labeled "ecological identity" and "neoliberal themes".

Finally, key lexical items are eco-critically analysed in their immediate context within each of the seven macro categories. Selected concordances also undergo a more detailed textual analysis with a special focus on the lexico-grammatical representation of social actors including the following categories, widely applied in CDA:

- 1) The choice of lexical items, especially those implying:
 - positive or negative evaluations;
 - inclusion vs. exclusion;
 - personal or impersonal representation (e.g. the use of nouns vs. pronouns, proper names, specific or generic classification).
- 2) Grammatical role as opposed to one another (Actor or Affected, Activated or Passivised), based on the assumption that the representation of social actors is a matter of social semiotics (e.g. a consistent passivisation of a particular group might lead to their perception as incapable of performing agentive roles; cf. Fairclough, 2003b: 145-150; after Halliday, 1994; van Leeuwen, 1996).

5.5. Analysed corpus

The corpus draws on the list of 132 companies qualified in 2014 as the top ethical companies in the world by the Ethisphere Institute. This choice was motivated by the fact that the companies holding the top positions in the ranking have managed to create positive corporate images worldwide and for this reason have been assumed to set global trends in communicating corporate identity. The ranking, dubbed the Ethisphere's World's Most Ethical Companies (Ethisphere Institute, 2014), is based on the Ethisphere proprietary ranking system, centred on the Ethics Quotient™ (EQ). EQ is computed on the basis of a survey that contains "a series of multiple-choice questions that capture a company's performance in an objective, consistent and standardized way" (Methodology of the Ethisphere Ranking) that pertain to the following areas of corporate activity: Ethics and Compliance Program (35%), Corporate Citizenship and Responsibility (20%), Culture of Ethics (20%), Governance (15%), Leadership, Innovation and Reputation (10%). The methodology of the ranking has been designed and approved by experts from the World's Most Ethical Companies Methodology Advisory Panel. An initial "self-reported" EQ is taken into account at the primary

stages of the classification. It is, however, later independently verified by additional research of corporate documentation as well as media sources and partners' studies available in the public sphere in order to assure objectivity of legal and reputational aspects. In this way the initial self-reported performance is validated by independent analyses.

5.5.1. Unit of analysis

Since nowadays corporate websites are the major communication channels, they have been singled out as units of analysis. A website usually consists of a number of webpages defined as "individual documents written in hypertext markup language (HTML)" (Pollach, 2002: 20). Downloadable materials such as complete documents (e.g. pdf files) do not qualify as webpages. The use of the term "home page" is restricted to the opening webpage of a website, which is commonly the first page available to the visitor after entering the company's website address in the browser interface (*ibidem*). The content of the webpages under current study has been limited to "About us" sections as the main carriers of corporate identity. As shown in chapter 3, these sections are considered to be the crucial corporate identity genre also dubbed corporate "brochure sites" (Kleindl, 2001) that typically provide information about the company purpose and value stance. Such sections are usually targeted at wide audiences and their potential readers embrace the whole spectrum of stakeholders ranging from employees or customers to potential investors.

5.5.2. Data selection process

The process of data selection and forming an electronic corpus in HTML was conducted in the period of June-December 2015. The content of the corpus has been limited to textual, computer-readable data; all images, video and pdf files have been excluded. After the conversion into a textual file, the corpus contains 1,953,491 word tokens (39,848 word types).

The complete list of the companies under study and their webpage addresses are available in Appendix 1. All the companies in the corpus are international corporations that represent 21 different countries but most of them originate in the USA (77%). The vast majority of the webpages are conducted in English (84.11%), yet those conducted in other languages also possess an English version that has been included in the corpus. Table 5.1 shows the composition of the companies under study by the country of origin.

Table 5.1. Corpus details: Companies by the country of origin

Country	Number of companies	%
USA	101	76.52
France	3	2.27
India	3	2.27
Japan	3	2.27
Australia	2	1.52
Brazil	2	1.52
Ireland	2	1.52
Switzerland	2	1.52
UK	2	1.52
Belgium	1	0.76
Colombia	1	0.76
Germany	1	0.76
Guatemala	1	0.76
Hong Kong	1	0.76
Italy	1	0.76
Panama	1	0.76
Poland	1	0.76
Portugal	1	0.76
Singapore	1	0.76
Spain	1	0.76
Sweden	1	0.76
Total	132	100.00

As far as the type of industry is concerned, the companies are active in a plethora of different fields of business, and represent a wide range of industries, qualified to 44 categories developed by the Ethisphere Institute (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Industries represented by the companies under study

Name of industry	Number of companies	%
Insurance	11	8.33
Energy & Utilities	9	6.82
Computer (Hardware, Services, Software)	8	6.06
Food & Beverage/Food Service	6	4.55
Industrial Manufacturing	6	4.55
Banks	5	3.79
Financial Services	5	3.79

Hospitals	5	3.79
Oil & Gas	4	3.03
Apparel	3	2.27
Automotive	3	2.27
Diversified Machinery	3	2.27
Engineering & Design	3	2.27
Forestry, Paper & Packaging	3	2.27
Health & Beauty	3	2.27
Healthcare Products & Services	3	2.27
Information Technology Services	3	2.27
Lodging, Leisure & Recreation	3	2.27
Real Estate	3	2.27
Semiconductor Equipment & Materials	3	2.27
Sourcing Services	3	2.27
Telecommunications Equipment	3	2.27
Aerospace & Defense	2	1.52
Chemicals	2	1.52
Construction & Building Materials	2	1.52
Consumer Products	2	1.52
Government Services	2	1.52
Machine Tools & Accessories	2	1.52
Metals	2	1.52
Payment Card Services	2	1.52
Retail	2	1.52
Scientific & Technical Services	2	1.52
Staffing & Outsourcing Services	2	1.52
Toys & Games	2	1.52
Business Services	1	0.76
Consulting Services	1	0.76
Electronics Wholesale	1	0.76
Environmental Services	1	0.76
Media & Publishing	1	0.76
Philanthropy	1	0.76
Safety Equipment	1	0.76
Specialty Eateries	1	0.76
Transportation & Logistics	1	0.76
Utilities	1	0.76
Total		100.00

5.5.3. Reference corpus

The major quantitative step in the methodology is to extract statistically significant keywords (Scott, 1999), i.e. lexical items with significantly higher or lower random frequency compared to a larger reference corpus. The reference corpus used in the present study is the British National Corpus (BNC) – more specifically, the 2007 BNC XML version, which is the revised third edition of the original 1994 version. Created by the Oxford University Press in the 1990s, the corpus contains 100 million words and is currently the largest corpus of late 20th century British English that has been used in the lion's part of corpus studies.

5.6. Data analysis

As far as the adopted analytical procedure is concerned, it has been partly inspired by the recommendations for the triangulation of the methodologies associated with CL and CDA provided by Baker et al. (2008: 295). Yet, the procedure has been simplified and adapted to the needs of the current ecolinguistic study, finally taking the form presented in Fig. 5.3.

Corpus linguistics is used as a starting point in the analysis, providing “a general ‘pattern map’ of the data” (Baker et al., 2008: 295), especially in the form of keywords and frequencies that allow for the identification of the main themes in the corpus. CL also enables the effective identification of clusters and collocations that are scrutinised in more detail at the further stages (stage 6 and 7). It must be emphasised that CL plays a complementary, supportive role to EDA and its application aims at assuring the objectivity and replicability of the study. Yet, the quantitative analysis, focused on lexical patterns and collocations, significantly facilitates the whole analytical process and guides eco-critical interpretation of the lexical data emerging from the corpus. Therefore, using Hyland's (2012: 31) terminology, the current research might be simultaneously qualified as corpus based and corpus driven as it respectively aims at testing hypotheses and discovering new insights.

In more technical terms, the software tool used in the study is *AntConc* version 3.4.4 developed by Lawrence Anthony (2014) that along with *WordSmith* represents the third generation of concordancers most frequently used for the analyses of corpora up to 100 million words (Anthony, 2013). The tool is freely available online (Anthony, 2014) and it has been ranked the second most popular tool used for analysing corpora (Tribble, 2012). The top ranked tool *corpus.by.edu* owes its popularity to the fact that it gives access to the largest

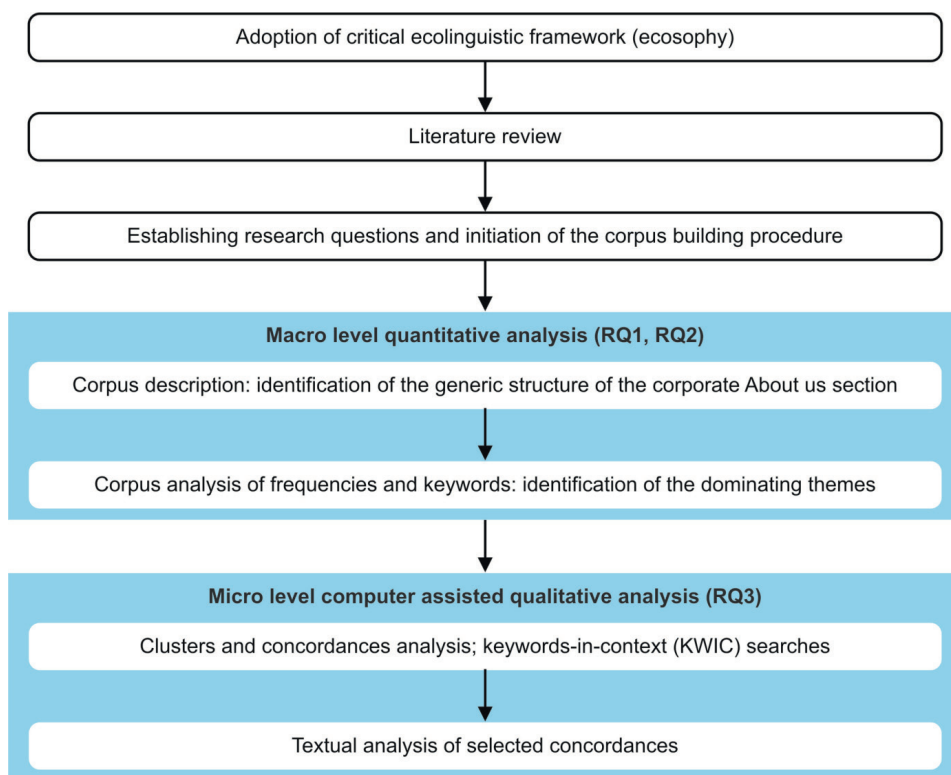


Figure 5.3. Stages in corpus-assisted EDA

corpus of contemporary American English (Anthony, 2013)²⁵. However, it has not been selected for the current study since it is not a general purpose tool. Moreover, due to the fact that the size of the corpus under study does not exceed 100 million words, it can be easily analysed with assistance of the third generation tools designed for small and mid-size corpora. In sum, *AntConc* version 3.4.4 is an easily accessible tool that simultaneously offers the most suitable options for the corpus under study.

5.7. Results and discussion

Following the recommendations for presenting mixed research reports formulated by Dörnyei (2007), the current section integrates the analysis and discussion of research results, mainly on the grounds of the reader-friendli-

²⁵ See Anthony (2013) for an in-depth critical analysis of the current tools used by corpus linguistics.

ness and the clarity of the debate. Moreover, the integration of the two sections appears more effective since it “allows for an ongoing commentary and theoretical framing” (ibidem: 284). While presenting the findings of the first stage of the analysis, addressing RQ1 and RQ2, I take the bird’s eye view in order to delineate the generic characteristics of the “About us” sections and identify keywords and master themes. At the next stage of the analysis, I shift from the bird’s to the ground level order to address RQ3 concerning the ideological grounding of corporate identity.

5.7.1. Quantitative analysis

5.7.1.1. “About us” sections: Generic features (RQ1)

In accordance with Nielsen’s (2003) recommendations, the majority of the companies under study label the identity sections of their corporate webpages “About us” (37%) or “About + company name” (27.3%). The remaining companies use the headers named “Our company”, “Overview” or simply “About”. Yet, for further reference, the common term “About us” will be used hereinafter for the entire section.

As regards the content of individual “About us” sections, it has turned out to be highly diversified (see Table 5.3) and, similarly to Pollach’s (2005) findings, not a single category has been identified in every “About us” section that might be explicated by the fact that companies tend to focus on the issues they deem strategic from their perspective. The core categories that have appeared in the majority of sections (moves) include: an overview, CSR and sustainability sub-section, value stance, the leaders’ profile and history. Markedly, the frequency of CSR/sustainability sections is at the very top of the ranking, preceded only by a “profile” section that addresses the basic identity question “who are we as an organization?” and typically provides succinct information on the company’s field and scope of activity. The third most common subsection presents the mission of the company and its core values, often accompanied by the vision and code of ethics. Another prevailing subsection acquaints the audience with the company’s leaders, usually by publicising their biographies and emphasising their contributions to the success of the company. Almost half of the companies in the corpus feature their history and about one third provides accounts of their ethics and products or brands. Awards granted by recognised organisations or rankings conducted by influential magazines offer credibility compared to the third-party endorsement and are usually desired and exposed by the companies. Surprisingly, the “Awards and recognition” section, potentially strategic from the perspective of reputation management, is contained in less than 30% of the webpages. For this reason, even though the subsection has

marked its presence in the corpus, its image enhancing potential does not seem to be fully used by all the companies under study. The third-party endorsement is also present in the subsection “Media/press releases” (13%) that publishes media extracts presenting the companies in a positive light. Corporate news coverage is provided in the newsroom that often takes the form of a separate, elaborate, dynamic and regularly updated subsection, contrasted with a relatively stable and static “About us” webpage.

“Career” subsections have been identified in every fourth “About us” section. It must be noted, though, that some companies deal with employment issues in separate sections, entirely devoted to potential employees. The main role of these subsections boils down to attracting top job candidates by positioning the company as a good employer offering decent working conditions and satisfactory remuneration as well as observing the binding legal and ethical norms and regulation, in line with the latest trend of employer branding (e.g. Wojtaszczyk, 2012). In this context, special emphasis is placed on the “diversity and inclusion” issues, sometimes dealt with in separate subsections (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3. Generic structure of the “About us” section

Name of subpage (move)	Hits	%
About (master category)	132	100
Overview/who we are/profile	108	81.8
CSR/sustainability	87	65.9
Mission/vision/values	82	62.1
Executive/board of directors/executive team/leadership	81	61.4
History	61	46.2
Governance/ethics	46	34.8
Our brand/brands/products	40	30.3
Awards and recognition/distinction	38	28.8
Careers	34	25.8
News and events/newsroom	32	24.2
Investor relations	30	22.7
Community	29	22
Diversity and inclusion	24	18.2
Media/press releases	17	12.9
Innovation	16	12.1
Our people	14	10.6
Location(s)	12	9.09
Partners	10	7.58

Reports and disclosure/publication	9	6.82
Our story	8	6.06
Research	5	3.79
Financial strength	4	3.03
Customers	3	2.27
Quality	1	0.76

“Investor relations” also tend to be separate subsections as they are not typically targeted at the general public and require more specialised information. Separate “Community” and “Diversity and inclusion” subsections, present, respectively, in 22% and 18% of “About us” sections, point to the importance of the sustainability agenda for the companies that feel the pressing need to provide an elaborate account of their initiatives. Apparently, corporate sustainability is not only targeted at purely environmental issues but also involves socio-economic aspects, bridging it to the assumed ecosophy.

Almost every eighth company under study holds a separate “Innovation” subsection informing the audience about a state-of-the-art solution developed or implemented by the company and reassuring its leading position on the market. Nearly 4% of the companies report on their research. Financial outcomes are discussed in a separate subsection by only 3% of the companies.

In conclusion, the communicative purpose as well as the form and content of “About us” sections are congruent with the previous studies (Pollach, 2005; Breeze, 2013). Accordingly, the genre might be classified as epideictic (Aristotle, 1991) since its main function is the promotion of the corporate entity, based on the recognition of its value and self-exaltation. The headings of the particular subsections to a great extent overlap with those specified by Lam (2009) and Casañ-Pitarch (2015) but their distribution in particular “About as” subsections significantly differs. What comes to the fore in the analysed corpus, is the domination and primacy of subsections specifying the companies’ ethical and value stances as well as their approach to CSR/sustainability, present in two thirds of the studied webpages. This number clearly points to the importance of sustainability related issues in constructing corporate identity. The focus on the commonly accepted values enhances corporate ethos and helps to build a bond with the audience. Winning sufficient social support (van Dijk, 1998) enables the company to pursue its goals and perform its business activity freely. The expression of the eco-social commitment is expected and highly valued by the audience and acts as a shield protecting the company from any form of criticism. On the one hand, the findings imply a certain stabilisation of the “About us” genre that typically contains at least five major moves identified in more than half of the studied webpages in the

corpus. On the other, the selection of the remaining sixteen moves depends on the companies’ specific needs. Therefore, the core moves of the genre are predictable, yet the final structure of the “About us” section remains diversified.

5.7.1.2. Discursive construction of corporate identity: Frequency, keyness and dominating themes (RQ2)

The current section addresses RQ2 concerning the discursive construction of corporate identity that has been isolated into two RSQs. Accordingly, the first part of the discussion focuses on the identification of the top keywords in the corpus in order to address RSQ2a.

As expected, the most frequent lemmas in the corpus are function words (see Table 5.4), embracing definers, prepositions, auxiliary verbs and conjunctions, which is congruent with previous studies (e.g. Stubbs, 2001b; Scott and Tribble, 2006). The analysis of the top 100 keywords and 100 most frequent words has clearly pointed to the dominance of content lemmas in the former category and function lemmas in the latter (see Fig. 5.1 and Fig. 5.2).

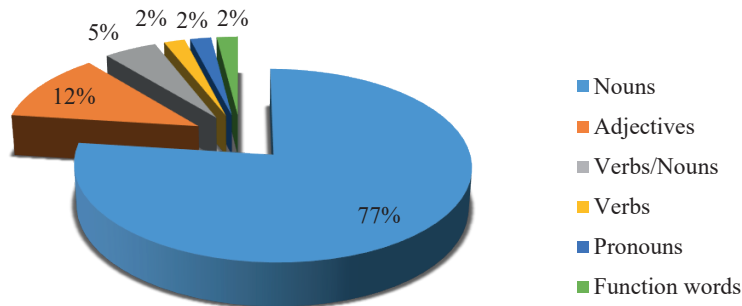


Figure 5.1. Grammatical category of top 100 keywords

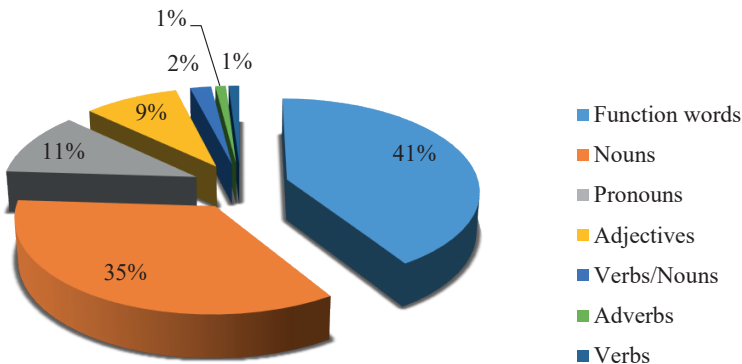


Figure 5.2. Grammatical category of top 100 most frequent words

Nouns have been identified to be the dominating grammatical category in the group of 100 top keywords (77.7%), followed by adjectives (12%) and verbs (7%). Function words constitute only 2% of the word items in this group, compared to 41% in the group of the 100 most frequent words. The second largest category in the latter group is the adjective. It must be noted that the top 15 most frequent words in any text in the English language constitute 25% of the text (Crystal, 1987; Landau, 1989). For this reason, frequency alone offers a rather poor insight into the ideological aspects of corporate discourse.

By contrast, the main ideas, beliefs, meanings and concepts that inform corporate ideology are represented by content lemmas (Fox, 1999). The juxtaposition of the top 10 most frequent words and keywords in Table 5.4 clearly illustrates the differences between the two categories and their applicability to the analysis of the ideological underpinning of corporate discourse. A brief look at the top keywords provides instant insights into the nature of the studied text. The high keyness of the lemma “our” does not come as a surprise in corporate discourse as it has been identified in a range of studies (e.g. Cheney, 1983; Swales and Rogers, 1995; Fairclough, 1995a; Bartkus et al., 2000; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Poncini, 2007; Dieltjens and Heynderickx, 2007). The majority of the remaining top 10 keywords fall into the category of thematic lemmas as they are semantically specific and provide insight into a company’s business activity (cf. Fox, 2006: 361). The lemmas “company”, “business”, “corporate”, “employees”, “management” leave little doubt as to the core activity of the organisations under study. Moreover, the high keyness of the pronouns “our” and “we”, as well as the noun “company” indicates the corporations’ need to make self-references in order to legitimise their existence.

Table 5.4. . Keyness vs. frequency: Top 10 words

Keyness Rank	Word	Frequency rank	Word
1	our	1	the
2	company	2	and
3	business	3	of
4	and	4	to
5	global	5	in
6	employees	6	a
7	we	7	for
8	corporate	8	our
9	management	9	is
10	energy	10	we

As far as RSQ2b is concerned, thematic analysis of the top 100 keywords has allowed to identify the concepts that might be regarded fundamental to corporate ideology. According to Scott (2010), the top positions of lexical items on the keyword list give an insight into the thematic scope of a text, yet their order on the list is of minor importance. Nine thematic categories have been discerned in order to expose the dominating themes (see Table 5.5 for general trends).

Table 5.5. Semantic categorisation of top 100 keywords

Category	Keywords
Activity (22)	business/energy/services/health/products/financial/technology/operations/performance/program/businesses/practices/ensure/foundation/programs/strategy/report/product/gas/insurance/initiatives/healthcare
Leaders (13)	management/executive/vice/board/president/officer/chief/director/directors/senior/leadership/chairman/ceo
Stakeholders (11)	employees/customers/communities/employee/suppliers/community/team/customer/member/supplier/partners
Values (11)	safety/compliance/commitment/care/support/ethics/governance/code/responsible/responsibility/conduct
Self-reference (10)	our/company/we/corporate/com/companies/inc/group/pepsico/network
Market (8)	innovation/solutions/quality/resources/development/opportunities/industry/innovative
Sustainability (8)	environmental/environment/sustainable/emissions/waste/sustainability/diversity/diverse
Range of activity (3)	global/worldwide/international
Reputation (2)	award/awards
Miscellaneous (12)	and/information/pdf/www/including/committee/university/http/based/risk/server/impast

The largest category, dubbed “Activity”, embraces lexical items that refer to the core activities of the companies under study, indicating the industry they operate in or their most essential tasks. The category named “Leaders” includes mostly nouns that stand for the executive managers holding the top position in the organisational hierarchy, followed by the “Stakeholders” category that specifies the key corporate audiences. Markedly, in contrast to the exposed corporate leaders, employees are positioned among other stakeholders. The nouns contained in the “Values” category are related to the ethical and normative aspects of corporate activity. The next category encompasses lexical items that are typically used for self-referencing in corporate discourse, such as pronouns, proper names or the noun “company” as well as

other nouns pointing to the organisational structure (e.g. group, network). The lexical items included in the “Market” category represent the qualities of offering a competitive advantage in the market, which are highly desired by the companies in market economy (e.g. innovation, quality, resources). The “Sustainability” section consists of lexical items referring to the environment and the key aspects of sustainable development. “The range of activity” incorporates three adjectives indicating the ambitions of the companies to mark and highlight their global presence. Thus, it is clearly the global rather than the local reach that is targeted by the companies. The smallest section “Reputation” contains only two items: the singular and plural form of the noun “award” that is often used to elevate corporate reputation by making third-party references. Finally, the “Miscellaneous” section contains all the lexical items that have not been qualified for the major categories.

Based on the scrutiny of the major themes that have emerged from the analysis of the top 100 keywords, the macro perspective has provided valuable preliminary insights into the ideological orientation of the corpus under study. The thematic scope of the top keywords in the corpus is to a large extent concomitant with the generic structure of the “About us” sections. The top keywords demonstrate the auto-narrative character of the corporate identity discourse that is predominantly self-referential and focused on the presentation of the issues central to the companies: i.e. their activity, leaders, stakeholders, values, as well as orientation towards sustainability and the market. Manifestly, these categories to a large extent overlap with van Dijk’s (1995) ideological schema that will be applied in the further qualitative analysis, along with two remaining categories of ecological identity and neoliberal themes that are critical from the perspective of the ecolinguistics analysis underpinned by the assumed ecosophy.

5.7.2. Qualitative analysis: Ecological Discourse Analysis (RQ3)

In this section I shift from a bird’s eye view to a worm’s eye view in order to address RQ3 concerning the ideological grounding of corporate identity. The macro structure of the analysis is delineated by van Dijk’s ideological schema (1995). At the micro level, the analysis is corpus-driven as it is based on the examination of words of potential interest in their immediate contexts by performing keyword-in-context (KWIC) searches (Stubbs, 2001b). Keywords discerned at the first stage of research have been thematically categorised into van Dijk’s ideological schema. Further, particular lexical items are eco-critically analysed in their immediate context. Selected concordances are analysed with a special focus on the representation of social actors (consult the procedures specified in section 5.5 and Figure 5.3).

5.7.2.1. Self identity description: Who we are

In the corporate settings, the key aspects of identity are encapsulated in the mission statement that addresses maximally three simple questions: “who an organization is”, “what it does” (cf. Falsey, 1989: 2) and “what it stands for” (Hoffman and Ford, 2010: 122). The specification of the company’s profile and activity as well as its values does, therefore, come across as the main function of corporate “About us” sections that are by definition auto-narrative. The centrality of this function has also been confirmed by textual data as the top positions in the keyness rank in the analysed corpus are held by the following lexical items: “our”, “company”, “we” and “business”. Semantically, the top keywords are primarily used for self-referencing. Moreover, the pronoun “we” is used interchangeably with the nouns “company”, and “business”. These nouns are also among the top frequent collocates of “our”, which, as a powerful identity marker, gives them a more personal touch and creates a sense of affiliation (cf. Fairclough, 2003b).

The top keyness of the collective pronouns in the analysed corpus does not come as a surprise as it has been reported in a number of studies (Cheney, 1983; Swales and Rogers, 1995; Fairclough, 1995a; Bartkus et al., 2000; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Poncini, 2007; Dieltjens and Heynderickx, 2007). The analysis begins with an overview of the most frequent clusters of the top keyword in the corpus (21,871 concordance hits), namely the pronoun “our” (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6. “Our”: Top 30 clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 2927			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 21871			
Rank	Frequency	Range	Cluster
1	749	1	our employees
2	747	1	our customers
3	647	1	our business
4	511	1	our company
5	415	1	our commitment
6	321	1	our products
7	254	1	our global
8	245	1	our people
9	226	1	our communities
10	205	1	our corporate
11	204	1	our suppliers
12	203	1	our clients

13	198	1	our values
14	191	1	our operations
15	170	1	our mission
16	169	1	our own
17	149	1	our supply
18	144	1	our goal
19	142	1	our environmental
20	136	1	our efforts
21	132	1	our vision
22	126	1	our core
23	125	1	our success
24	125	1	our work
25	118	1	our stakeholders
26	111	1	our sustainability
27	108	1	our community
28	105	1	our team
29	100	1	our board
30	99	1	our facilities

Semantically, the most frequent “our” collocates might be grouped into the following six categories:

- *Stakeholders*: employees/customers/people/community/communities/suppliers/clients/stakeholders/team/board;
- *Values*: commitment/values/mission/vision/sustainability/environmental;
- *Self-referential*: company/business;
- *Activity*: products/operations/supply/goal/success/work;
- *Resources*: facilities;
- *Adjectives*: global/corporate/own/core.

The above categorisation, to a large extent, reiterates the major themes related to the construction of identities and ideologies underlying them. Table 5.7 provides selected examples of keywords-in-context.

In most cases the possessive pronoun “our” is used as an organisational referent (e.g. “our company”, “our business”, “our mission”, etc.). It also frequently clusters with external audiences that are deemed strategic from the corporate perspective and represented by the broad category of stakeholders, which embraces customers, suppliers, clients, communities, etc. The use

of “our” emphasises the bond between the company and its stakeholders, who are rendered pivotal elements of the corporate identity. Moreover, certain groups of stakeholders, especially those who contribute to the process of product development, production and distribution (i.e. suppliers, distributors and other subcontractors), are crucial from the perspective of reputation management since they are treated as part of the team who collectively bear responsibility for the quality of offered products and services as well as ethical standards. Therefore, applied in reference to stakeholders, the pronoun plays the inclusive function. Additionally, the frequency of the pronoun is also motivated by the fact that it appears in section headers organising text into logical chunks (e.g. “our values”, “our leaders”, “our people”, etc.).

Table 5.7. “Our”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
49	We engage our employees so they can reach their potential
347	We listen to our customers around the world, and share their
609	We’re guided by our values : empathy, originality, integrity and
741	it was in the early days of our Company . With our mature market emissions near
800	Demonstrate Cummins’ commitment to using our resources to improve our communi- ties.
1058	We’ve made sustainability an integral part of our business .
1680	This involvement allows us to better accomplish our mission to protect our customers and the
1910	Founder of Capgemini // Our Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability
2402	use our brands and technologies every day. Our products are our core business, and this
6620	work, we create a better life for our stakeholders and ourselves.
10658	associates, customers and citizens in each of our global communities. Below are some examples of

The pronoun *we* has turned out to be one of the top keywords in the corpus (keyness rank: 7). This finding is in line with earlier studies reporting over-representation of personal pronouns in corporate communication and postulating their centrality in self-representational discourse (cf. van de Mierop, 2006; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). The marked presence of *we* in corporate discourse is part of a larger trend of “personalization” of public discourse, observable in recent decades, which might be explicated by the elevated economic significance of language in the Post-Fordist era (Fariclough et al., 2011; Fairclough, 1992b; Petersoo, 2007; Mulderrig, 2011). Mulderrig (2011: 565) also argues that the over-representation of *we* in public discourse reflects the growing importance of “face” in organisational success and profitability

that accounts for an increased interest in “design, presentation and communication techniques”. Additionally, this phenomenon reflects a shift towards informality and power symmetry in institutional communication, labelled “democratisation” of discourse by Fairclough (1992b).

Furthermore, as pointed out by Dieltjens and Heynderickx (2007: 244), “the *we*-form is an active component of communication strategy based on linguistic and textual elements” and its use is typically qualified as inclusive vs. exclusive, distributive vs. collective, generalising or muting (ibidem). In the analysed corpus of texts on corporate identity, the vast majority of the occurrences of *we* might be categorised as exclusive as the noun is primarily used as an equivalent of the company or its proper name for self-referential purposes.

Extract (1)

We are a company of promise and possibilities. Each day represents a fresh opportunity to share Our Vision, live Our Purpose. (Kellogg, App. 1; item 53)

The inclusive/generalising function of *we* might be exemplified by 13 occurrences of the cluster “we are all”. As illustrated in the extracts below, *we* is not only limited to the company and its stakeholders but in certain cases it also stands for the whole humanity. Thus, companies are strongly personalised and characterised with human qualities (see extract 2).

Extract (2)

We are all human, and sometimes we make mistakes. In some cases, a person may make a comment or do something that was not intended to offend, but it has that effect. (3M Company, App. 1, item 74)

The use of the generalising, inclusive *we* predominates in the context related to environmental problems, especially those focused on climate change and concerning all human beings. Corporations are aware of the seriousness of this problem and the need to solve it at the global level. Yet, corporate appeals calling for action against climate change have a deep persuasive dimension since they might be interpreted as an attempt to disperse corporate responsibility for environmental problems. In a way, shared responsibility for climate change absolves corporate sins and makes all humans culprits in the process of ecological destruction, which is apparently convenient for corporations from the perspective of their reputation management.

Extract (3)

We are all familiar with the dire warnings about climate change if something isn't done to mitigate it. One-quarter of the Earth's species – gone, by 2050. (The Nature Conservancy SA, App. 1, item 109; emphasis added)

Mulderrig (2011: 569) interprets the inclusive style of self-representation and the consequent diffusion of responsibility as a “semantic slipperiness”, which facilitates the construction of “an apparent consensus on the nature of the world we live in and the inescapable responsibilities this creates”. Such a consensus, in turn, lays firm foundations for further legitimisation.

Nevertheless, certain signs of conflict between sustainability and market goals might also be traced in the corpus. For example, as demonstrated in extract 4 below, PKN ORLEN’s CEO subtly hints that strict environmental standards impede the global competitiveness of the EU economy.

Extract (4)

PKN ORLEN’s CEO believed that the European Union’s policy, which tends to favour RES, blatantly disregards the extremely poor competitive power of the EU economy: **We are all** in favour of fighting climate change, but not in abstraction from reality. Climate targets should not be tightened further with China, India and the US standing idly by. (...) We should be aware that **we are all** in the same boat, which is why taking care of the external market is so important. Some have estimated that there are 350 different RES subsidies in the EU. (ORLEN, App. 1, item 105; emphasis added)

The above extract is, in fact, a rare example of an openly expressed concern related to the conflict between economy and sustainability. This theme, crucial from the perspective of the current work, will be further elaborated in the section devoted to “Ecological identity” in this chapter.

As far as the right clusters of *we* are concerned, the pronoun most frequently collocates with verbs and plays agentive roles as illustrated in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. “We”: Top 25 right clusters

Total No. Of Cluster Types: 1202			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 15249			
Rank	Frequency	Range	Cluster
1	1599	1	we are
2	977	1	we have
3	568	1	we do
4	464	1	we also
5	457	1	we will
6	387	1	we believe
7	386	1	we can
8	304	1	we work
9	219	1	we’re
10	211	1	we offer

11	192	1	we operate
12	192	1	we serve
13	186	1	we strive
14	177	1	we provide
15	165	1	we use
16	139	1	we've
17	133	1	we make
18	130	1	we live
19	128	1	we know
20	128	1	we recognize
21	124	1	we want
22	116	1	we must
23	115	1	we encourage
24	115	1	we take
25	110	1	we support
26	108	1	we continue
27	100	1	we may

The vast majority of verbs collocating with *we* are strong action verbs: such as “do”, “make”, “operate”, “provide”, “serve”, etc. Such verbs typically appear in the context of business discourse, especially to construct dynamic narrations on the company’s involvement in the production process and market activity. A large part of verbs might be, however, categorised as stative (e.g. “believe”, “strive”, “know”, “recognize”, “encourage”, “support”). Their use almost gives organisations a human-like ability to think abstractively, formulate their goals and express ethical stances.

Nevertheless, probably the most straightforward way the companies define their identity is addressing the question “who we are”. In fact, in the entire corpus the phrase has occurred 94 times. The analysis of the concordances for the cluster has allowed to discern five major themes that have emerged from the textual data, namely: communities, people, values, leadership and stories. Apparently, these themes do not seem to be out of place in the context of corporate identity discourse as they, in fact, practically mirror the core moves in the “About us” genre. Each of these categories will be discussed briefly below.

Communities

While defining their own identity, companies emphasise their embedding in their communities, which are regarded in the accepted EMCI model as part of the larger ecosystem the company operates in. Companies treat their affini-

ty with a particular community as a dimension of their own identity. Communities are not, however, solely represented as part of the ecosystem. The companies also tend to expose their positive impact on the communities, which are presented as the main beneficiaries of their activity. Therefore, such a positioning brings mutual benefits for the involved. On the one hand, it offers companies a sense of identification and embeddness in the local ecosystem as well as strengthens its image as a socially responsible company – highly desired in the context of reputational goals. Communities, on the other hand, receive corporate attention, often followed by invaluable financial support, crucial for pursuing their own goals (see Table 5.9).

Table 5.9. “Who we are”: Selected concordances (communities)

Hit	KWIC
1	Being part of our communities is who we are as a company.
9	expert on international business ethics. That is who we are and what you can expect
26	Making A Difference In Our Communities Who we are

People/workforce

Another strongly exposed element of corporate identity is the workforce, composed of people from varied backgrounds. Their diversity, recognised as a corporate asset, converts into a complex mosaic, which integrates individual elements and finally takes the form of a congruent, commonly recognised picture. As exemplified by concordance 86 in Table 5.10, employees are also seen as transmitters of corporate identities, which are constructed in corporate stories circulating within the company.

Table 5.10. “Who we are”: Selected concordances (workforce)

Hit	KWIC
24	diversity of our workforce is part of who we are as a company and is
80	best and brightest minds is central to who we are . We believe each person
86	Our employees share the story of who we are , what we do and how
90	we will strive for diversity in who we are and what we do
91	for the unique individuals who make us who we are .

Values

Yet, values seem to be the strongest pillars of corporate identity that “reflect”, “define” and “represent” who the companies are. They act as a point of reference, setting certain ethical standards and guiding people’s actions (see Table 5.11).

Table 5.11. “Who we are”: Selected concordances (values)

Hit	KWIC
15	Our Core Values represent who we are . They provide without question the
27	the integrity of our businesses and represents who we are and how we operate as
28	shared values are at the foundation of who we are at AES.
36	core value and has been part of who we are for more than a century.
49	OUR CULTURE 25 powerful tenets define who we are and what we do
51	corporate responsibility is a fundamental part of who we are .
77	values have been at the heart of who we are and how we operate for
79	culture and lie at the heart of who we are and how we behave. Integrity
85	OUR VALUES Our Cisco values reflect who we are , what we believe
93	Our seven core values define who we are and what makes us truly stand apart.
15	Our Core Values represent who we are . They provide without question the

Interestingly, in defining their identity companies tend to prioritise values over corporate activity. In other words, the real value of the companies lies in their integrity and credibility rather than the manufactured products or offered services as exemplified by the following extracts:

Extract (5)

It's not what we do. It's **who we are**. (The Principal, App. 1, item 91)

Extract (6)

Customers will do business with us because of **who we are**, not just what we sell. (Allstate Insurance Company, App.1, item 92)

Extract (7)

We are defined by how we behave. We refuse to compromise our high ethical standards. (TIAA-CREF, App. 1, item 49)

The present section, however, provides merely preliminary views on the role of values in corporate discourse. Being regarded cornerstones of corporate identity and ideology (cf. van Dijk, 1995), values without doubt deserve a more exquisite elaboration. For this reason, this theme will be addressed in a separate section 5.7.2.4.

Leadership

Leadership is represented as the “driving force” of corporate actions – indispensable to keeping the company on the go in the pursuit of its goals. Leaders are perceived to be the main constructors of corporate identity as illustrated in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12. Selected concordances of “who we are”: Leaders

Hit	KWIC
69	servant leadership is a driving force behind who we are and what we do
73	our progress are key indicators of leadership, who we are as a company
82	look at where we’ve been and who we are today. Our presence. Our leaders

Stories

Similarly to narrative and discursive approaches to organisational identity (see Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994), stories are seen as the fundamental fabric corporate identity is made of. As exemplified in Table 5.13, stories “shape” and “make up” the very essence of identity.

Table 5.13. Selected concordances of “who we are”: Stories

Hit	KWIC
88	create stories that matter. Because stories shape who we are and what we do.
89	Our stories make up who we are . By living our values

The question of identity is also directly addressed by the cluster “we are”, in fact, the most frequent cluster containing the pronoun *we* (1,599 cluster tokens). The most frequent right clusters of “we are” have been juxtaposed in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14. “We are”: Top 12 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 468			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 1599			
Rank	Frequency	Range	Cluster
1	227	1	we are committed
2	72	1	we are proud
3	70	1	we are a
4	57	1	we are also
5	43	1	we are working
6	39	1	we are the
7	22	1	we are looking
8	21	1	we are able
9	21	1	we are making
10	20	1	we are not
11	19	1	we are dedicated
12	19	1	we are pleased

As illustrated in Table 5.14, the rank is opened by the cluster “we are committed” (227 occurrences), which typically precedes corporate value statements. Similar insights are also provided by declarations opening with the words “we are dedicated” (19 occurrences). Except for ethical concerns, companies also define their identity through their sense of pride. Accordingly, 72 occurrences of the clusters “we are proud” have been identified in the corpus. The third most frequent cluster – “we are a” (70 occurrences) – gives an insight into the cardinal nouns specifying corporate identity. The top 12 right clusters have been gleaned in Table 5.15. The nominal collocates point to the professional roles and activities performed by corporations, who most often define themselves as “companies” or “leaders”. A significant element of their identity seems to be the membership categorisation that reveals the companies’ presence in particular organisational structures, e.g. “network” or “group”. Other categorisations pertain to the roles the companies play in the business world, e.g. “suppliers”, “sponsors”, “supporters”.

Table. 5.15. “We are a”: Top 12 right clusters

We are a +	Word item	Hit
	company	21
	leader	11
	network	4
	group	3
	member	3
	organization	5
	partner	3
	sponsor	3
	supplier	3
	supporter	3
	team	3
	stakeholder	2

The presence of the clusters “we are” followed by the definite article is less frequent (39 hits) and tends to precede proper names of the companies (8 hits), e.g. “We are The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc.” (The Hartford, App. 1, item 93). In other cases the structure is primarily used to emphasise the leading and/or unique position of the company either in the global arena or, less frequently, at the national or local level (see table 5.16).

Table 5.16. “We are the”: Top 12 right clusters

	Word item	Hits
We are +	the (market) leader	3
	the global/worldwide leader	4
	the world’s leading company/ manufacturer	4
	the nation’s leading member/provider/supplier/manufacturer	5

The primacy in the market appears to be one of the strongest themes in corporate identity discourse and is also expressed by structures specifying the following qualities of the companies:

- *size of the company*:
We are the largest distributor/donor/company/member (4 hits).
- *type of ownership*:
We are **the sole** owner/operator/stakeholder (3 hits)
We are **the majority** shareholder (1 hit)
- *uniqueness*:
We are **the only** company/project/sourcing firms (3 hits)
We are **the first** company (1 hit)
We are **the city’s oldest** company (1 hit)
Why we are **different** (1 hit)
- *recognition (only 3 hits)*
Extract (8)

We are known for our commitment to building high-quality projects, abiding by our Core Values, and supporting and developing our workforce. (Elbit Systems of America, App. 1, item 1)

Extract (9)

We are known for the depth of our knowledge across more than 40 industries, and more than half of Accenture people have certified industry skills or are aligned with a specific industry. (Accenture LLC, App.1, item 26)

Extract (10)

We are known as a preeminent source of first-of-a-kind/one-of-a-kind solutions for commercial, federal, transportation, and water resources. (Parsons Corporation, App. 1, item 45)

- *belonging*:

We are among the major European operators in the energy sector/Europe's most environmentally-friendly companies/many healthcare organizations that house spaces for exploration (3 hits)

Insights into desired aspects of corporate identity are also provided by the analysis of "proud" concordances. In fact, the vast majority of 335 "proud" concordances are related to reputation issues (see Table 5.17). The companies are usually boastful of their achievements, staff or their leading position in the market. They also take pride in being recognised for their ethics and leadership in the market (see Table 5.18) and seek external recognition and validation of their activity (hit 71, 233, 234, 264 in Table 5.17).

Table 5.17. "Proud": Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
5	in which we live. We're proud to have earned recognition for our efforts
33	standing relationships over the years and are proud of our reputation as a reliable and
34	Recognition Granite is proud of our reputation in the industry.
71	In keeping with this commitment, PepsiCo is proud to be listed on the Dow Jones
74	to deliver Performance with Purpose, we are proud that numerous organizations have recognized
233	Australia. Pacific Northwest Efforts We're proud to be ranked among the top 100 corporate
234	92s goals and objectives. In 2013 we were proud to receive the Ethisphere Institute
258	business in every sphere. Tata Steel is proud of the longstanding respect it has earned
264	conforms to federal guidelines. We are extremely proud to be named to the Ethisphere Institute'

Table 5.18. "Proud to be recognized": Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	16 Best Hospital Rankings' Baptist Health is proud to be recognized by US News & World
2	innovation into emergency care. We are proud to be recognized by the Emergency Nurses
4	excellent inclusion, teamwork, and growth. We are proud to be recognized for our commitment
5	President and CEO. We're proud to be recognized for our ethical business
6	stronger, more innovative company. We're proud to be recognized for our leadership
7	always do the right thing. We're proud to be recognized by the Ethisphere Institute
12	our people, partners and communities We're proud to be recognized by innovative organizations
178	President and CEO. We're proud to be recognized for our ethical business

Even though the discussion has so far focused on pronouns, it is actually the word “company” that holds the second top position in the keyness rank. The noun has turned out to be the key self-referencing word. Its high keyness points to the primary auto-narrative function of corporate identity discourse. As illustrated in Table 5.19, “company” collocates most frequently with the definite article “the”, personal pronoun “our” and indefinite article “a”. Other frequent clusters contain the name of the branch the company operates in (e.g. “insurance”) or the company’s proper name (e.g. Kellogg or Timken).

Table. 5.19. “Company”: Top 13 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 1082			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 8611			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	3712	1	the company
2	511	1	our company
3	309	1	a company
5	167	1	insurance company
6	132	1	deere & company
9	93	1	kellogg company
12	77	1	and company
13	68	1	timken company

A thematic analysis of the remaining left clusters with a frequency above 10 has allowed the identification of two dominating categories of lexical items preceding the word “company”: nominal phrases typically indicating the field of activity or adjectives praising the company’s leading position in the market.

Valuable insights have also been provided by the analysis of left collocates of the cluster “our company”. Every fifth collocate has turned out to be a verb (see Table 5.20). Similarly to the personal pronoun *we*, “our company” most frequently collocates with the verbs “be”, “have” and “do”. The remaining verbal collocates point to the business activity of the company, which takes on an agentive role.

In sum, the concordance analysis of the top keywords has pointed to the auto-narrative, self-referential character of the whole corpus. Even though ingroup-outgroup polarisation, entailing “ingroup favouring and outgroup derogation”, is typically applied in constructing any collective identity (van Dijk, 1995: 151), corporations do not construct their own identities in opposition to any out-groups. In fact, they are self-centred and focused on positive self-presentation. The representation of the companies is highly personal; the companies are defined through their proper names as well as the names of

Table 5.20. Most frequent verbal collocates of “our company”

Our company	Verb	Hits
	is	41
	has	18
	continues	6
	does	5
	was	5
	grows	3
	gained/values/attracts/keeps/lasts/develops/operates/provides/ originates/permits, etc.	18
Total		99

their industries. Verbs collocating with the major self-referencing nouns are predominantly active, pointing to the agentive roles of the companies that are able to act as well as pursue abstract goals and express themselves. Passive forms do occur but their use is rather limited to third party evaluations of the companies, e.g. rankings, reports, etc. This simple grammatical trick enables the companies to distance themselves from such opinions, which automatically gain an aura of authenticity. In general, companies are positioned as personified, dynamic entities, defined by their actions and values. Yet, a more detailed specification of respective actions and values stances will be offered in the sections to follow.

5.7.2.2. Activity description: What we do

The specification of an organisation’s field and scope of activity constitutes the rudimentary element of its identity and group life. Simultaneously, typical activities are also among the basic ideology schema that reveal the ideological underpinning of an organisation’s members. In the case of business organisations, their activity lies at the very core of their existence. Information concerning a company’s business activity is regarded as crucial and is usually contained in the opening lines of the “About us” section, typically in its sub-section entitled “overview”, “who we are” or “profile”.

Accordingly, the specification of a particular field of business activity lies at the very core of a company’s identity and for this reason it is often contained in its name. Table 5.21 presents the most frequent nominalisations specifying the profile of the companies under study.

Table 5.21. "Company": Selected noun clusters

Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
6	167	1	insurance company
29	50	1	service company
36	45	1	motor company
39	43	1	holding company
40	43	1	services company
45	37	1	energy company
48	32	1	mutual life insurance company
57	26	1	products company
60	25	1	light company
62	25	1	parent company
63	25	1	power & light company
64	25	1	trust company
65	24	1	fortune 500 company
66	24	1	technology company
67	23	1	allstate insurance company
68	23	1	florida power & light company
72	22	1	electric company
75	22	1	power company
81	20	1	insurance company
92	18	1	gas company
94	18	1	management company
104	17	1	construction company
111	17	1	chocolate company
131	14	1	chemical company
142	13	1	investment company
143	13	1	oil company
145	13	1	telecommunications company
150	12	1	estate company
151	12	1	forest products company
179	11	1	outsourcing company
180	11	1	paper company
198	10	1	manufacturing company
206	10	1	scrap company
207	10	1	share company

As regards adjectives most frequently collocating with the noun “company” (see Table 5.22), they are immensely positive and their use aims at boosting the companies’ image. The rank is opened by the adjective “ethical”, followed by “global”, which might be interpreted as another example of the consolidation of ecological and neoliberal appeals. It must be noted, though, that the top positions in the rank are also held by a group of other adjectives appealing to sustainability, i.e. “sustainable”, “friendly”, “socially responsible”. The selection of other adjectives, such as “new”, “first”, “great”, “large” is not surprising since the words are typically used in the discourse of advertising and marketing in order to expose the company’s advantageous position in the market.

Table 5.22. “Company ”: Selected adjective clusters

Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
24	55	1	ethical company
26	54	1	global company
27	54	1	public company
53	30	1	new company
90	18	1	first company
93	18	1	great company
123	15	1	large company
124	15	1	listed company
159	12	1	publicly traded company
162	12	1	sustainable company
167	12	1	traded company
173	11	1	friendly company
208	10	1	socially responsible company

Right clusters of the noun “company” are less frequent than the left ones (total no. of left cluster types 5,046 vs. total number of cluster tokens 8,611). One fifth of the total number of left clusters constitute Saxon genitive structures: “company’s + noun”. Verbal phrases are rather rare, yet they might potentially provide valuable insights into the companies’ actions (see Table 5.23). The most frequently used verbs include “have” and “be” – the stative verbs that present the company’s resources and ideological stances rather than actions. Accordingly, corporate identity discourse is more informative of ethical aspects of a company’s activity rather than the very process of production or doing business. The “company” is personified and in most cases it plays agentive roles. Passive structures are typically used in reference to rankings, e.g. “company was recognized” (see Table 5.23), to make the third-party statements more credible.

Table 5.23. “Company ”: Selected verbal clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 7167			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 8611			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
7	10	1	company has more than 70,000 employees
18	7	1	company that is run for
23	6	1	company is committed to establishing
24	6	1	company shall provide for appropriate
39	4	1	company is a testament to
45	4	1	company believes that investors may
52	4	1	company stands for is just
53	4	1	company to be the world
54	4	1	company to work for in
79	3	1	company was recognized in 2015 as
95	3	1	company changed its name to
96	3	1	company continues his legacy more
97	3	1	company continues to grow, our

“Business” has turned out to be the third top keyword in the entire corpus leaving no doubt as to the companies’ general field of activity (see Table 5.24). The noun most frequently collocates with the pronoun “our”. In general, the most frequent clusters are very similar to those of “company”.

Table 5.24. “Business”: Top 33 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 1530			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 8069			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	647	1	our business
2	543	1	of business
3	404	1	the business
4	351	1	and business
5	219	1	’s business
6	200	1	in business
7	177	1	do business
8	152	1	a business
9	106	1	doing business
10	98	1	small business
11	98	1	your business

12	82	1	global business
13	76	1	our business
14	74	1	its business
15	64	1	international business
16	62	1	new business
17	60	1	to business
18	59	1	ethical business
19	58	1	owned business
20	58	1	responsible business
21	57	1	for business
22	53	1	and business
23	52	1	the business
24	51	1	harvard business
25	51	1	of business
26	49	1	strategic business
27	42	1	care business
28	42	1	solutions business
29	41	1	each business
30	41	1	their business
31	41	1	with business
32	40	1	sustainable business
33	39	1	conduct business

The cluster “our business” in most cases acts as a pre-modifier of nouns related to the company’s activity (see Table 5.25).

Table 5.25. “Our business” + noun: Selected right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 278			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 724			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
2	41	1	our business partners
3	24	1	our business activities
5	21	1	our business operations
6	17	1	our business units
9	15	1	our business model

12	12	1	our business practices
13	15	1	our business strategy
15	8	1	our business continuity
17	8	1	our business home
18	8	1	our business objectives
19	6	1	our business activities
21	6	1	our business conduct
22	6	1	our business goals
23	5	1	our business process
24	5	1	our business success
26	4	1	our business units
28	4	1	our business processes
29	3	1	our business objectives
31	3	1	our business decisions
34	3	1	our business needs
38	3	1	our business relationships
39	3	1	our business strategies

Further valuable insights are provided by an analysis of particular grammatical categories. A glance at the top 100 two-word clusters of “business” reveals the domination of adjectives (30), followed by nouns (26), function words (24) and verbs (9). Similarly to “company” noun clusters, “business” noun clusters mostly refer to the industry a particular business operates in. The selection of adjectives, displayed in Table 5.26, is much wider, compared to the adjectival collocates of the noun “company”.

As illustrated in Table 5.26, among the most frequent adjectival clusters of “business” are those related to sustainability that shows the clear ideological slant of companies that are determined to present their activity as ethical, responsible and green. At the same time, the global, international range of business is strongly emphasised. A bulk of the adjectives collocating with business evokes positive connotations, yet their selection does not come across as original; the dominating adjectives are commonly used in the discourse of marketing and advertising (e.g. “good”, “better”, “best”, “strong”, “leading”, etc.). These lexical choices again illustrate corporate attempts to combine the concerns related to sustainability, globalisation and challenges of the market.

The assortment of verbs collocating with business is practically limited to two verbs: “do” and “conduct” (see Table 5.27). These verbs are active and, consequently, their clusters with “business” illustrate the companies’ actual actions rather than their ideological stances.

Table 5.26. Types of adjectives in “business” clusters

Common adjectives				“Sustainability” adjectives		Adjectives referring to the origin or area of business activity		Adjectives referring to the type of business activity	
Neutral		Positive		Rank	Cluster	Rank	Cluster	Rank	Cluster
Rank	Cluster	Rank	Cluster						
19	owned business	50	good business	18	ethical business	12	global business	47	industrial business
26	strategic business	42	better business	20	responsible business	15	international business	16	manufacturing business
52	core business	54	strong business	32	sustainable business	51	local business	14	recycling business
68	corporate business	58	best business	48	diverse business	55	world business		
69	disadvantaged business	63	leading business	53	minority business	57	American business		
77	critical business	81	significant business	92	green business	71	national business		
78	daily business	94	successful business	98	collaborative business	83	Hispanic business		
16	new business								
99	entire business								
10	small business								

Table 5.27. “Business”: Selected verbal clusters

Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
9	106	1	doing business
33	39	1	conduct business
38	29	1	does business
39	28	1	conducting business
56	17	1	do business
67	14	1	conducts business

Corporate business activity typically materialises in products offered by the company to the market. Products do, in fact, play an important role in the recognition of the companies by the stakeholders, especially the consumers who in the postmodern world tend to identify themselves with particular goods or brands (Featherstone, 1991). Table 5.28 presents the top 19 right “products” structures. Again, the noun most frequently collocates with the pronoun “our”. It also frequently clusters with nouns that reveal the origin or purpose of the product. Adjectives typically highlight positive qualities of the product (e.g. “new”, “innovative”, “efficient”).

Table 5.28. “Product”: Top 19 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 868			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 3475			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	351	1	our products
2	132	1	of products
3	108	1	forest products
4	100	1	care products
5	84	1	the products
6	73	1	new products
7	69	1	and products
8	66	1	innovative products
9	60	1	consumer products
10	58	1	wood products
11	54	1	hygiene products
12	45	1	incontinence products
13	45	1	quality products
14	41	1	s products

15	38	1	its products
16	29	1	insurance products
17	25	1	advanced products
18	22	1	their products
19	20	1	efficient products

An analysis of “our products” concordances has revealed a strong presence of “sustainability” concerns (see Table 5.29). Companies declare that their products are manufactured in an ethical, responsible and sustainable way. Additionally, they assure the audience that source materials for the products are provided by suppliers who share these corporate values. Products, similarly to suppliers or other business partners, are seen as an integral element of corporate identity. Thus, in accordance with the honker effect discussed earlier, any possible defects of the product would have a detrimental effect on the overall image of the company.

Table 5.29. “Our products” – selected concordances (eco themes)

Hit	KWIC
4	animals. We expect all suppliers to make our products in an ethical and responsible way.
14	button Wasteless button Production We want our products to be part of a sustainable
30	also are committed to source materials for our products from companies that share our value
44	luxury or convenience, we will ensure that our products remain highly attractive and relevant
51	use our brands and technologies every day. Our products are our core business, and this
60	customers and consumers can be certain that our products are safe when used as intended.
69	we systematically assess the contributions that our products make to sustainability. We are currently
74	or success Open Image in Lightbox Our products are both innovative and sustainable
185	ore the sustainability section of our website. 4 Our products make life better,

It must also be emphasised that the singular form of the word “product” is frequently used in nominal phrases, mainly in the marketing context, to present different phases of the product lifecycle. Thus, the marketing narration begins from the stage of product design and development, goes through the preparation of product lines and offerings, and is finalised with product management and training.

Table 5.30. "Product": Top 27 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 479			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 1461			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	90	1	product development
2	77	1	product safety
5	37	1	product portfolio
6	30	1	product quality
7	26	1	product line
8	26	1	product lines
10	23	1	product design
11	22	1	product development
14	16	1	product stewardship
15	15	1	product innovation
17	14	1	product donations
18	13	1	product management
19	13	1	product manager
21	12	1	product categories
22	12	1	product offerings
23	11	1	product innovations
24	11	1	product life
25	10	1	product engineering
26	10	1	product environmental
27	10	1	product training

In conclusion, despite certain attempts to evade straightforward pronouncements of the companies' activity by making frequent references to the ethical dimension of their undertakings, the keyness figures leave little doubt about it. The words "company" and "business" hold the top positions in the keyness ranking of the corpus under study (the second and third position, respectively) and manifestly indicate what the organisations really do. The companies are, in fact, defined by their products as well as the industry they operate in. The products as the outcomes of the whole business activity play a particular role in the corporate identity discourse as they, in a way, materialise the company's declarations, especially those concerning the market values, such as the quality, effectiveness, innovativeness, etc. Often being fetishised in a consumption-obsessed society, they potentially offer a sense of identity and belonging to consumers (cf. Bauman, 2004) and for this reason they play a substantial role in their attachment to the company. On the oth-

er hand, from the perspective of the company, the products are essential in reputation management since they embody corporate values. For this reason, companies emphasise their commitment to ethical values and sustainability issues, stressing their own impeccable “intelligence, character and goodwill” (Aristotle, 1932: 92) that is also credited to their business partners who are expected to share the same set of values and norms.

5.7.2.3. Goal description

Even though the organisations in the corpus under study are companies that are by definition settled to do business, an overview of their declared goals might be somewhat misleading. Contrary to folk logic, open statements such as “our goal is to do business and make profit” are nowhere to be found on the corporate webpages. Instead, organisational goals are detached from the down-to-earth pursuits and reach for value-driven aims. For this reason, the analysis of goals offers direct insights into the corporate value systems. In the corporate identity discourse goals are usually expressed in the mission statements – the core carriers of corporate identity. This context points to the rank of goals in the group of the core elements constructing corporate identity, embracing the specification of “who” the company is and “what it does” (Falsey, 1989: 3) as well as objectives and values (Swales and Rogers, 1995: 227). The mission statement below (extract 11) illustrates a common formulation of corporate goals that might be to a great extent regarded as representative for the companies under study:

Extract (11)

The mission of Allstate PRIDE is to create a positive, inclusive work environment for employees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. It is **our goal** to establish equality and a safe, open and honest business environment. (Allstate Insurance Company, App. 1, item 92; emphasis added)

As far as the frequency of the word “goal” is concerned, it totalled 624 occurrences, yet the position of the noun in the keyness rank was rather distant (382). This noun most frequently collocates with the pronoun “our” and definite article “the” (see Table 5.31).

Table 5.31. “Goal”: Top 10 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 143			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 624			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	144	1	our goal
2	100	1	the goal

3	36	1	a goal
4	29	1	this goal
5	23	1	's goal
6	12	1	that goal
7	11	1	its goal
8	11	1	reduction goal
9	9	1	ultimate goal
10	8	1	ambitious goal

If we now look more closely at the concordance for “our goal” (Table 5.32), it is clear that corporate concerns primarily oscillate around sustainability issues, especially their social rather than environmental dimension.

Table 5.32. “Our goal”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
19	human rights within our entire value chain. Our goal was to improve awareness on these
34	abilities, veterans and other demographic groups. Our goal is to reflect the diversity of
65	delivery so that we can all achieve our goal of healthier communities. Purchase your
67	entoring from medical and business professionals. Our goal is to foster the continuing education
75	impact to more readily measure progress against our goal of reducing our carbon footprint by 20%
79	environment for cultural diversity and inclusion. Our goal is to provide quality health care,
92	backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. Our goal is to welcome and include diversity
98	sexual orientation or gender identity. It is our goal to establish equality and a safe,
106	Associate should be injured at work. Our goal is zero workplace injuries or illnesses.
127	received an ES? engagement score of 85, meeting our goal to be an Employer of Choice,
131	tencies needed to execute our business strategy. Our goal is to attract and retain employees
158	improve performance, and build capacity. Our goal is to increase transparency in the

The strongest emphasis is put on creating an employee-friendly workplace that observes human rights, fights against any form of discrimination, especially that based on gender, and follows the principles of diversity and inclusion. These concerns are voiced, for example, by PepsiCo:

Extract (12)

Talent Sustainability is **our goal** to provide a safe and inclusive workplace globally and to respect, support and invest in the local communities where we operate (Pepsi-Co Inc, App. 1, item 54; emphasis added).

Corporations stake claims for the validity of employees so they aim at attracting the best candidates and retaining their employees. They also express their green goals entailing the reduction of their environmental footprint. Finally, companies demonstrate their contribution to communities that takes the form of a rich assortment of social programmes, most often materialised in the provision of healthcare and education.

Similar themes might be also identified in the analysis of the concordance of another semantically close word, i.e. “aim”. The frequency of this lexical item (220 hits) is much lower than that of “goal” (Table 5.33).

Table 5.33. “Aim”: Top 10 clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 38			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 202			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	69	1	we aim
2	55	1	the aim
3	15	1	our aim
4	6	1	and aim
5	6	1	that aim
6	5	1	's aim
7	5	1	which aim
8	3	1	market aim
9	3	1	will aim
10	2	1	also aim

Observing the concordance for the verbal clusters “we aim” (69 concordance hits), positive prosody might be found, similar to that surrounding the cluster “our goal”. The companies aim at minimising their global footprint and generally wish to “make that world a better place” (Table 5.33, hit 50). Nevertheless, in several cases the companies use the structure “we aim” to express their strive for profitability.

Table 5.34. “We aim”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
2	We aim to use our global footprint a
16	We aim to triple the value we generate
29	we aim to enhance supplier relationships, ensure
36	we aim to improve the profitability and return
40	We aim to achieve water sustainability and we
49	We aim to achieve a sustainable society through
50	We aim to help make that world a better place
67	We aim to be an industry leader in
68	We aim to keep our customers happy by
69	We aim to help workers throughout the world,

The right clusters of the node “the aim” (55 hits) openly point to the paramount theme of environmentalism and sustainability. Occasionally, isolated references to profitability or employees’ professional development might be identified.

Table 5.35. “The aim”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
9	The aim is to be the most competitive
14	the aim of establishing a competitive market position
36	the aim of improving the learning levels in
37	The aim is to use less water in
38	the aim is to protect all plant and
39	The aim of the amendments is to create
40	The aim is to encourage professional development
41	The aim of the Foundation is to promote
42	the aim of further increasing consumer satisfaction
52	the aim of gaining back the original environment.

The examination of 15 concordances of “our aim” has revealed another theme in the discourse on corporate aims, namely the customer orientation that is perceived as a prerequisite of a competitive market position. These concerns are, however, interwoven with appeals to sustainability.

Table 5.36. “Our aim”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
2	our aim to always exceed our customers’ expectations
8	Our aim is to provide solutions that solve
9	Our aim is zero workplace accidents, and we
10	our aim of being even more consumer-oriented,
12	Our aim is to empower sustainable growth for

Moreover, the cluster typically appears in mission statements, as exemplified by the extract below:

Extract (13)

We believe it is imperative to exhibit the highest ethical standards as a company and as individuals. **Our aim** is to be defined by a culture that reflects our core values. Our values provide the foundation for our company’s practices and standards. (Parsons Corporation, App.1, item 45; emphasis added)

The collocates of “objective” (15 hits), another near synonym of “goal”, also confirm previously discerned trends (see Table 5.37 and Table 5.38). As illustrated in Table 5.38, first and foremost, corporations wish to attain environmental objectives as well as those related to creating a safe and employee-friendly environment. Yet, concordance 58 in Table 5.38 is a unique example of the externalised expression of monetary aspirations.

Table 5.37. “Objective”: Top 10 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 52			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 140			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	22	1	the objective
2	12	1	and objective
3	12	1	our objective
4	10	1	this objective
5	9	1	’s objective
6	8	1	an objective
7	5	1	important objective
8	4	1	main objective
9	4	1	primary objective
10	4	1	which objective

Table 5.38. “Objective”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
10	growth in these important consumer markets. Our objective is to know our global consumers and
13	Sustainable consumption An important objective of our strategy is fostering sustainable
21	a building contributing to the Group’s objective to reduce its energy consumption. The
32	and respect for diversity). To achieve this objective , we are fostering a favourable environment
33	IBERDROLA HAS SET AN AMBITIOUS NEW ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVE OF REDUCING THE INTENSITY OF ITS CO
48	responsibility and environmental concerns with the objective of improving quality of life. We believe
51	ensuring a greener and sustainable planet. The of conceiving this concept is to travers
58	The Company’s primary objective is to maximize stockholder value, while
109	Group Strategy Our Objective is to build a growing, sustainable and
118	PKN ORLEN a safe workplace and our objective is to reduce the number of accidents
124	& Business Model Our Goals Our primary business objective is to grow our business through organic

The usurpation of environmental discourse by corporations (discussed e.g. by Jonker and Marberg, 2007; Alexander, 2009; Burchell and Cook, 2006), might be exemplified with a lengthy passage from the “About us” section of Iberdrola – one of the largest electricity companies in the world, headquartered in Spain. Extract 14 below shows that the world’s sustainable future is positioned as one of the company’s primary objectives.

Extract (14)

IBERDROLA against climate change

IBERDROLA HAS SET AN AMBITIOUS NEW ENVIRONMENTAL **OBJECTIVE** OF REDUCING THE INTENSITY OF ITS CO₂ EMISSIONS TO BELOW 150 GRAMS PER kWh IN 2030, A LEVEL 50% LESS THAN ITS EMISSIONS IN 2007

- The Company’s per kWh level is already 30% below the sector average in Europe
- The **objective** set by IBERDROLA comes on top of other recent initiatives that included signing a joint letter of 43 CEOs from global companies seeking strong action to secure an ambitious agreement at the Climate Summit held in Paris in December, in which IBERDROLA has participated.
- Just2Challenge, a voyage towards a more sustainable future (...)
- We have reached a decisive juncture in our history: governments, companies and the society as a whole must join together around the globe to fight climate change. This is the goal of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21)

that has brought representatives from the different countries together to reach a new universal agreement on climate to limit the rise in the global temperature by less than 2 degrees C. **Corporate participation is vital to achieve this target**, in which the electricity sector plays an essential role, since it now has the renewable technologies capable of reducing emissions sustainably and efficiently. Through this commitment to fighting climate change (...) IBERDROLA seeks to actively and decidedly contribute to a low-carbon sustainable future, an effort that will also drive the social and economic development by the creation of jobs and profit. (Iberdrola, App. 1, item 38 emphasis added)

As illustrated in extract 14, Iberdrola positions itself as an active participant in the world debate on climate change, focused on the reduction of CO2 emission. In this context corporations are not, however, presented as the main troublemakers; quite the contrary, they act as the main players in global environmental policy whose “participation is vital” (extract 14) for the effective solution of the problem. Additionally, the company also attempts to strike the chords simultaneously harmonised with the principles of sustainable development and neoliberalism by visualising positive socio-economic outcomes of environmentally-friendly solutions.

Corporate goals might be also traced in concordances of the cluster “we strive for” (20 hits), which demonstrate environmental concerns and display corporate drive to create an honest and fair workplace that is inclusive and supportive to employees.

Table 5.39. “We strive for”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	we strive for a balanced workforce in terms
2	We strive for a company culture where everyone
4	We strive for a close collaboration with our
5	we strive for operational excellence. Our definite
6	We strive for continuous improvement and support
10	we strive for honesty, fairness and integrity. We
11	we strive for proactive collaboration and mutual u
12	we strive for a reasonable balance of the
14	We strive for an employee-empowered environment,
15	we strive for the smallest possible environmental
16	we strive for these qualities in our work
17	We strive for Excellence. We adapt and innovate
18	We strive for a proactive approach in our
20	we strive for an inclusive environment, one where

The use of the cluster in context is exemplified in the following extract generated from Henkel's website:

Extract (15)

At Henkel, **we strive for** a balanced workforce in terms of gender, different generations and cultural backgrounds. There are many more dimensions that define us as individuals, such as educational background, family and relationships, mindset or personal experiences. But only considering all individual properties of our employees we completely embrace our diversity.

Our leadership principles

We strive for a company culture where everyone is responsible for their own inclusive behavior. When we ignite enthusiasm, motivation, respect and commitment we are more successful. This leads to greater innovation, diversity of thought and creativity and therefore to a higher performing team. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29)

As far as the human resources policy is concerned, the goals expressed by Henkel concisely summarise one of the dominating themes identified in the declarations of corporate goals that boils down to the pursuit of creating a workplace that is friendly to employees from diverse backgrounds. However, the most visible goals are related to environmental issues frequently epitomised by the word "sustainability" that has indeed come to the fore when it comes to corporate objectives. "Sustainability" and "sustainable" do indeed have the status of a fetish and their frequency points to the "surface ecologization" of language raised by Fill (2001) and Alexander (2009).

Corporate goals studied in separation from their original context would translate into false perceptions concerning the real identity of the companies under study, positioned as non-profit rather than for-profit business organisations. As the very name suggests, the main purpose of for-profit organisation is making money. Obvious as it appears, this aim seems to be somewhat occluded by the overexposed social and environmental objectives. It is also worth mentioning that goals are underpinned by values – the main footholds of corporate identity – that will be discussed in the next section.

5.7.2.4. Where companies stand: Norm and value description

As discussed in the previous chapters, the statement of corporate mission and ethical orientation constitutes one of the main pillars of corporate identity. In the analysed corpus norm and value descriptions were identified in over 62% of the "About us" sections. Following van Dijk (1995) and his ideology schema, an organisation's norms and values prove to be particularly helpful in deconstructing the ideological foundations of the discursive construction of identity. Accordingly, they are also deemed central in the case of corporate identity discourse.

5.7.2.4.1. Values

The noun “values” appeared 1001 times in the corpus but its position in the keyness ranking is moderately high (keyness rank: 442; keyness: 205.635). It collocates most frequently with the pronoun “our” (210 clusters) that is typical for the business context. The second most frequent clusters are “core values” (187 clusters) and “corporate values” (44 clusters). The importance of values for corporate identity is usually explicitly expressed by companies that define themselves through them:

Extract (16)

Our values define us. They are our compass and filter through which we make every decision (Voya Financial, App. 1, item 51).

Extract (17)

Our values are part of our DNA. (Kellog, App. 1, item 53)

The most frequently referred to values embrace: social justice, equal opportunity, sustainability, environmental and social responsibility, inclusion and diversity, integrity, honesty, accountability, customer satisfaction, market leadership. As such, they share more in common with the principles of sustainable development rather than a neoliberal agenda. Most companies do not openly express their business orientation and distance themselves from monetary benefits of their activity, taking on the façade of a green organisation whose main concern is helping the planet and solving its environmental problems. A brisk look at a typical value statement evokes immediate associations with a *pro-publico bono* organisation rather than a corporation.

Extract (18)

Our Values

- Integrity. Strive to do what is right and do what we say we will do.
- Innovation. Apply the creative ingenuity necessary to make us better, faster, first.
- Delivering Superior Results. Exceed expectations, consistently.
- Corporate Responsibility. Serve and improve the communities in which we live.
- Diversity. Embrace the diverse perspectives of all people and honor with both dignity and respect.
- Global Involvement. Seek a world view and act without boundaries. (Cummins Inc., App. 1, item 6)

The only subtle markers of business activity are references to company products or corporate customers and their satisfaction.

Direct references to profitability are rather scarce in value statements contained in the corpus and their use is usually mitigated by the accompanying appeals to sustainability or ethics, as the extracts below illustrate:

Extract (19)

The heart of our vision and strategy is building a company with value and with values. **We believe that profitability and integrity are inextricably connected.** (Voya Financial, App. 1, item 51; emphasis added).

Extract (20)

Cummins believes a company is only as healthy as the communities where we do business. Acting responsibly will contribute to the company's health, growth, profitability and sustainability. (Cummins Inc., App. 1, item 6)

The message conveyed by Cummins (extract 20) strikes with its ecological slant. It embeds the company in its ecosystem and points to their mutual relations that influence each other's "health". This might be interpreted as another attempt to "marry" typically neoliberal aspirations (i.e. growth and profitability) and sustainability.

The pursuit of ethical integrity is not limited to the company itself but involves third parties – usually suppliers, vendors or other partners who are expected to share the corporate values. Such appeals act as a shield against potential criticism targeted at corporations, mainly on the grounds of the alleged unfair treatment of the workforce by their subcontractors (e.g. creating hazardous work conditions or offering unjust pay). The media and the public are particularly sensitive to such allegations that might expose discrepancies between the company's declared identity and image and contribute to a serious corporate reputation crisis (e.g. Monsanto or clothes companies such as H&M or GAP). Accordingly, the following statements might be found on H&M's website:

Extract (21)

RESPONSIBLE PARTNERS

We are committed to working with partners who **share our values**.

FAIR LIVING WAGE

Every factory worker in the fashion industry should earn enough to live on. (H&M, App. 1, item 4; emphasis added)

Apparently, taking into account the real goals of business organisations, which by definition involve money-making, it would be extremely naïve to believe in such declarations. However, this self-positioning of corporations in the socio-environmental domain might be interpreted as a specific smoke-screen occluding the real purposes and motivations of companies under the pressure of public opinion that leans towards sustainability.

Significant insights into corporate value systems have also been provided by the analysis of the concordances of "we value" cluster (35 concordance

hits) that might be categorised into four main themes: employees, ethics, interaction with the audience and relationships. Companies simply announce that they value their employees, their dedication, contribution, performance or efforts (see Table 5.40 below).

Table 5.40. “We value”: Selected concordances (employees)

Hit	KWIC
2	we value our diverse, dedicated global workforce a
4	We value , challenge and reward our people.
15	We value our employees. We behave responsibly as
16	we value our employees. We strive to provide
20	We value the unique contributions of every employee
24	We value our engaged and talented employee team.
27	We value inventiveness, passion, accuracy and performance
29	We value the collective and collaborative efforts
31	We value our employees’ personal information.

Companies also emphasise their respect for ethical issues and standards, embracing human rights, environmental issues or social responsibility (see Table 5.41).

Table 5.41. “We value”: Selected concordances (ethics)

Hit	KWIC
3	We Value Social Responsibility We are always looking
9	We value compliance because it is the right
10	We value transparency, and have made our official
11	WE VALUE HUMAN RIGHTS Our Human Rights Policy,
14	We value our role in environmental stewardship by
30	we value above all else the highest ethical standards

The very noun “ethics” is, in fact, among the top 100 keywords in the corpus and requires a separate discussion. Yet, it would be rather difficult to detach the concepts of values and ethics as they are strongly related and discussed simultaneously, as the extracts below illustrate:

Extract (22)

At Milliken, we’ve always believed prosperity and responsibility must coexist and we conduct business with a higher purpose and a longer-term view. As such, we are guided by three values: Ethics, Excellence and Leadership. These are the purpose of our play. (Milliken & Company Capegemini, App. 1, item 78)

Extract (23)

The Tata Code of Conduct

The values and principles, which have governed Tata Steel’s business for a century, have been deployed through the implementation of the Tata Code of Conduct (TCOC, often referred to as the ‘Code’), which was first formally articulated in 1998. This was intended to serve as a guide to each employee on the values, ethics and business principles expected of him or her in personal and professional conduct. (The Tata Power Company Limited, App. 1, item 41)

Another discernible theme is the declared appreciation of interaction with and feedback from the audience in the form of opinions, queries, ideas or any other contributions (Table 5.42). Such declarations offer a sense of real communication with the public and respect for their feedback

Table 5.42. “We value”: Selected concordances (interaction with the audience)

Hit	KWIC
33	We value your opinions. Should you have questions
34	We value ideas and contributions from everyone. We
35	We value everyone’s unique contributions, view

Finally, the companies highlight the importance of their relations with their clients, creating an illusion of symmetrical and mutually satisfactory rapport (Table 5.43).

Table 5.43. “We value”: Selected concordances (relationships)

Hit	KWIC
12	we value highly the strong relationships we’ve got with our clients
17	We value our clients and take pride in
28	We value and nurture strong relationships with everyone

Particular corporate value stances might also be revealed by scrutinising what the company opposes. Valuable insights are provided by analysing the concordances of the preposition “against” (314 concordance hits). Surprisingly, the frequency rank opens with the phrase “against violence” (98 hits) that is rather unexpected in the corporate context, especially bearing in mind that in most cases “violence” refers to “domestic violence” (60 hits) or “gender/gender-based violence” (7 hits). These frequencies imply that companies strive for being perceived as involved in women’s rights issues.

Extract (24)

We are committed to the fight against **domestic violence**. (...) We firmly believe that **gender violence** is a frontal attack on fundamental rights like freedom, equality, life, safety and non-discrimination. (Iberdrola, Awareness-raising campaign against gender violence, App. 1, item 38; emphasis added)

Another malpractice the companies stand against is corruption – it appears in only 16 clusters with against, but is more commonly used (144 hits) in other clusters (“anti-”, “opposed to”, “prevent”). Furthermore, the companies are against “climate change” (14 hits), “fraud” (5 hits), “human right abuses” (1 hit) and “discrimination” (5 hits). As far as discrimination is concerned, the companies primarily oppose any form of workplace discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age or discrimination specifically targeted at “individuals diagnosed with HIV” and “LGBT citizens”. Anti-discrimination policy also pertains to corporate partners:

Extract (25)

We generally do not fund requests that benefit: (...) groups that practice discrimination against others **based on age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or mental disabilities, race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry** (Sempra Energy, App. 1, item 36; emphasis added).

The companies also declare not to “discriminate against” (7 hits) the vulnerable, women, minorities, the disabled, HIV and AIDS patients. Tata Power has even developed its own HIV/AIDS Policy, which obliges the company to take the following action:

Extract (26)

- Create awareness amongst all employees regarding prevention, transmission, social & economic consequences of HIV & AIDS for the individual and family.
- Not discriminate **against employees who are known cases of HIV & AIDS**.
- Respect the confidentiality of HIV & AIDS status.
- Provide counseling facilities for employees & families of HIV & AIDS cases to foster a culture of caring.
- Consider HIV & AIDS patients like other patients suffering from life threatening & prolonged illnesses. (The Tata Power Company Limited, App. 1, item 41 emphasis added)

Furthermore, the companies condemn any form of “retaliation” (16 hits) against individuals that report any violation of the corporate code of conduct and promise to ensure protection and anonymity for the whistleblower.

Extract (27)

We also have very strict and specific policies against retaliation that protect employees who raise concerns. (Sempra Energy, App. 1, item 36)

Extract (28)

PepsiCo. We prohibit retaliation against any individual who, in good faith, reports a suspected violation of the law or the Code of Conduct. (PepsiCo, Inc., App. 1, item 54)

In sum, the declarations of anti-discrimination and equal rights policy contained in the “About us” section should not be naïvely interpreted as an act of pure goodwill on the part of the companies but rather as their compliance with the legal regulations that bind employers. The contents of “employment” or “diversity and inclusion” subsections to a great extent reiterate the main principles of the binding acts and regulations, particularly those adopted in Western countries, especially the US, Canada, Australia and the EU. The standards of employment and treatment of the workforce are an important element of corporate identity and their violation might lead to a serious corporate reputation crisis. Hence, positioning the company as a law-abiding employer appears an essential element of the overall corporate communication and one of the key factors in the process of its legitimisation.

5.7.2.4.2. Ethics

As mentioned earlier, the word “ethics” is among the top 100 keywords in the corpus (rank 63) and is characterised by high frequency (1271 hits). The most frequent clusters embrace: “code of ethics” (224), “business ethics” (144), compliance and ethics” (22), “conduct and ethics” (22), “culture of ethics” (22), “standards of ethics” (18), “governance and ethics” (14), “commitment to ethics” (9). The two most frequent clusters are in most cases used as headings of particular subsections or paragraphs. The use of the term corresponds with Altham’s (2001: 10) differentiation between business ethics (BE) and CSR discussed in chapter 2, as BE predominantly “seeks to prevent harm” by specifying rules of conduct and dealing with existing problems in contrast to CSR that takes a more proactive stand and focuses on exposing positive aspects of corporate activity and involvement. The BE sections basically expose the commitment of the company to the binding regulations and high ethical standards in order to rebut any possible criticism. Despite certain differences between BE and CSR, the two areas are usually related and referred to simultaneously, along with corporate governance policies, which might be exemplified by the following extract:

Extract (29)

IBERDROLA adopts a set of principles and values that express its commitment in the areas of corporate governance, business ethics and corporate social responsibility. (Iberdrola, App. 1, item 38)

Typically, references to ethics are a rather brief mention of corporate ethical principles. Yet, such entries are usually followed by a hyperlink directing the webpage visitor to a complete downloadable PDF document, as illustrated below.

Extract (30)

Code of Business Ethics and Conduct

Conducting our business ethically is one of Elbit Systems of America's core values. As part of our ongoing Ethics compliance program, and consistent with applicable legal requirements, we are pleased to share our Code of Business Ethics and Conduct as approved by Elbit Systems of America's Board of Directors. Because of the importance we place on conducting our activities in an ethical manner, our employees, officers and directors are committed to following the Code as well as our other ethics and compliance related procedures and policies.

Click here for "Code of Business Ethics and Conduct" document (Elbit Systems of America, App. 1, item 1; emphasis added)

A code of ethics adopted by a particular organisation is also expected to be abided by corporate partners – in most cases suppliers – in order to meet strict and transparent standards.

5.7.2.4.3. Commitment

A company's value stance might be also communicated by the use of the word "commitment", whose importance to corporate identity discourse has been confirmed by its high frequency and keyness in the corpus (keyness rank: 40; frequency 1542). The word's most frequent right cluster is the pronoun "our", central in the corporate identity discourse ("our commitment": 415 concordance hits), presented selectively in Table 5.44. The concordances might be thematically grouped into the following categories:

- Issues: diversity and inclusion, environmental impact, ethics, transparency, human rights, integrity, social responsibility, female participation.
- Beneficiaries: employees, clients, customers, communities, the environment.

The cluster "our commitment" specifies a company's declared dedication to and interest with specific problems and groups that are completely aligned with the principles of sustainable development and the overall corporate communication strategy. Again, companies occlude their monetary aspira-

tions and expose their socio-environmental involvement. The unique exception to this rule might be exemplified by the concordance 292 (see Table 5.44) that contains the only mention of economic success.

Table 5.44. “Our commitment to”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC		
1	Our Industries Our passion lies in	our commitment to	our customers who depend on
9	This promise continues to guide	our commitment to	the communities where we live
22	the communities where we do business, fulfilling	our commitment to	make a positive impact on
32	global programs and initiatives are testament to	our commitment to	a diverse and inclusive working
37	complicity in human rights abuses.	Our commitment to	the realization of human rights
48	community whose lives we touch. It shapes	our commitment to	the environment, to affordability
51	heir natural environments. This policy emphasizes	our commitment to	protecting biodiversity in area
72	dialogue, engaged employees and mutual respect.	Our commitment to	workplace diversity has been considered
88	with relevant stakeholders. To further enhance	our commitment to	transparency, PepsiCo is providing
89	value on working with others who share	our commitment to	human rights. Downloads
95	and Africa (AMEA) In 2013, PepsiCo AMEA advanced	our commitment	to increasing female participation
108	the change in our business relationships and	our commitment to	serving customers with passion.
121	message This corporate message also serves as	our commitment to	the Earth. We cannot sincerely
128	that our organization has been recognized for	our commitment to	the highest standards of ethics
134	because it is the community we serve.	Our commitment to	supplier diversity is based on
150	our Code of Conduct (PDF), which outlines	our commitment to	compliance and ethics. To further
157	Dear Friends: At University Hospitals,	our commitment to	diversity and inclusion extends
172	of integrity, quality, commitment and innovation.	Our commitment to	integrity and social responsibility
179	We are proud to be recognized for	our commitment to diversity.	National Minority Su

180	seating components and systems for automobiles	Our commitment to	sustainability dates back to our
196	strength of our compliance and ethics program,	our commitment to	corporate social responsibility
212	force for good. How? Suppliers who share	our commitment to	safeguarding the environment and
225	We believe good communication, recognition,	our commitment to	an ethical corporate culture and
236	Environmental stewardship culture	Our commitment to	reducing our environmental impact
247	Our Environment, Health & Safety Policy outlines	our commitment to	the environment across our globe
258	Design and development of the facility showcases	our commitment to	protecting the environment and
264	diversity of our workforce. In line with	our commitment to	create an inclusive workplace,
278	ethical business conduct and who share	our commitment to	safety, reliability and quality.
292	This program is a great example of	our commitment to	the economic success of our
297	in our Code of Business Ethics which includes	our commitment to	equal opportunity and non-disc
312	and Safety We are recognized internationally for	our commitment to	the protection of our employees
321	an expanded group of experts who share	our commitment to	integrity, excellence and high
327	Clients' lives: their homes and their businesses.	Our commitment to	our clients is to conduct
339	smarter, safer, greener, healthier and more fun.	Our commitment to	building a better future is
346	critical priority for our company. This drives	our commitment to	improving science, technology,
354	LEED Certified „green building,” it also shows	our commitment to	eco-friendly business practices.

A valuable insight into the corporate value stance is also provided by the analysis of the concordances of “we are committed to” (249 concordance hits). Table 5.45 presents selected examples of the use of the phrase. Just consulting the concordances of the selected instances unveils the companies’ drive to maximise their positive impact on the environment, the workplace and the community. All the statements might be, in fact, categorised as compliant with the principles of sustainable development. Decontextualised, they could be read as the manifestos of environmental or social organisations.

Table 5.45. “We are committed to”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC	
5	Globally,	we are committed to creating opportunities for women
116	manufacturing facilities are located in 26 countries.	We are committed to minimizing our environmental footprint
220	of our planning, programming and implementation.	We are committed to creating a better world
228	among our teams brings to our organization.	We are committed to promoting a diverse workforce
333	Openness and Transparency in Political Activity	We are committed to openness and transparency in
335	the best truly global consumer products company,	we are committed to doing business with integrity
336	Sustainability at Henkel	We are committed to leadership in sustainability.
441	One of our five corporate values:	We are committed to leadership in sustainability.
665	recognize that our people are our energy.	We are committed to helping our people develop
776	the broad perspectives of our diverse workforce.	We are committed to building our diversity effort
880	As a full-service financial services company,	we are committed to serving our customers and
999	hospitality, healthcare, education and leisure.	We are committed to making a meaningful impact
1101	many other societal demands for water. Still,	we are committed to reducing our water use
1147	respecting our social and physical environment.	We are committed to the goal of sustainable
1149	integrity, quality, commitment and innovation.	We are committed to living our values and,
1182	status under local, state or federal law.	We are committed to providing equal employment opportunities
1184	conduct ETHICS & CODE OF CONDUCT at Schnitzer	we are committed to promoting a positive workplace
2208	the United States and more than 35 countries.	We are committed to our diversity and inclusion
2220	As world’s largest real estate franchisor,	we are committed to supporting our global community
2223	the safety of our employees very seriously.	We are committed to providing a safe workplace
2241	part to help build a sustainable world.	We are committed to protecting natural resources
2245	in need. How We Play At Mattel,	we are committed to maximizing our social impact

Again, corporations position themselves as benefactors to the whole of human kind, who take efforts to “create a better world” or support “our global community”. Apparently, such declarations are, by all means appealing to the public, yet they raise certain doubts concerning the real intentions behind the words as well as questions pertaining to the hidden, unspoken agenda. Similar conclusions might be also drawn from the analysis of the concordances for the cluster “we are dedicated” (see Table 5.46).

Table 5.46. Concordances for “we are dedicated”

Hit	KWIC
1	we are dedicated to earning that trust through responsible stewardship of our most valuable resources.
2	we are dedicated to providing financial products
3	We are dedicated to diversity, fair treatment, mutual respect and trust.
4	we are dedicated to provide for or cooperate the safe operation of our facilities and to the protection of our employees, the public and the environment.
5	We are dedicated to investing in creative and innovative ideas through community-based grant making
6	We are dedicated to supporting projects that couple the passion of employees
7	We are dedicated to improving the lives of our customers
8	We are dedicated to improving the lives of the people in the areas we serve
9	We are dedicated to improving the lives of kids in need
10	We are dedicated to developing a broad range capabilities within our supplier base
11	we are dedicated to developing the best and most productive sales force in the industry
12	we are dedicated to patient privacy
13	we are dedicated to helping you experience a lifetime of good health
14	we are dedicated to enhancing all employees’ cultural competencies
15	we are dedicated to improving traffic safety and mobility
16	we are dedicated to the health and well-being
17	We are dedicated to conducting all business in a professional and ethical manner.
18	we are dedicated to the economic support of local, diverse workforces
19	We are dedicated to the safe operation of our facilities and to the protection of our employees, the public and the environment.

A more precise specification of the beneficiaries of corporate actions is provided by an examination of the concordances for “we support” (119 concordance hits). As it has emerged from the textual data, corporate support is primarily directed at employees and retirees, communities, ethical and environmental issues, organisations and women. Tables 5.47-5.51 below present selected “we support” concordances that have been thematically categorised.

Our employees and retirees (21 hits)

Table 5.47. "We support": Selected concordances (employees and retirees)

Hit	KWIC
12	we support and empower our employees, the way
14	We support and encourage our employees to actively
16	we support our employees and retirees in their
30	we support employees with functional diversity, pr

Communities (10 hits)

Table 5.48. "We support": Selected concordances (communities)

Hit	KWIC
33	we support and enrich our communities through a
50	We support U.S. and Canadian communities where
92	We support community development through our communication

Ethical and environmental issues (15 hits)

Table 5.49. "We support": Selected concordances (ethical and environmental issues)

Hit	KWIC
36	we support diversity and inclusion in our company
47	We support causes that our people care about
53	We support reforestation programmes in Brazil, as
76	we support alternative modes of commuting that pl
86	we support the concept of recycling. Every year
117	we support a shift to a low carbon
36	we support diversity and inclusion in our company

Organisations (16 hits)

Table 5.50. "We support": Selected concordances (organisations)

Hit	KWIC
48	we support hundreds of important organizations and
57	we support charitable organizations and events who
60	We support hundreds of charitable and community or
61	We support non-profit, tax-exempt organizations in
78	We support development programs at the high school
85	We support many local organizations in the community
97	We support environmental organizations through
48	we support hundreds of important organizations and

Women (5 hits)

Table 5.51. Selected “we support” concordances: Women

Hit	KWIC
41	We support women’s empowerment and their
55	We support women, including working women, becoming

In practical terms corporate support of their employees might translate into “work-life flexibility, personal career and development planning, mentoring to diversity and inclusion consulting” (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29). Communities are usually supported financially through educational and developmental initiatives. Corporate support entails a range of principles, projects, positions, programs, initiatives, efforts and standards that build up a relatively consistent corporate ethical credo, based on the declared respect and support for the corporate social and environmental surrounding. As far as ethical environmental issues are concerned, corporations express their support for enigmatic “causes that our people care about” (Weyerhaeuser Company, App. 1, item 60). Their more specifically voiced support embraces company diversity and inclusion policy or certain environmental initiatives, such as reforestation programmes in Brazil, the use of alternative energy or more sustainable exploitation of natural resources. Finally, corporations take an emancipatory stand towards women’s issues and proclaim their strong support for the empowerment and equality of women, e.g.:

Extract (31)

Through our Global Citizenship initiatives, PepsiCo supports programs that:

- encourage healthy lifestyles;
- improve availability of affordable nutrition;
- expand access to clean water;
- enhance sustainable agriculture capability;
- enable job readiness; and
- empower women and girls.** (PepsiCo Inc, App. 1, item 54; emphasis added)

This theme has strongly marked its presence in corporate identity discourse and it will be revisited in the next section.

5.7.2.4.4. Diversity and inclusion

The notion of diversity has become one of the top keywords in the contemporary corporate identity discourse. In the analysed corpus it holds the 25th position in the keyness rank (frequency: 2,105; keyness rank: 25). At the

discursive level, the corporate “us” is framed in opposition to a homogenous entity since numerous statements emphasise plurality and diversity of the organisations and their stakeholders. The most frequent concordance for “diversity” is “inclusion” (316 concordance hits). The frequency and keyness of the noun “inclusion” in isolation is significantly lower (frequency: 689; keyness rank: 140) compared to “diversity”. It must be noted, though, that the cluster “diversity and inclusion” plays an important metatextual function as it serves as a header of separate sections in the “About us” sections. In fact, almost one fifth (18.2%) of the analysed websites contains “Diversity and Inclusion” subsections.

As illustrated in Table 5.52, companies express their commitment to promoting “diversity and inclusion” and emphasise the centrality of these values in their ethical standards. The prosody of the cluster is overwhelmingly positive and presented in the context of potential benefits to the companies and their employees.

Table 5.52. Selected “diversity and inclusion” concordances

Hit	KWIC	
15	Maximize the business impact of global	diversity and inclusion to empower our people,
24	to guide our direction. We are emphasizing	diversity and inclusion as a key factor in
36	All Schneider entities are obliged to develop	diversity and inclusion action that cover areas s
58	employees and workplace Fluor’s commitment to	diversity and inclusion is absolute. We believe that
77	We are strongly committed to promoting	diversity and inclusion . Diversity is about
83	TIAA-CREF has a longstanding commitment to	diversity and inclusion . In 1987, Dr. Clifton R.
91	From Our President and CEO We believe	diversity and inclusion are essential to living our values
119	we know that a strong commitment to	diversity and inclusion is vital to our global
132	Progress About 10 years ago, Kellogg made	diversity and inclusion a key corporate initiative
198	suppliers and visitors alike. Our passion for	diversity and inclusion is not only about doing

The need to incorporate “diversity and inclusion” to corporate discourse has been to a great extent dictated by globalisation that has diversified the workplace in cultural, ethical and linguistic terms, creating both threats to and opportunities for business organisations. Companies, however, tend to focus on opportunities related to surfing the waves of international, compet-

itive business and celebrate the diversity of their multicultural teams, which results in the overall better performance. This apparently optimistic stance might be illustratively exemplified by a large extract from Henkel's website, enumerating multiple benefits of staff diversity for the company:

Extract (32)

Diversity & Inclusion makes business sense. As globalization increases, demographics and lifestyle change, we need to reflect these developments affecting our workforce and our external stakeholders. We believe that embracing diversity opens up a **wealth of opportunities**. The diversity of our employees, their backgrounds, knowledge and expertise **makes the difference** in a highly competitive, international environment. By profiting from the creativity, knowledge and international mentality of our employees, we are able to **come up with new approaches** and **transform good ideas into successful innovations**. This enables us to **build strong, synergistic relationships** with our consumers, customers, suppliers and colleagues. Studies, e.g. by Catalyst or McKinsey, demonstrate that diverse organizations are **better performing, more profitable and more powerful** and that customers, employees and suppliers have **greater loyalty** to businesses that seek to be more representative of the communities they serve. Diversity & Inclusion does **lift employee engagement** and continually **increases our value** for our people and customers. Thus the business case for having a diverse workforce is compelling: **Enterprises that appreciate and effectively manage** diversity and inclusion will clearly take the lead with regards to their employees, their war for talents and their competition. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29; emphasis added).

In fact, becoming a leader in diversity and inclusion management is one of Henkel's key goals, which has been expressed in the company's main document, i.e. the mission statement:

Extract (33)

What are our dimensions of Diversity & Inclusion?

At Henkel we take a holistic approach and embrace all aspects of diversity. Our goal is to strengthen our global team. (...) while living a corporate culture of respect and appreciation towards all of our **diverse** employees, customers and suppliers.

Our mission is to:

- Enable our employees to better understand our markets, customers and consumers

- Attract, retain and promote the best talents

- Enhance competencies of our employees to build high-performing and inclusive global teams

- Be recognized as a **leader** in diversity and inclusion management. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29; emphasis added).

In the corporate context diversity stands for the diversification and uniqueness of individual employees treated as an asset by the company (see extracts 34-35 below).

Extract (34)

Our markets, products and customers are strongly affected by globalization, proven by the fact that they are becoming more and more diverse. Thus, the different backgrounds and diverse abilities of our employees are invaluable for our understanding of our stakeholders and markets. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29)

Extract (35)

When we talk about diversity and the valuable differences that each of us brings, we should be aware that not all differences are immediately visible. Each of us is unique and it is this uniqueness that we aspire to capture. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29).

Corporate diversity and inclusion programmes are not, however, solely targeted at the cultural diversity of employees but they attempt to deal with any form of discrimination based on gender, race, national and ethnic origin, age, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, marital status (see extract 36).

Extract (36)

At Henkel, we strive for a balanced workforce in terms of gender, different generations and cultural backgrounds. There are many more dimensions that define us as individuals, such as educational background, family and relationships, mindset or personal experiences. But only considering all individual properties of our employees we completely embrace our diversity. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29)

Except for cultural differences positioned as an asset, the remaining differences are seen as a problem potentially disadvantaging the worker. Nevertheless, the companies take a proactive attitude and show their willingness to overcome this obstacle. The “disadvantaged” employer, however, does not play an agentive role as the company takes action to solve the problems for them. This relation might be, to a certain extent, viewed as patronising. Particular attention is paid to women as a group vulnerable to unequal treatment. For this reason, selected companies (e.g. PepsiCo, Henkel, GAP, Schneider Electric) have developed programmes aimed at empowering women and helping them realise their full potential. Such help is materialised in economic support and educational activities in addition to mentoring and consulting, as well as the possibility of working flexi-time for a more effective work-life balance.

As shown in Table 5.53, the word “women” most frequently collocates with “men”. In most cases the cluster “men and women” is used to assure the audience that the company treats men and women equally, which translates specifically into equal footing in the process of recruitment and selection as well as equal remuneration for their work. “Girls and women”, similarly to “minorities and women”, appear in the context of empowering, engaging,

supporting and inspiring. The clusters “number of women” and “representation of women” disclose the companies’ concern with the under-representation of women in the workforce.

Table 5.53. “Women”: Top 15 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 1561			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 2144			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	27	1	men and women
2	18	1	girls and women
3	18	1	minorities and women
4	15	1	for executive women
5	15	1	opportunities for women
6	14	1	most powerful women
7	14	1	society of women
8	10	1	companies for executive women
9	8	1	number of women
10	8	1	representation of women
11	7	1	advancement of women
12	7	1	minority and women
13	7	1	more girls and women
14	6	1	corporations for women
15	6	1	men and women

In order to increase the credibility of corporate diversity and inclusion policies and activities, the companies are also evaluated and ranked by third parties to assure objectivity. The compliance of corporate declarations concerning women’s issues with their real operations is verified by the following rankings: “Top Company for Executive Women”, “Fortunes List of Best Companies for Women”, “Best 100 Companies for Women”, “PINK’s Magazine Top Companies for Women”. Undoubtedly, the need for such a verification and getting credit for one’s initiatives attests to the high position of women’s issues on the corporate agenda – at least at the discursive level.

5.7.2.4.5. Work-life balance

Commitment to diversity and inclusion as well as providing equal opportunities to all employees with respect to their needs involve maintaining adequate proportions between work and private life, referred to in the corpus as

“work-life balance” (52 hits). Selected concordances for “work-life balance” have been presented in Table 5.54.

Table 5.54. Selected concordances of “work-life balance”

Hit	KWIC	
3	a career path and maintain a healthy	work/life balance. Our members, community and
5	career goals. We also value a healthy	work/life balance. Staying healthy, balanced and
9	and tools to help employees achieve greater	work life balance. These resources range from
10	opportunities. Also, our focus on a healthy	work-life balance and flexible working environment
11	Schneider Electric understands that a good	work-life balance is important to employees
22	support of minorities and women, attention to	work/life balance, and commitment to supplier diversity
23	very family-oriented, with an emphasis on	work-life balance, which is important to me.
28	company’ support in helping employees achieve a	work/life balance.
31	value inclusive diversity, equal opportunity and	work-life balance. The workplace diversity strategy
34	effort to help them strike a positive	work-life balance by providing comfortable living

Currently, this outspoken expression of the need for equilibrium between the employee’s private life and professional performance does not come as a surprise in the context of corporate discourse. It, actually, points to a major value shift that has taken place over the last thirty years and is now reflected in mainstream discourse. Back in the 1980s, corporate life was dominated by the “yuppie” culture obsessed with career and consumption. The yuppie lifestyle was hallmarked by a strong drive for professional development and elevated economic status at the cost of a private life that barely existed. This model reflected the 1980s America in the Reagan era and embodied the core principles of neoliberalism (cf. Feuer, 1995; Piesman and Hartley, 1984). Despite its American origin, with the development of globalisation the yuppie culture infiltrated corporations worldwide.

Nowadays, however, the term has a rather derogatory connotation that might be explicated by widespread criticism of ruthless capitalism and unlimited consumerism, accompanied by a subturn towards sustainability. This

change is apparently reflected in corporate discourse. Companies attempt to position themselves as employers sensitive to their employees' needs and the very word "career" tends to be understood holistically as an aggregate of all aspects of human life. This approach might be exemplified by the following extract:

Extract (37)

Our culture is clearly defined by education. Our employees are encouraged and supported to further their education, **develop a career path and maintain a healthy work/life balance.** (Teachers Mutual Bank, App. 1, item 11; emphasis added).

Additionally, corporations do not remain mute to women who are now able to articulate their concerns. In order to authenticate their stance, the companies resort to "employees' testimonials" that might be found in selected "About us" sections. For example, Stephanie Phillips, Director of Concur Administration at Gallagher, gives voice to the voiceless and provides the following testimonial:

Extract (38)

At Gallagher one of the biggest things that keeps me here, and is different than other employers in the industry, is the senior leadership team. Due to their leadership, I feel secure in my role and have autonomy in the way I work. **They are also very family-oriented, with an emphasis on work-life balance, which is important to me.** (Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., App.1, item 85; emphasis added)

In a similar vein, The Principal, the world's leading insurance corporation, shares "Amanda's story on balancing" which provides a testimonial of one of the company's employees who points to the flexibility of her employer and exposes the multiple benefits of this approach that are gained by the employer, the customers and the organisation itself:

Extract (39)

I'm a working mother in the Midwest and support an Individual Disability West Coast territory. I'm able to provide sales support to our West Coast customers during their core hours, drop my daughter at school each morning along with participating in an Employee Resource Group Mentee Program paired with a Managing RVP as a mentor located on the East Coast. **It's a win-win for our customers, my family and my development as a woman of The Principal.** (The Principal, App.1, item 91; emphasis added)

The incorporation of diversity and inclusion issues in corporate discourse might be explicated from a wider perspective of the dominating socio-cultural trends and the importance of diversity in the late postmodern society that is reflected in various walks of life and discourses (cf. Sandberg, 2006: 218).

Constructing a powerful and consistent identity brings beneficial outcome for the company as it creates a sense of solidarity and loyalty among the members of an organisation and inspires collective action. Yet, appeals to diversity render a contemporary turn towards individualism signalled by a focus on autonomy, flexibility, heterogeneity and pluralism (ibidem). These terms are central to both the postmodern and ecological perspectives and the very presence of these items in corporate discourse might be interpreted as an element of a wider trend.

The presence of diversity and inclusion issues in corporate discourse does not only reflect the dominating patterns in mainstream discourse nor is it merely dictated by the audience's preferences. Actually, it has been to a great extent enforced by binding law. For example, in the US and the EU employers are obliged to provide equal opportunities for all employees and prevent any form of discrimination. In the European Union the general legislative framework has been specified in the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 1 June 2005 – Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities for All – A Framework Strategy [COM(2005)224 – Official Journal C 236 of 24.9.2005], available to the general public online (Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities for All).²⁶ Further legislations are also regulated at the national level. For example, in the UK the legislative framework embraces the following acts: Human Rights Act 1998, The Civil Partnership Act 2004, The Gender Recognition Act 2004, The Equality Act 2006, Equality Act 2010 (Diversity Policy UK).

It might be concluded that values and ethics lie at the very core of corporate identity. Special emphasis in corporate identity discourse is placed on human rights, environmental issues and social responsibility, as well as women's issues. In the political sense, corporate value systems lean towards the leftist agenda and green activism rather than neoliberalism.

5.7.2.5. Organisations and their stakeholders

A *stakeholder* is defined as “anyone who has an interest in or can influence a business or facility” (McKinney, 2005: 28). Stakeholders are vitally important for an organisation's existence as they give it a “license to operate” (ibidem). The recognition and targeting of specific internal and external stakeholders of an organisation is the primary function of corporate commu-

²⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:c10313>

nication. Internal stakeholders typically embrace actual and former employees and retirees, while external stakeholders are usually a wider group the composition of which is to a large extent dependent on the type and scope of an organisation's activity. In the business sector this audience usually includes shareholders, customers, suppliers, contractors, investors, as well as families of the workers and the broadly understood community that embraces the media, authorities, activists, civic leaders, schools, as well as the general public. These groups of people might have divergent and often contradictory interests but they are all vital for the company's functioning. For this reason, the process of building and maintaining relations with varied stakeholders appears a challenging task.

These relations are essential from the perspective of corporate identity construction and reputation management as well as the assumed ecosophical framework as they show the anchoring of the organisation in its ecosystem and their mutual influences. As evidenced by textual data, lexical items related to corporate stakeholders have turned out to be among the top keywords in the corpus (e.g. "employee" keyness rank: 6; "management" keyness rank: 9; "communities" keyness rank: 33). The discursive construction of internal and external stakeholders will be discussed separately in the sections below.

5.7.2.5.1. Internal stakeholders

Due to essential changes in corporate culture in western countries over the last decades, the relationships between the management and their subordinates have undergone a dramatic transformation from an authoritarian towards a more participatory style (Breeze, 2013: 79). These changes have been primarily enforced by the technological revolution that has brought about a transition from industrial economy to knowledge-based economy (k-economy). The new model of economy has also redefined the worker that is now required to be highly skilled, autonomous, creative and prepared to face the challenges of lifelong learning (cf. Kefela, 2010). Educated, creative employees capable of critical thinking and problem-solving constitute the core of k-economy. Accordingly, nowadays human capital has gained critical importance and employees have become the company's main asset.

Linguistic data (see Table 5.55) has also corroborated this trend as the word "employees" has turned out to be one of the top keywords in the corpus (keyness rank: 6; frequency: 4503). Additionally, 1667 occurrences of the singular form of the word have been noted (keyness rank: 53), so the overall frequency of the lemma *employee** totalled 6170.

Table 5.55. “Employees”: Top 22 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 1125			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 4503			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	844	1	our employees
2	212	1	all employees
3	130	1	and employees
4	126	1	of employees
5	116	1	its employees
6	115	1	for employees
7	67	1	m employees
8	56	1	to employees
9	44	1	help employees
10	39	1	customers, employees
11	39	1	the employees
12	39	1	with employees
13	36	1	their employees
14	34	1	shoreside employees
15	33	1	by employees
16	33	1	your employees
17	31	1	s employees
18	30	1	and employees
19	28	1	government employees
20	25	1	shipboard employees
21	25	1	where employees
22	22	1	new employees

Our employees

The critical importance of the employees for the companies under study is also emphasised by the use of the pronoun “our” that has been recorded in 844 “employees” clusters. A scrutiny of “our employees” concordances has allowed discerning four major themes in the positioning of employees and their role for the company that will be discussed below.

Assets

First of all, 67 concordances of “our employees are” have illustratively shown that employees are primarily treated as the company’s key asset or the most valuable resource (see Table 5.56). On the one hand, such a representation might be interpreted as influenced by neoliberal ideology that perceives em-

ployees as human capital (cf. Breeze, 2013) or “the greatest asset” that has a real monetary value (see concordances 4 and 30 in Table 5.56 below). On the other hand, the positioning of employees as “the heart” (see extract 46) of the company’s business activity or its foundation (e.g. concordances 40, 41) empowers employees and appreciates their active role in constructing the company.

Table 5.56. “Our employees are”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
4	we see safety as critical to innovation. Our employees are our most valuable resource
30	in which to work. We know that our employees are our greatest assets.
40	Blue Shield of California strongly believes that our employees are the driving force that make
41	to reach your professional and personal goals. Our employees are at the foundation of what we do
46	Print page shown At Holland America Line our employees are the heart of our business.

The companies praise their employees’ high competences and expertise, which come to the fore in k-economy. Employees are no longer presented as a cog in the machine or a human, yet unreflective, element in the process of production that requires control, but highly skilled experts who contribute to the company’s success.

Table 5.57. “Our employees are”: Selected concordances (competences)

Hit	KWIC
10	Thousands of our employees are bilingual. They serve customers
27	a variety of development and training needs. Our employees are expected to be experts

Two illustrative examples of the positioning of employees as key to the company’s success have been presented in Table 5.58.

Table 5.58. “Our employees are”: Selected concordances (key to company’s success)

Hit	KWIC
16	task force with about 50,000 members Our employees are a vital factor for success
56	Social/Our Priorities Valuing our employees: Our 5,900 employees are the foundation of our success

Education

In accordance with the major principles of k-economy, companies promote the culture of learning, especially the idea of lifelong learning. The word “education” appears 1,434 times in the corpus (keyness rank: 212). The compa-

nies usually position themselves as facilitators or enhancers of education, typically provided for their employees or local communities. The most frequent clusters embrace: “research and education” (25 cluster tokens), “access to education” (11 cluster tokens), “training and education” (11 cluster tokens), “to provide education” (8 cluster tokens), “counselling and education” (7 cluster tokens), “department of education” (7 cluster tokens) and “commitment to education” (6 cluster tokens).

Employees are encouraged to raise their qualifications in order to boost their careers and provide more valuable contributions to their organisations. The importance of education for the companies is particularly strongly emphasised in the following extracts:

Extract (40)

Our culture is clearly defined by education. Our employees are encouraged and supported to further their education, develop a career path and maintain a healthy work/life balance. (Teacher’s Mutual Bank, App.; 1 item 11)

Education is seen as a continuous lifelong process. Overall, 11 references to “life-long learning” have been identified. Extracts 41-42 exemplify typical contexts in which the phrase appears.

Extract (41)

Training and sharing of knowledge in EDP: EDP undertakes to encourage women and men to pursue lifelong learning and make full use of their abilities and knowledge on an equal footing. (EDP Energias de Portugal, SA, App. 1; item 37).

Extract (42)

In 2007, Mr. Gallagher was granted Freedom of the City of London by the city’s Lord Mayor in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Lloyd’s insurance market and for his support of the Gallagher Lifelong Learning scholarships. In 2009, he was honored by the Spencer Educational Foundation (which is affiliated with the Risk and Insurance Management Society) for his ongoing support of the Foundation. (Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., App. 1; item 85).

Participation and empowerment

Another discernible theme that has emerged from the corpus is the representation of employees as empowered and active individuals, who share responsibility and are fully engaged in their work (see Table 5.59). This slant appears essential from the perspective of sustainable development that is defined and promoted by participation. Participation typically translates into the involvement with the decision-making process and policy making at different levels of social organisation, ranging from local, national or global communities for the sake of the public rather than individual

Table 5.59. “Our employees are”: Selected concordances (participation and empowerment)

Hit	KWIC
28	behaviors and correcting hazardous situations. Our employees are fully engaged and share responsibility
36	companies at no charge. Today many of our employees are active leaders in organizations
50	is important to us that all of our employees are well informed about company initiatives

interests (Baker, 2006: 41). In organisational settings, employees are positioned as actively participating in the process of corporate governance. As the internal public, they are consulted and encouraged to participate in the process of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of corporate policies. This approach lies at the heart of sustainable development and clashes with the earlier forms of governance that involve the imposition of policies made solely by the leaders.

Bridge between company and community

Additionally, employees are ascribed the role of mediators between the company and its external environment. First of all, companies expose their employees’ involvement in communities (e.g. concordance 18 in Table 5.60), especially in the role of leaders that promote sustainable development and enhance corporate image through their actions. Moreover, some employees themselves stem from local communities and for this reason they play the fundamental role in embedding the company in a given community, acting as a bridge between the community and the company.

Table 5.60. “Our employees are”: Selected concordances (bridge between company and community)

Hit	KWIC
12	Community accelerates our progress Our employees are a bridge to our customers.
18	communities. Investment in our communities Our employees are involved in the communities
36	companies at no charge. Today many of our employees are active leaders in organizations
13	different backgrounds and diverse abilities of our employees are invaluable for our understanding

The companies declare to be proud of their employees (see concordances 122 and 275 in Table 5.61) and strive to create a supportive workplace, of which employees feel proud (concordances 1, 116, 15). In order to provide evidence for the effectiveness of their efforts, the companies resort to quot-

ing employee’s testimonials on corporate webpages. Employees express their sense of pride arising from the very fact of working for the company and the value system they share (see Table 5.61).

Table 5.61. “Proud”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	supportive workplace where employees are proud to be a part of our team.
38	is headquartered in Düsseldorf, Germany, and proud of its about 50,000 employees
43	the choices we make, and I am proud of our employees who consistently do the
116	our first solar installation, we are most proud of our role in helping the employee-
122	support our nation’s veterans and proud of our employees.
183	are here. Claims Processor “I am very proud to say I am an employee of
184	Blue Shield of California. “I am very proud to say I am an employee of
185	make it a place where employees are proud to work. That culture is one of
202	Work At The Principal? May 14, 2015? I’m proud to tell others that I work at
205	people ask where I work, I’m proud to tell others that I work at
223	Allstate, for hosting Elizabeth! I’m proud to work for this company that values
242	contribute to Hypertherm associates. I am so proud to work in a company that values
243	that I will never forget. I’m proud to work at Hypertherm where we promote
275	local ordinance. Visa Total Rewards We are proud of the nearly 10,000 employees that call Visa

Top employees

Despite overt declarations concerning the importance of employees to corporate existence and success, orchestrated with the spirit of sustainable development, in reality the main pillars of corporate identity seem to be the leaders rather than grassroots workers. It must be noted that 61.4% of the analysed “About us” sections contain a separate subsection solely devoted to the presentation of the corporate top management, labelled “executive”, “board of directors”, “executive team” or “leadership”. Such subsections usually outline the silhouettes of the company’s chairman and top executives, which are accompanied by their bios and photographs. By contrast, subsections deemed “our people”, focused on all employees, have been identified in only 14% of the “About us” sections under study. The significance of the leadership to corporate identity is also evident in the frequency and keyness of lexical items related to top management (see Table 5.62).

As evidenced by the textual data, the lexical items referring to the highest positions in the hierarchy of organisations under study hold the top positions in the keyness rank. Their total frequency amounts to 33,694 in contrast to 6170 occurrences of the lemma *employee**. This disproportion clearly illustrates

that despite the declared centredness on employees, it is, in fact, the management that gets the lion's share of attention: the frequency of words related to company leaders is more than 5 times higher than that of employees.

Table 5.62. Top employees

Word	Keyness rank	Frequency
Management	9	4636
Executive	13	3225
Vice	18	2719
Board	19	3716
President	21	4421
Officer	28	2482
Chief	29	2522
Director	36	2365
Senior	46	1593
Leadership	54	1855
Chairman	60	1616

Alvesson (2004) explicates that this exposure might result from the need to acquaint the public with the profiles of corporate leaders who play fundamental roles in constructing corporate identities and conveying positive image but remain anonymous due to mergers and acquisitions:

Employees may have little or no direct knowledge of senior management and directors, yet their dealings with customers may be critical to profitability, constructed organizational identities are designed to convey positive messages and favourable impressions to employees through promotional videos, websites, 'founder stories' and corporate entertainment (Webb, 2006: 58; after Alvesson, 2004).

It must be, however, noted that the top management fully controls the content of corporate narrations and might be naturally tempted to emphasise their role and position in the company in order to convey their own positive personal image. Their profiles are indeed highly personalised and present the leaders as the companies' main assets and architects of their success. Such an exposure of individuals might be questioned from the perspective of sustainable development as it promotes concentration on the individual instead of collective well-being and legitimises hierarchy and the asymmetrical distribution of power.

It might be concluded that the linguistic data has provided contradictory results. On the one hand, the core message conveyed by corporate discourse is aligned with the contemporary trends in management and an orientation of

economy towards knowledge and information. Accordingly, the construction of employees in corporate discourse is based on their expertise and knowledge that is considered by the companies as their main asset and one of the essential dimensions of their identity. Employees are no longer expected to be (at least in discourse) obedient followers of their supervisors' instructions. Such qualities were, undoubtedly, desirable in the industrial era and its highly procedural mass production that required discipline, conformity and efficiency. The contemporary pursuit of innovation and technological advantage has replaced these qualities with creativity and an autonomy that is clearly reflected in discourse, positioning the employee as an empowered individual who is able to find creative solutions to ever-emerging problems in the context of a highly complex and competitive global economy. In this respect, such a positioning might be dubbed sustainable as it attempts to empower the employee and minimise the gap between the management and grassroots workers.

On the other hand, the textual statistics points to a reverse trend: the frequency and keyness of items related to the company leadership signal the utmost importance of the corporate top figures for the construction of corporate identity. Thousands of employees remain an anonymous mass in contrast to a very narrow privileged group of the top leaders with emanating personalities that take credit for the companies' success and legitimise hierarchy and unequal power relations.

5.7.2.5.2. External stakeholders

Among the top 100 keywords in the corpus 7 lexical items might be qualified as those standing for external stakeholders (see Table 5.63). The rank is opened by the word "customers" holding one of the top positions in the keyness ranking in the whole corpus, which might be interpreted as a tribute to the neoliberal agenda and its market orientation. On the other hand, the second position in the keyness rank is held by "communities"/"community" – the word that plays an essential role in the discourse of sustainable development. The next lexical items (i.e. "suppliers" and "partners") are directly related to business activity.

Table 5.63. Key external stakeholders

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Word
20	2482	1761.130	customers
33	1844	1247.316	communities
48	1284	1057.046	suppliers

58	2451	974.339	community
65	1326	899.604	customer
70	1083	851.584	supplier
86	1026	733.853	partners

Companies position themselves as subservient to customers who are to be helped and served. Satisfying their customers' needs and providing tailored solutions to their problems seem to be corporate priorities (see Table 5.64 and 5.65).

Table 5.64. "Customers": Top 13 left clusters

total No. of Cluster Types: 1366			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 2482			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	103	1	to our customers
2	86	1	for our customers
3	79	1	of our customers
4	51	1	with our customers
5	34	1	help our customers
6	23	1	success of customers
7	21	1	and our customers
8	18	1	serve our customers
9	16	1	to our customers
10	13	1	employees and customers
11	13	1	to help customers
12	12	1	of our customers
13	11	1	consumers and customers

Table 5.65. "To our customers": Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
6	providing outstanding support to our customers
10	suit their lifestyles. By listening to our customers
14	to deliver outstanding products to our customers
21	delivering the highest value to our customers
30	we provide unmatched value to our customers

41	By maintaining close proximity to our customers
52	This is a duty we must uphold to our customers
74	and offer tailored solutions to our customers
86	the way we listen and respond to our customers
114	Provide superior service to our customers

The scope of help and services provided by the companies to their customers is limited to two seemingly contradictory areas, i.e. economy and sustainability. The companies position themselves as enhancers and facilitators of their customers' growth and simultaneously take the role of "environmental counsellors" who offer their assistance and guidance concerning the reduction of their customers' environmental footprint (see Table 5.66).

Table 5.66. "Helping and serving": Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
4	We help our customers save energy and money
10	We can help our customers grow, while saving energy and
16	To help our customers reach their environmental goal
17	To help our customers address the issue of climate
21	That help our customers do business better
22	To help our customers reduce waste
35	To help our customers reach their full potential
36	help our customers reduce their impacts
41	help our customers reduce their environmental footprint

The use of the verb "serve" in the organisational context might be typically associated with public service rather than business activity. A particularly strong stance in that respect has been provided by NiSource (see hit 19 in Table 5.67 and extract 43) that constructs its identity on the serving function. Such a positioning might evoke certain doubts pertaining to the authenticity of the declared identity and inspire reflections concerning the real motives underlying it.

Extract (43)

We exist to serve our customers and communities. We understand the needs and expectations of our customers and stakeholders so we can do our best to meet or exceed them. We care about our customers and we give back to our communities. We're investing to improve our customers' experiences with us and making their service more reliable. (NiSource Inc., App.1, item 128)

Table 5.67. “Serve our customers”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	We work hard to serve our customers ; develop and support our employees
5	Delight our consumers and serve our customers through the high quality of
7	We lead in the way we serve our customers , the way we develop our
18	to support policies that allow us to serve our customers better
19	We exist to serve our customers and communities.

As far as the singular form of the noun “customer” is concerned, it is primarily used in nominal phrases (see Table 5.68) that are typically associated with the field of marketing. The most frequent nominalisations presented in Table 5.68, such as e.g. “customer service”, “customer satisfaction”, “customer needs”, represent the core marketing concepts and have reached the status of clichés in the discourse of marketing and advertising. The customer is therefore granted superior status and the whole corporate activity is customer-oriented.

Table 5.68. “Customer”: Top 10 nominal clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 349			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 1326			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	184	1	customer service
2	85	1	customer satisfaction
3	51	1	customer and
4	49	1	customer experience
5	48	1	customer needs
6	43	1	customer base
7	36	1	customer support
8	31	1	customer care
9	18	1	customer’s
10	16	1	customer accounts
11	15	1	customer focus

Suppliers and partners

The status of the supplier and the partner significantly differs from that of the customer. First of all, suppliers and partners are seen as in- rather than out-group members. Being part of the team, they are expected to follow the rules of corporate conduct delineating ethical and quality standards (see Tables 5.69-5.70).

Table 5.69. “Supplier”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
6	Diverse suppliers contribute to our company’s success in
15	We set high standards for our suppliers when it comes to working conditions.
20	We only work with suppliers who have signed our Code of Conduct
98	Our efforts focus on training and educating about human rights and working condition
177	Kao prioritizes suppliers that place importance on social responsibility
216	You expect your partners and suppliers to adhere to high ethical standards.
402	support from diverse and diversity-conscious suppliers. Our Supplier Diversity Program is proud
424	building strong and effective relationships with our suppliers which allow us to provide the highest
438	We expect our suppliers to share the principles which are expressed
612	If needed, we work with our suppliers to develop a corrective action plan to

As regards “partners”, the noun most frequently collocates with “business” followed by the pronoun “our” (see Table 5.70). The vast majority of the occurrences of the word do not pertain to the professional activity of the companies but focus on building relations with their partners and ethical aspects of their cooperation (see selected examples in Table 5.71).

Table 5.70. “Partners”: Top 11 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 314			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 1026			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	139	1	business partners
2	77	1	our partners
3	48	1	and partners
4	38	1	energy partners
5	31	1	with partners
6	27	1	community partners
7	17	1	responsible partners
8	16	1	business partners
9	15	1	capital partners
10	14	1	industry partners
11	14	1	strategic partners

Table 5.71. “Business partners”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
12	aim to work with our suppliers and business partners in around 130 countries to improve
21	We build firm cooperative relationships with our business partners through mutual understanding an
35	risk, and enhance relationships with employees, business partners , investors and the broad regulations
45	Partner Due Diligence We also hold our business partners and contractors to high ethical
50	and inclusion adds value to Clients and business partners . Each region of the world has
60	and harassment We expect our suppliers and business partners to uphold these principles. Our
80	and protection of the environment, with our business partners and encourage them to take thei
106	keeping the trust of its employees, customers, business partners and others who share their perso
123	to build relationships with their clients and business partners fosters the development of you
150	influence the human rights actions of our business partners . The development of our Human

The most exposed issues embrace social responsibility, human rights and working conditions. The latter have indeed frequently hit the headlines, especially in the context of “sweatshops” and common violations of labour laws that have led to numerous reputation crises of the key players in the textile industry (Bartley, 2007; Bartley and Child, 2007; Merk, 2011). Despite the fact that, in response to the crisis situations, corporate public relations services attempted to pass the buck on the issue and lay the blame for any misconduct on their subcontractors, public opinion remained rather unconvinced. In accordance with the principles of the horns effect (see Thorndike, 1920), central in corporate communication, any negative associations related to corporate partners or collaborators are immediately transferred to the company itself, draining its reputation account.

For this reason, suppliers and business partners are nowadays carefully selected and monitored as the media and the public are highly sensitive to any revelations concerning human rights abuse in the workplace, child labour, fair pay or improper working conditions. These concerns are explicitly expressed in corporate identity discourse as exemplified in the extracts below.

Extract (44)

We are defined by who we work with. (Teradata Corporation, App. 1, item 23)

Extract (45)

Our approach has emphasized building capability throughout the supply chain to manage human rights and working conditions effectively. Our efforts focus on training and educating suppliers about human rights and working conditions issues. Following the formal training sessions, we conduct assessments of individual suppliers to verify performance and progress. We are committed to collaborative action to influence all levels of the automotive supply chain. (Ford Motor Company, App. 1; item 81)

It might be concluded that suppliers and partners are represented in corporate discourse as an integral part of corporate identity. As such, they are expected to share corporate norms and values and observe strict ethical standards.

Communities

The linguistic data has clearly demonstrated the centrality of the concept of community in corporate identity discourse. Based on the keyness rank (33) and frequency (1844), “communities” have turned out to be the second top corporate stakeholders. Yet, the keyness of the singular form of the word was slightly lower (61st position in the keyness rank), despite its higher frequency (2451) compared to its plural equivalent. Thus, as assumed in the proposed Ecological Model of Corporate Identity, the community appears to be one of the company’s major stakeholders and one of the main elements of the corporate ecosystem. The data also illustrates a recent shift of corporate communication towards community building, materialised in discourse by the emergence of the new genre of community reports (McKinney, 2005: 28-29).

The community is usually understood by public relations theorists and practitioners in a broad, inclusive sense since the term does not only stand for the residents of the area neighbouring the company but also “local media, elected officials, activists, civic leaders, schools, and residential and industrial neighbors” (McKinney, 2005: 28). These people along with employees and retirees constitute the primary audience for the community report and play a key role in the construction and management of corporate reputation. Therefore, they are the main addressees of corporate communication that might be critical to the very existence of the company in crisis situations.

In the corpus the word “community” is often chained to other elements of the corporate ecosystem, such as the environment, employees, customers, etc. A brief look at the concordances of the noun allows the identification of dominating themes illustrated by the examples contained in Table 5.72. First of all, the companies declare their support and commitment that translates

into an overwhelmingly positive impact on the community that enhances its growth and environmental performance. Corporations take on active roles as benefactors, while the community is represented as the passive beneficiary of their generous help and assistance. The community remains inert and does not seem to take its own initiative to deal with green issues, in contrast to corporations taking on the role of mentors who have to take care of minimising the ecological footprint of the community and ensuring sustainability.

Table 5.72. “Community”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
52	better world for our members, the teaching community , the planet and the people on it. 177.
56	will recognise our impact on the wider community 343. We will support and promote this
72	we share our broader environmental performance, community outreach and approach to governance
112	our customers. Supporting Community Diversity We’re all part of the
138	and a positive social impact on the community . For more details about the definition a
146	for measuring corporate contributions to the community , developed by LBG. 2005 Presentation of
366	Vision 2010 strategic plan and investment in the community . Going forward, we will continue to focus
394	that are instrumental to success, benefit the community , and raise the bar for ethical standards
712	learn about Old National’s commitment to community , sustainability and corporate governance

These trends are particularly visible in “community” nominalisations, demonstrating that the community remains passive since the agentive roles are solely granted to the company, which declares its “community involvement”, “community service”, “community engagement” or contribution to “community development”.

Table 5.73. “Community”: Top 15 clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 767			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 2451			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	133	1	community and
2	85	1	community involvement
3	85	1	community service
4	51	1	community outreach

5	50	1	community relations
6	38	1	community of
7	37	1	community health
8	34	1	community support
9	30	1	community organizations
10	29	1	community is
11	28	1	community in
12	27	1	community partners
13	25	1	community benefit
14	25	1	community engagement
15	24	1	community development

Apparently, community involvement offers corporations a sense of pride as evidenced by concordances displayed in Table 5.74.

Table 5.74. “Proud”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
50	Sempra Energy is proud of the commitment to the community our
51	The Sempra Energy Foundation is proud of the commitment to the community employee
53	with no motorable roads. We are immensely proud of what it achieved for the villagers.
174	what’s right. I’m proud of the history of ethics and integrity
250	pen in April 2016. United Way Kennametal is proud of our long tradition of supporting community

In sum, in their relations with suppliers and business partners the corporations represent themselves as ethical watchdogs guarding the observance of the accepted norms and values. Corporate subcontractors are expected to enjoy unblemished reputations since any flaws in their image might possibly threaten their principal’s reputation. The community, on the other hand, is represented as one of the main beneficiaries of corporate activity that is rendered passive and inert. This relationship is, in fact, to a large extent patronising; the community remains voiceless as it is represented and “taken care of” by the company that identifies its needs and responds to them. As far as environmental issues are concerned, at the discourse level the companies attempt to take complete control of the environmental discourse and position themselves in the role of the controllers of the community’s ecological performance even though it should be the role of the community as part of the general public to control and legitimise corporate action. This practice might be interpreted as an attempt to placate public opinion by offering a false sense

of tending to environmental issues and distracting attention from any possible corporate demerits in this respect. For this reason, the declared corporate focus on the community and environment must be approached with a great deal of reservation as the main critics of “the great neoliberal utopia” blame corporations for “the deconstruction of all collective institutions” and imposition of “moral Darwinism” advancing competition and cynicism instead of solidarity or cooperation (Bourdieu, 1998b: no pagination).

5.7.2.6. Resources

The statistical data concerning the use of the word “resources” confirms the significance of this lexical item in the corpus (frequency: 1743; keyness rank: 59) and its consequent importance for the organisations under study. A closer look at the top 15 “resource” clusters (Table 5.75) makes it clear that the most frequent cluster “human resources” constitutes almost one third of all the “resources” clusters in the corpus. These figures are undoubtedly indicative of the centrality of human capital for corporations.

Table 5.75. “Resources”: Top 15 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 357			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 1743			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	518	1	human resources
2	152	1	natural resources
3	143	1	and resources
4	53	1	energy resources
5	38	1	the resources
6	37	1	of resources
7	33	1	water resources
8	25	1	other resources
9	24	1	our resources
10	19	1	electronic resources
11	19	1	financial resources
12	16	1	's resources
13	15	1	company resources
14	14	1	additional resources
15	12	1	renewable resources

The terms of “human capital” and “human resources” are widely used in the corporate contexts, yet their neoliberal embedding (Holborow, 2012) might bring up certain negative connotations concerning the dehumanisation of employees and perceiving them only in financial terms. Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that in the entire corpus employees are consistently represented as the core corporate asset and the key element of corporate existence (see discussion in section 5.7.2.5.1).

The second most frequent cluster “natural resources” does not directly stand for the resources owned by the companies but it is used in the contexts specifying the treatment of the environment by the corporations. Exclusively corporate resources are referred to as “our” (27 occurrences). The most frequent verbal collocates of “our resources” include the following verbs: “focus”, “leverage”, “use”, “allocate”, “conserve”, “share”, “ensure”, “manage”, “devote”. As the companies state, any engagement of their resources is motivated by the drive to improve the life of corporate stakeholders or have a positive impact on them, as illustrated by the following extracts:

Extract (45)

Better life is what we’re fostering as we focus **our resources** and efforts to positively impact our communities, employees and stakeholders. (The Hershey Company, App. 1, item 55 emphasis added)

Extract (46)

We work in more than 30 countries and all 50 United States, and we use **our resources** wisely, focusing on effectively protecting the world’s most ecologically important places. (The Nature Conservancy, App. 1, item 109; emphasis added)

Valuable insights into corporate resources are also provided by an analysis of “assets” concordances. Semantically close to “resources”, assets automatically evoke connotations related to economy and accounting. The frequency and keyness of this lexical item are much lower compared to “resources” (471 concordance hits; keyness rank: 284), yet the word has undoubtedly marked its presence in the corpus. Table 5.76 presents selected concordances of the lemma “asset*”.

Table 5.76. “Asset*”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC	
13	and corporate integrity. We safeguard company	assets . We comply with all laws and company
16	appropriate security to protect our people and	assets and that we understand, avoid or mitigate
27	as one of the Group’s main	asset . Human development is an essential tool in

32	in new window. The company, which boasts	assets worth in excess of 30 billion dollars, was
33	considers its employees to be a strategic	assets , fostering their development, training, and
34	enrichment and knowledge that he considers key	assets for any company. Tireless and with strong
186	know that our employees are our greatest	assets . They are entitled to a safe and
188	ully leveraged either its tangible or intangible	assets such as the technical expertise cultivating
195	sibilities in financial resources and information	assets support Vizient's growing portfolio of
359	They are one of our chief	assets , providing exemplary leadership that has he

Based on the concordance analysis, assets under corporate management might be classified in accordance with classic economic principles into tangible and intangible ones. Mentions of tangible resources are, however, scarce and limited to references to the company worth or financial resources. The vast majority of assets referred to in the corpus is of intangible nature and embraces people, with a special emphasis on the employees' competences, as well as knowledge, information and technology, in other words, the overall corporate knowhow.

The above findings lead to a closer scrutiny of the concordance for one of the top assets, i.e. competence. By and large, one hundred sixteen occurrences of the lemma "competenc*" have been identified in the corpus (Table 5.77), most frequently collocating with the adjectives "cultural" (25 hits) and "core" (24 hits). Companies declare to enhance and invest in their employees' competencies, which translate into corporate success and, in the long run, secure the company's leading position in the market.

Table 5.77. Selected concordances of "competenc*"

Hit	KWIC
1	lower cost. At Rockwell Collins, our core competencies include: *Cabin management
8	promote the best talents? Enhance competencies of our employees to build high-perfor
20	services, we also utilize those same core competencies to meet the needs of the communities
26	corporate Senior Management Team and has specialist competency in these issues, and heads a CSR
35	experience. Diversity, inclusion and cultural competence are critical to our mission. As serving
40	and training our employees to increase cultural competency ? Engaging our employees to
48	re dedicated to enhancing all employees' cultural competencies . Our professionals are given training

61	literacy and expertise, accounting skills and competency and overall financial acumen. These skills
66	calibre team members Invest in team member competencies and talents Drive a Performance and
75	includes a focus on leadership, and the competence of individuals and teams, as well as
84	achieve this leadership by leveraging our core competencies in: 1.Materials Engineering – Applie
89	Connor Our success depends on the motivation, competence and retention of our people, hence, we
92	200 courses available to improve core competencies and build leadership capabilities.

The main reflection that comes to the fore after the analysis of concordances of the lexical item “resources” and its synonyms, is the under-representation of references to company tangible resources. Any remarks on company financial resources or other possessions are hardly to be found. By contrast, company intangible resources, such as human capital and knowhow, are presented as the most valuable assets that play a decisive role in corporate success. Such an unbalanced distribution of accents on different types of resources, might be interpreted as an attempt to obscure the real power of corporations and obfuscate the audience. This strategy allows the companies to minimise the business dimension of their activity and expose their social and environmental involvement. As a result, the general public might be distracted from the overwhelming resources of corporations and remain unaware of the actual authority of corporations and their global influences that are used to legitimise their actions and accumulate capital.

5.7.2.7. Ecological identity

One of the vital aspects of corporate identity that has recently become visible in corporate communication is its ecological dimension. In fact, over the last two decades, world leading companies have attempted to construct their ecological identity based on their declared commitment to sustainable development. Although environmental discourse has colonised corporate discourse, or rather corporate discourse has taken over environmental discourse, ecolinguists and environmentalists remain rather sceptical about this newly-arisen corporate concern and tend to view it as involvement in greenwashing rather than true environmental activism (e.g. Livesey, 2001; Alexander, 2009).

Summarising one of his papers on corporate discourse, Alexander (2009: 64) asserted that “everyone is talking about sustainable development”. In Alexander’s (2009: 64) view, this over-lexicalisation and over-statement of corporate commitment to sustainable development serves primarily one

function: “to control the agenda and crowd out the critical voices”. Indeed, linguistic data, both at the frequency and keyness levels, is very telling and does confirm this trend, positioning the narrations on sustainable development at the very core of corporate interest. In the analysed corpus the words related to “environment” and “sustainability” are among the top keywords, with “environmental” ranked 14th (frequency: 2704, keyness: 2197.481), followed by “sustainability” at the 16th position in the keyness rank (frequency: 2431; keyness: 2049.764), “environment” (keyness rank 35, frequency 1752, keyness: 1163.143), “sustainable” (keyness rank: 49, frequency: 1252, keyness: 1055.658). A further analysis of the clusters and concordances of these keywords (see Tables 5.78-5.85) provides a more detailed insight into the context of their use.

5.7.2.7.1. The environment

As far as the key word “environmental” is concerned, its top 30 clusters (see Table 5.78) are focused on the companies’ influence on the environment, most frequently referred to as “impact”, “protection”, “management”, “performance”, “footprint”, or “sustainability”. The companies realise that their business activity might negatively affect the environment but they, naturally, do not aim at highlighting this aspect. They do mention that their possible negative impact on the environment has been reduced to the minimum and their activity does not pose any risk to it, but the central message emerging from the corpus is that the companies’ activity might actually bring positive outcomes. In the first place, the companies point to their internal legislation, programmes and practices that are environmentally friendly, positioning themselves as “green” environmentalists. As van Dijk (1995: 151) puts it: “Self-glorification does not mean that there is never any self-critique. Ironically enough, however, even such critique often presupposes good characteristics”.

Table 5.78. “Environmental”: Top 30 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 460			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 2704			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	196	1	environmental impact
2	169	1	environmental and
3	130	1	environmental protection
4	116	1	environmental management

5	98	1	environmental performance
6	87	1	environmental stewardship
7	80	1	environmental impact/s
8	76	1	environmental footprint
9	84	1	environmental sustainability
10	57	1	environmental, health
11	46	1	environmental, social
12	42	1	environmental responsibility
13	40	1	environmental policy
14	30	1	environmental excellence
15	28	1	environmental health
16	27	1	environmental design
17	27	1	environmental issues
18	24	1	environmental activities
19	22	1	environmental conservation
20	21	1	environmental laws
21	21	1	environmental leadership
22	20	1	environmental management
23	20	1	environmental risks
24	20	1	environmental, safety
25	19	1	environmental challenges
26	18	1	environmental compliance
27	18	1	environmental education
28	18	1	environmental practices
29	17	1	environmental benefits
30	17	1	environmental policies

In a similar vein, the vast majority of the uses of the word “environment” refers to the environmental context (see Table 5.79), especially the cluster “the environment” (see Table 5.80). Companies primarily recognise their impact on the environment and ensure their stakeholders that they take measures to reduce or minimise its possible negative effects. They show their concern for and their commitment to the protection of the environment. The use of the pronoun “our” in reference to “environment” additionally strengthens the positive effects, positioning the company as part of the community, sharing the same values and priorities as well as facing the same problems. As a result, the responsibility for particular problems is dispersed – the companies

do not take entire responsibility for environmental damage but rather share it with the audience. Another observation is that corporations have adopted environmental discourse positioning themselves not as potential trouble-makers but problem-solvers.

Table 5.79. “Environment”: Top 16 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 372			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 1752			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	605	1	the environment
2	156	1	work environment
3	98	1	an environment
4	44	1	our environment
5	35	1	and environment
6	27	1	natural environment
7	26	1	working environment
8	24	1	inclusive environment
9	21	1	safety, environment
10	17	1	healthy environment
11	16	1	business environment
12	14	1	safe environment
13	12	1	for environment
14	12	1	global environment
15	11	1	built environment
16	11	1	of environment

However, the use of the word “environment” does not only refer to environmental issues. An analysis of left collocates of “environment” showed that it is also used in the sense of surroundings, mostly in reference to “work”, “working” or “business” environment. Another strong emphasis is put on providing a “healthy environment” for employees (Table 5.79). Clear environmental concerns emerge, however, from the analysis of the use of longer, three or four word, left clusters of “the environment” that refer solely to its ecological connotations (Table 5.80). Accordingly, the clusters primarily expose declared corporate involvement in the protection of the environment. In accordance with the principles of deep ecology,

the clusters point to the assumed ecocentric rather than anthropocentric perspective. Accordingly, man’s role is to “protect” and “care for” the environment.

Table 5.80. “The environment”: Top 20 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 329			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 605			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	48	1	impact on the environment
2	17	1	commitment to the environment
3	17	1	protection of the environment
4	14	1	to protect the environment
5	12	1	people and the environment
6	10	1	communities and the environment
7	10	1	health and the environment
8	10	1	respect for the environment
9	9	1	safety and the environment
10	8	1	impacts on the environment
11	7	1	to improve the environment
12	5	1	have on the environment
13	5	1	persistence in the environment
14	5	1	to protecting the environment
15	4	1	and protecting the environment
16	4	1	care for the environment
17	4	1	concern for the environment
18	4	1	employees and the environment
19	4	1	health or the environment
20	4	1	preservation of the environment

5.7.2.7.2. Sustainability

Initially embedded in the environmentalist domain, the word “sustainability” has indeed colonised numerous aspects of social and business life (Alexander, 2009: 59). Alexander (2009: 62-63), however, points to a lack of consensus concerning the definition of “sustainability” that remains open to multiple interpretations and is thus prone to discourse engineering: “The re-positioning of multinational corporations as promoters of ‘sustainable development’ has proceeded so rapidly and with so much PR flak and smoke

screening that today no one really knows, nor do they care, what the concept means” (Alexander, 2009: 67).

References to “sustainability” are particularly important in the current study due to the fact that “sustainable development” (Baker, 2006, 2016) is one of the core pillars of the assumed ecosophy. Even though Baker (2006) points to the strictly ecological provenience of the term “sustainability” and opts for the use of “sustainable development” in the socio-economic context, the frequency and keyness of the former notion is higher in the corpus under study. In other words, corporate discourse shows a certain preference for the application of an ecological term in their identity narrations (see Table 5.81).

Table 5.81. “Sustainability”: Top 13 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 729			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 2431			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	286	1	sustainability report/reporting/reports
2	60	1	sustainability index
3	50	1	sustainability strategy
4	41	1	sustainability efforts
5	36	1	sustainability performance
6	26	1	sustainability Progress
7	22	1	sustainability goals
8	19	1	sustainability initiatives
9	19	1	sustainability policy
10	18	1	sustainability issues
11	15	1	sustainability leadership
12	13	1	sustainability award
13	13	1	sustainability program

In the analysed corpus the most frequent lexical item that forms clusters with sustainability is “report” or “reporting”. It plays the function of a header of particular subpages or subsections, marking the boundaries of a new corporate subgenre that has emerged in the 21st century, mainly as a result of stakeholders’ pressure and their emphasis on transparency. Sustainability reporting, initially undertaken by a few particularly “green” companies, has become a common practice in business nowadays that translates into tangible benefits. According to the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship and Ernst & Young LLP’s (2013) survey, these include better reputation, employee loyalty, better access to capital and increased efficiency and waste

reduction. In other words, an overt expression of sustainability concerns generates additional profit for companies and this fact evokes certain scepticism towards the real motivation behind this newly-emerged corporate green engagement.

The next most frequent cluster – “sustainability index” – reflects corporate preoccupation with external rankings that are used as powerful PR tools legitimising corporate activities. In this particular case sustainability index refers specifically to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index. Companies refer to it in order to show that they have been “named to” or “listed to” this prestigious ranking. A similar mechanism might be identified in texts informing about obtained “sustainability awards”. Other most frequently used sustainability clusters are embedded in texts informing the audience about the corporate sustainability “strategy” and “goals” and “initiatives” and “efforts”.

A particularly powerful manifestation of corporate concern with sustainability has been made by Schneider Electric (App.1, item 33) that declares the following: “Sustainability is in our DNA”. In fact, “sustainability” is declared to lie at the very core of corporate identity:

Extract (47)

SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC AT A GLANCE

Reliable, safe, efficient, and **sustainable** ecosystems

With our 180-year corporate commitment, we have developed world-leading capabilities to manage the full life cycle of our customers’ energy and industrial needs. Today, 170,000 Schneider Electric employees apply their expertise in energy management and automation, delivering innovative solutions for our customers in more than 100 countries. Our rich and integrated portfolio combines with a strong and broad global footprint, ensuring a best-in-class customer experience. **We are committed to transformative solutions that provide connectivity, sustainability, efficiency, reliability, and safety while dramatically reducing power consumption. Less becomes more.** (Schneider Electric, App.1, item 33; emphasis added)

The company’s declarations resonate with the principles of the assumed ecosophy as they call for sustainability and reduction of “power consumption” and simultaneously seek efficient and innovative solutions to satisfy their customers. Thus, in Baker’s (2006) understanding of sustainable development the company aligns with the capitalist principle of customer satisfaction and profitability but simultaneously respects and cares for the environment.

The cluster “sustainable development” has appeared in the corpus 171 times. Except for high frequency, even a quick look at a list of selected concordances for “sustainable development” (Table 5.82) demonstrates that semantic prosody surrounding it, especially the left collocates, might be categorised as positive. For this reason, the cluster plays a function similar to “purr words”.

Usurped by corporate discourse, the initially ecological term is now used as a silver bullet silencing any possible criticism of corporate actions. No wonder references to “sustainable development” are particularly frequent in the narrations of “trouble-makers”, clothes companies in particular, whose unethical business behaviour has been made public (e.g. H&M company that suffered from a reputation crisis evoked by allegations of unfair workforce treatment in their overseas sweatshops (cf. Coombs and Holladay, 2015). The cluster might be also considered an artefact of the text form as it is frequently applied for subheading titles of particular sections or paragraphs.

Table 5.82. “Sustainable development”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC		
1	Being a competitive and profitable bank, promote	sustainable development	of Brazil and to fulfill
5	our business, but an ethical obligation for	sustainable development.	Granite has constructed
92	The fight against climate change and for	sustainable development	is a top IBERDROLA’s most
99	initiative within the Company’s commitment to	sustainable development	and the emission reduction
103	benchmark for measuring business contribution to	sustainable development	and also by other internal
127	and incorporating the principles of	sustainable development	in the harvesting of our
129	True to our commitment to	sustainable development,	we favor the more sober
131	as the second most committed business to	sustainable development	in the world.
137	We are committed to the goal of	sustainable development	through environmental
138	award recognizes our efforts toward	sustainable development	in research and development
141	Medal for International Corporate Achievement in	sustainable development	making us the first enterprise
150	We are committed to	sustainable development	and attach a lot of import
153	bring Europe back on the path to	sustainable development.	According to one
163	to act in accordance with	sustainable development	principles, and to harmonize
165	based in Europe and is focusing on	sustainable development	climate change and
170	the development of public policies that lead	sustainable development.	CONFLICT MINERALS I

The left collocates (see Table 5.82) might be mostly qualified as process words – either verbs (e.g. “promote”, “is focusing on”, “lead”) or reified processes and nominalisations (“ethical obligation for”, “the principles of”, “our efforts toward”, etc). Other immediate most frequent collocates of “sustainable” are as follows: “business” (40), “energy” (32), “forestry” (29), “agriculture” (26), “forest” (26), “practices” (24), “value” (23), “future” (22), “growth” (20), “solutions” (19), “society” (18).

“Sustainable development” is apparently one of the key clusters in contemporary corporate identity discourse. Its frequent use, however, does not automatically translate into a profound understanding of the problem it signifies. As Alexander (2009: 55) pointedly remarks: “Because if everyone is talking about sustainable development, there is no guarantee that they are talking about the same thing”.

Analysed at the micro level, appeals to sustainability on the part of particular companies do indeed comply with the ecosophy underlying this volume. As exemplified by Henkel’s strategy (App. 1, item 29), in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, companies aim to achieve their corporate goals with a simultaneous reduction in their negative influence on the environment:

Extract (48)

Creating more value for our customers and consumers, for the communities we operate in, and for the company while reducing our environmental footprint at the same time. This is the idea at the heart of our sustainability strategy and its related ambitious targets. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29).

Additionally, in the analysed extract Henkel explicitly admits the limitation of the Earth’s resources and links their exploitation with growth. Such a formulation of the problem as well as a rather pessimistic tone of references to future developments would be characteristic for an environmentalist rather than a corporation (see extracts 49 and 50).

Extract (49)

For a long time, growth and resource consumption seemed to go hand in hand and impossible to attain one without the other. Whenever population and living standards increased, it meant using up more and more of the Earth’s resources. With expected population to grow to about nine billion people by the year 2050, this trend will not change anytime soon. Resource consumption will accelerate in the coming decades as natural resources such as fossil fuels or water are consumed much faster than the planet can keep producing them. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29)

Nevertheless, despite realising the gravity of the environmental challenges, the company focuses on providing the solution to the problem, which in this particular case entails innovation that will help to reduce further exploitation of resources. Interestingly, this solution does not involve a slower pace of growth or lower comfort.

Extract (50)

While these developments are challenges for the future, they also offer great potential: Innovating and achieving more with less will be the key to becoming sustainable. We need solutions that allow people to live a good life yet use less and less materials. This idea is at the heart of Henkel’s sustainability strategy, as we strive to find new ways of growing and improving quality of life without using up more resources. We want to improve our products and solutions through innovations and smart thinking to create more value at a reduced ecological footprint. (Henkel AG & Co KGaA, App. 1, item 29)

Apparently, it would be rather naïve to think that “innovation” is a cost-less remedy to all the pains of the contemporary world, yet, the applied problem-solution strategy, so effective in advertising, might make pretence of it. The above extract, that is indeed very representative of other “sustainability statements” in the corpus, might be interpreted as a skilful combination of environmental and neoliberal discourses. On the one hand, the exposure of environmental concerns appears evident. On the other, the real corporate goals are growth and customer satisfaction.

In the proposed Ecological Model of Corporate Identity, the natural environment is positioned as one of the elements of the corporate ecosystem. The presence of the very word “environment” is indeed marked in the analysed corpus (see the section above). The natural environment is also metonymically represented as the “planet”, “earth”, or the “world”. The word “planet” appears 220 times in the corpus and its concordances (see Table 5.83) reveal the relationship between the company and the planet as its stakeholder. First of all, the company plays an agentive role, while the planet is posited as a passive object of its actions. Accordingly, companies announce that they protect the planet or minimise their impact on it. Some of the statements (e.g. concordance 133), in fact, suggest the primary status of the planet among corporate stakeholders as the care for it is declared to be the company’s mission. In this particular case the relationship between the company and the planet is additionally strengthened by the use of the metaphor conceptualising the PLANET as the HUMAN BODY: “As Shiseido live in harmony with the Earth, our mission is to care for our planet and realise a balanced, beautiful global environment, in the same manner as we care for our skin.” (Shiseido Co., App. 1, item 65).

Table 5.83. “Planet”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC		
3	minimizing our impact on the	planet	But it takes more than our strong
5	work we do to help protect our	planet	MADE OF PROGRESS Levi Strauss & Co. has
9	reducing our impact on the	planet	Sure, we’re a leader, but

23	working toward a healthier	planet	A recipe for responsibility in Brazil
51	innovation to lower the cost to the	planet	Innovation zeitgeist
118	We positively impact our communities and our	planet	We make products and services that add
133	our mission is to care for our	planet	and realize a balanced, beautiful global environment
142	are committed to improving our business, our	planet	and every life. Improving every life is
158	co-exists with the harmonization of the	planet	and its environment. This co-existence requires
165	are the life support system of the	planet	providing nourishment, the air we breathe
177	focus on delivering shared value for people,	planet	and profit. It is critical to our
200	Protecting the health of our	planet	is a responsibility we embrace. Follow us
218	in reducing our collective footprint on the	planet	More information about Hasbro
220	impacting our people, our products, and our	planet	by playing responsibly.

The close relationship with the planet is additionally strengthened by the use of the pronoun “our” (“our planet”: 27 hits) that might be qualified as inclusive. The planet is presented as a common good that everyone is responsible for. The verbs collocating with the cluster are immensely positive, as the companies: “protect”, “sustain”, “improve”, “benefit”, “positively impact”, “feed the future of”, “restore the health of”, or “create a sustainable haven for our planet”. This might be exemplified by the following extract in which the company, represented by the pronoun “we”, takes on an agentive role:

Extract (51)

We take care of our people. **We positively impact** our communities and our planet. **We make** products and services that add value to people’s lives. **We are inclusive** and **incorporate** diverse perspectives in all that we do. (Voya Financial, App. 1, item 51; emphasis added)

Apart from signalling the problem and expressing their concerns with environmental issues and their possible negative impact on the planet, the companies also attempt to provide solutions. For example, as declared in the mission statement of Elbit Systems of America: “We provide innovative solutions that protect and save lives” (App. 1, item 1).

Similar collocations are also formed with the word “earth” (176 concordance hits). Semantically, they concern protecting the Earth or reducing practices damaging the Earth as illustrated in the following extracts:

Extract (52)

At Wyndham Worldwide, **we understand that our business activities impact the earth, our resources and people’s lives**. We will continue leveraging our sustainability programs and innovation ideas to conserve resources, preserve natural habitats and prevent pollution. We are adopting sustainability best practices and building a culture that continuously strives to improve and sustain our positive results over time. We will work globally and act locally by:

- Developing environmental programs, products and services
- Setting environmental impact targets and measuring performance of green programs
- Working with our associates, suppliers, owners and local communities to minimize our environmental impact
- Complying with climate policies and environmental laws. (...)

Wyndham Worldwide’s commitment to sustainability incorporates initiatives that help conserve the earth’s natural resources. (Wyndham Worldwide Corporation USA, App. 1, item 97; emphasis added)

It is also worth noting that the audiences are ascribed agentive roles in protecting the Earth.

Extract (53)

You can help protect and restore the Earth’s most critical natural places for both people and nature. Become a Conservancy member now. (...) **You** are critical to our efforts protecting Earth’s lands and waters. (Dow Chemical Company and the Nature Conservancy, App. 1, item 109 emphasis added)

This might be interpreted as a mitigating strategy, dispersing corporate responsibility for environmental destruction.

5.7.2.7.3. Being green

In the ecological context, the adjective “green” might be considered another “purr-word” that evokes immensely positive connotations. Compared to the adjective “sustainable”, its frequency (912) and keyness rank (358) are significantly lower. Nevertheless, “green” has turned out to be one of the core adjectives used by corporations to construct their ecological identity. A quick look at the top “green” clusters shows that the word is most often used in reference to “buildings” and “power” (see Table 5.84).

Table 5.84. “Green”: Top 20 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 324			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 912			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	162	1	green building(s)
2	20	1	green power
3	25	1	green ranking(s)
4	18	1	green week
5	16	1	green key
6	16	1	green team
7	14	1	green and
8	14	1	green space(s)
9	12	1	green energy
10	11	1	green business
11	11	1	green program
12	11	1	green teams
13	10	1	green brands
14	10	1	green initiatives
15	10	1	green research
16	8	1	green belt
17	8	1	green star
18	7	1	green awards
19	7	1	green bay
20	7	1	green seal

The cluster “green buildings” is used in reference to company premises that are reported to comply with energy-saving policies and high environmental standards. In other words, companies attempt to position themselves as eco-friendly entities that take care of the environment and do not contribute to its further degradation through their activity. This commitment might be best exemplified by PepsiCo’s declaration:

Extract (54)

PepsiCo is committed to saving energy through green building and design worldwide. We encourage our facilities to meet the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC’s) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, which are among the most rigorous benchmarks for green building design, construction and operation in the world. So far, 42 facilities across PepsiCo have achieved LEED certification and energy. (PepsiCo Inc., App. 1, item 54)

“Green” in a way legitimises the company business activity as well as its staff (e.g. “green team”) and products (“green brands”) through direct references to them and references to rankings and awards that involve the participation of a third party. The comparative form of the adjective (frequency: 47; keyness rank: 357) is used as a pass to a better, more environmentally-friendly future world, e.g. “greener and more connected world” (4 hits), “greener future” (2 hits), “greener tomorrow office” (2 hits), “greener means of communicating” (2 hits), “greener, safer communities” (2 hits).

Concerns pertaining to the companies’ impact on the environment have also been expressed in 65 clusters of the word “ecological” (see Table 5.85). The clusters are highly diversified as they form 33 different cluster types.

Table 5.85. “Ecological”: Top 10 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 33			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 65			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	16	1	ecological footprint
2	12	1	ecological landscape
3	3	1	ecological society
4	2	1	ecological awareness
5	2	1	ecological balance
6	2	1	ecological concern
7	2	1	ecological preservation
8	2	1	ecological environment
9	1	1	ecological economics
10	1	1	ecological management

Collocations of the adjective “ecological” are to a large extent similar to those of the word “environmental”. The most frequent cluster is “ecological footprint” (16 hits) that usually appears in the context of corporate attempts to reduce their negative impact on the environment, exemplified by the selected concordances in Table 5.86.

Table 5.86. “Ecological footprint”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
4	products deliver more value at a reduced ecological footprint . Our corporate value
7	that couples better performance with a smaller ecological footprint . Henkel researchers developed
10	programs include our efforts to decrease our ecological footprint (energy, waste, paper, travel

The frequency of the adjective “eco-friendly” is much lower (33 hits) compared to its synonym “green”. Companies simply declare themselves to be “eco-friendly” (3 hits) or use this adjective in reference to their products (10 hits), technologies (3 hits), awards (3 hits), initiatives (3 hits), practices (3 hits), projects (2 hits), efforts (2 hits), lifestyle (2 hits), strategy (2 hits). Another synonym, “earth-friendly” appears only 3 times in the corpus in reference to practices, educational and community events, and building materials.

The frequency of the adjective “natural”, associated with environmental discourse, is relatively high in the corpus (998 hits), especially compared to its rather distant position in the keyness rank (346). As illustrated in Table 5.87, the diversity of “natural” cluster types is relatively low and the most frequent “natural gas” constitutes more than half of all the cluster types. The cluster primarily appears in sections specifying the field of the company’s activity, usually defining it as a supplier or provider of natural gas or an operator of natural gas power plants. Alternatively, natural gas is recommended as a more affordable, available and more environmentally-friendly fuel compared to coal or oil.

Table 5.87. “Natural”: Top ten right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 129			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 998			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	506	1	natural gas
2	164	1	natural resource(s)
3	49	1	natural disaster(s)
4	29	1	natural environment
5	13	1	natural capital
6	12	1	natural heritage
7	11	1	natural catastrophes
8	9	1	natural language
9	9	1	natural history
10	8	1	natural habitats

The second most frequent cluster, i.e. “natural resources” typically appears in the context of environmental problems. The company either signals the problems related to the exploitation of natural resources, dubbed the “use of natural resources” (12 hits), “waste of natural resources” (11 hits), “consumption of natural resources” (3 hits), or reports on having taken action to “conserve” (12 hits), “preserve” (4 hits) or “protect” (2 hits) natural resources.

Despite its high frequency (3405 hits) and keyness (keyness rank: 195), the noun “world” is rarely used as an agent; in most contexts it plays the function of a noun adjunct in noun phrases. For this reason, “the world” is not positioned as a corporate stakeholder but it is primarily used for self-appraisal, typically in the structure: “world’s” + adjective in the superlative form. The most frequent adjectives in this structure are as follows: “ethical” (110 hits), “largest” (61 hits), “admired” (41 hits), “reputable” (4 hits), “attractive” (3 hits), “dynamic” (3 hits), “prestigious” (2 hits), “celebrated” (2 hits).

The most frequent adjective collocating with “the world’s most” cluster is “ethical” that is used in reference to the ranking of the World’s Most Ethical Companies by the Ethisphere Institute (110 hits). This finding is easily explained by the fact that the ranking was the basis for the selection of the corpus under study. The direct references to the ranking on the corporate webpages point to their importance for the companies as the external sources confirming their ethics.

Table 5.88. “World’s most ethical companies”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
59	Place on Ethisphere’s Exclusive 2013 List of World’s Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere Institute.
66	Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. one of the World’s Most Ethical Companies .
76	Schnitzer has been named one of the 2015 World’s Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere Institute.
91	Recognized by Ethisphere as one of the World’s Most Ethical Companies for 7 consecutive years.
109	Named to the prestigious World’s Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere Institute.

Being recognised by the ranking dubbed “prestigious” is a source of pride for the companies since its value as an “objective”, external opinion of an independent body seems more credible than self-praising auto-narration.

Another ranking repeatedly mentioned in the corpus (41 hits) is Fortune’s Ranking of the “World’s Most Admired Companies” (Table 5.89).

Table 5.89. “World’s most admired companies”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
29	Henry Schein has been a Fortune World’s Most Admired Company for 14 consecutive years
37	Ranked No. 4 in industry on World’s Most Admired Companies list.

There have also been six references identified to the ranking of the World's Most Respected Companies and three references to the World's Most Attractive Employers (Table 5.90).

Table 5.90. "World's most attractive employers": Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	Ranked 33rd on Barron's World's Most Respected Companies list (2014)
2	3M ranked 12th in World's Most Respected Companies (Forbes)
3	3M was ranked among the world's most Attractive Employers by Universum

Rankings undoubtedly play an important role in establishing corporate image as they help to gain the audience's loyalty and trust. Published by prestigious institutes or organisations, rankings create an aura of authenticity and objectivity that is used by companies to legitimise their existence and be considered credible by the public. Indeed, the list of rankings referred to in the corpus is impressive. The most frequently addressed ones are as follows: the World's Most Attractive Employers Ranking, All-Europe Executive Team, Dow Jones Sustainability World Index, Most Admired Companies, Fortune 500 Ranking, Europe's Most Attractive Employers Ranking, America's Most Community-minded Company, Best Small Workplaces in Ireland, Global Innovation 1000, 100 Best Corporate Citizens, Deere's Ranking, America's Best CFO, World's 10 Largest Brokers, America's Best Employers, Newsweek Green Ranking, HVS European Corporate Governance Ranking, Polityka Weekly Magazine's Lista 500, CE Top 500 Index of Success, Top Brand, Responsible Companies Ranking, 250 Top Global Energy Companies, Houston's Top Workplaces, Franchise Time' Fast 55 List, The Euromoney Ranking, Fortune's List of Best Companies for Women, Best 100 Companies for Women, PINK's Magazine Top Companies for Women, Best Places to Work in IT, The Elite 100. It must be noted that except for rankings assessing the size and economic performance of the companies, the majority of them evaluate the companies' impact on their ecosystems and rank them as employers who can create the most employee-friendly working environment.

The cluster "world's largest" (61 hits) followed by a noun (e.g. "producer", "provider", "company") points to the primacy of the company in the global market in a particular branch, e.g. insurance broker, generator of renewable energy, software company, mine operator, etc.). Pioneers tend to boast of their achievements, such as inventing waterproof paper, a high-speed facsimile or a fully integrated production system, etc. (see extracts 55 and 56).

Extract (55)

Rockwell Collins is a **pioneer** in the design, production and support of innovative solutions for our customers in aerospace and defense. (Rockwell Collins, App. 1, item 2; emphasis added)

Extract (56)

The Rezidor Hotel Group's history began in 1960 when we opened our **first** contemporary hotel: the towering Royal Copenhagen, built by SAS airlines to satisfy the demand for luxury accommodation in the Danish capital. Styled down to the smallest detail by the legendary architect Arne Jacobsen, it was acclaimed as **the world's first** designer hotel. Many of the iconic pieces that Jacobsen specifically created for the hotel - including his famous Swan and Egg chairs - have become highly desirable collectables. (The Rezidor Hotel Group's, App. 1, item 96; emphasis added)

The above references signal the global scope of corporate operations and their aspirations to compete in the global arena. Being a member of the world's top companies – undoubtedly an extremely competitive environment – requires continuous confirmation of the company's ultimate competences and flawless reputation.

In conclusion, as it has been evidenced by the textual data, the main pillar of corporate identity and reputation is the company's ecological identity that expresses the company's attitude and relations to its ecosystem, embracing all the stakeholders, with special emphasis put on the environment. Ecological concerns are expressed particularly loud and clear. The companies define themselves as "green" and "environmentally friendly" and demonstrate their strong attachment to the principles of "sustainable development". Such a representation of corporate identity is aligned with the proposed Ecological Model of Corporate Identity embedding the company in its environmental and anthropomorphic ecosystems. As evidenced in the corpus, corporations declare their environmental concerns and attempt to minimise their negative impact on the planet. Even though their global concerns come to the fore, multinationals also intend to mark their positive impact locally. This is particularly evident in declared corporate efforts to enhance the quality of life within their communities. Companies position themselves as benefactors to their communities in order to win their support, which is crucial in legitimising corporate activity. As far as the ideological grounding is concerned, the companies strongly promote the idea of sustainable development that centres on the provision of environmental and socio-economic sustainability but simultaneously does not completely reject business goals. At the declarative level, corporate identity discourse complies with the assumed ecosophy, centring on sustainable development.

5.7.2.8. Neoliberal themes

As already discussed in chapter 4, neoliberal ideology centres on free market and its drive to unconstrained development, solely regulated by supply and demand. In the public sphere it translates into a lack of interference from the state and commercialisation of public services that undergo “marketisation” (see Holborow, 2012; Fairclough, 2006). As far as the keywords of neoliberalism are concerned, Holborow (*ibidem*) points to the word “market” and “marketisation”, “deregulation”, “human capital”, “entrepreneur”, “privatisation”, “deregulation”, “commercialisation”.

So far the analysis has revealed that corporate identity of the companies under study is constructed through a network of relations between the company and its ecosystem, which at the declarative discursive level apparently seem to resonate with the assumed ecosophy. Yet, it must be emphasised that companies, despite their declarations, are the heart of the capitalist system and their ultimate goal is profitability. For this reason, it seems substantial to analyse the presence of the lexical items related to neoliberalism in the corpus.

5.7.2.8.1. Market

As far as the main keyword of neoliberalism is concerned, in the studied corpus 1202 concordance hits of “market” have been identified. The word is also characterised by a relatively high keyness (keyness ranking: 139; keyness: 563.211). Owing to the character of the corpus, the word “market” is not used in an abstract sense in the context of theoretical economic discussions but predominantly refers to tangible corporate business activity. Contrary to economics discourse (cf. Holborow, 2012, 2015; Harvey, 2006), in “About us” sections the market is rarely personified or ascribed an agentive role. The word is used repetitively in nominal phrases as a pre-modifier, usually to refer to a company’s or a product’s competitive position on the market: e.g. “market leader”, “leading market position” (Table 5.91).

Table 5.91. “Market”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
49	the U.S. and quickly becomes the market leader . Only Colgate Total,
77	Henkel Beauty Care holds leading market positions worldwide, and its brand-name products
78	stimulating our emerging markets. We hold leading market positions in all of the international markets

Companies also tend to emphasise their customer-orientation and sensitivity to customer needs, for example:

Extract (57)

Our Mission

We unleash the Power of Cummins by:

- * Motivating people to act like owners working together.
- * Exceeding customer expectations by always being first to market with the best products.
- * Partnering with our customers to make sure that they succeed.
- * Demanding that everything we do leads to a cleaner, healthier, safer environment.
- * Creating wealth for all stakeholders. (Cummins Inc., App. 1, item 6)

The positioning of a product or a company is also accentuated by the prepositional phrases “on the market” (26 concordance hits) and “in the market” (18 concordance hits).

Extract (58)

What makes Cummins different is the way in which we take the time to understand our customers and then exceed their expectations by always being the **first to market** with the best product. (Cummins Inc., App. 1, item 6; emphasis added)

Extract (59)

Ford products would be some of the best vehicles **on the market**. A key part of Mulaly’s leadership was the One Ford plan. (Ford Motor Company, App. 1, item 8; emphasis added)

In the majority of the analysed concordances, the word market is rarely used in an economic, abstract sense. In fact, only one instance of the representation of market as a supreme regulating force has been noted:

Extract (60)

The project loan discussed concerns a loan issued by Ginnie Mae which was purchased by TIAA. TIAA-CREF products may be **subject to market** and other risk factors. See the applicable product literature, or visit www.tiaa-cref.org for details. (TIAA-CREF, App. 1, item 49; emphasis added)

Most of the uses are embedded in the marketing domain and refer to particular stages of the product life cycle, i.e.: developing the product, launching it to the market, marketing and selling it, or even monitoring it in the market (see concordances 85, 86, 90, 300 in Table 5.92).

Table 5.92. “Market”: Selected concordances (the marketing domain)

Hit	KWIC
17	expectations by always being the first to market with the best products. The other advantage
29	some of the best vehicles on the market . A key part of Mullaly’s
85	evaluation prior to being launched on the market . The tests and evaluations are based on
86	continuous monitoring of our products in the market . Our product developers and product safety
90	involving marketing and sales activities in each market . Develop Suitable Local Business Operations
91	America boasting over 100 years in the American market .
92	was the dawn of the Japanese toiletries market , and the Asience premium hair care brand,
93	new product for the fast- growing toothpaste market .
300	Asia Pacific. Advertising We sell and market them appropriately to our consumers, including

Other typical concordances (e.g. 17, 29, 91, 92, 93 in Table 5.92) related to marketing activity embrace: “market opportunities” (19 concordance hits), “market penetration” (18 concordance hits), “market trends” (11 hits concordance hits), “market segment” (8 concordance hits), “market presence” (5 concordance hits), “market practices” (3 concordance hits), “market success” (1 concordance hit).

The noun is also frequently pre-modified by a noun or an adjective specifying the area of corporate business activity (e.g. capital, energy, electricity, financial, securities, real estate, power, sugar, candy), specification of the product (e.g. shampoo, toothpaste, baby products, etc.) or national orientation of the market (e.g. Japanese, Chinese, French, German, American, European). Other adjectives frequently collocating with “market” specify the range of the markets the companies operate on: “global market” (35 concordance hits), “local market” (15 concordance hits), “domestic market” (2 concordance hits), “regional market” (6 concordance hits).

In the studied corpus the word “market” does not really seem to be heavily ideologically loaded. For this reason, in the context of corporate identity discourse its categorisation as a carrier of neoliberal ideology would be too far-fetched. In fact, the word appears in typically professional, specifically marketing, contexts or in reference to the company’s or its products’ position on the market.

5.7.2.8.2. Growthism

“Growth” is another fetish word in the neoliberal discourse and an aim in itself for any business activity. Yet, in ecolinguistics the word is rather negatively biased as carrying the idea of growthism that threatens sustain-

ability and leads to the exploitation of the Earth's resources, contributing to the environmental crisis (see Halliday, 2001). In the corpus, 1194 occurrences of "growth" have been identified (keyness rank: 222; keyness: 373.163). The most frequent clusters are indeed those related to the companies' financial outcomes (see Table 5.93 below).

Table 5.93. "Growth": Top 33 left clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 371			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 2388			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	62	1	and growth
2	53	1	the growth
3	58	1	economic growth
4	37	1	profitable growth
5	31	1	for growth
6	31	1	's growth
7	28	1	of growth
8	28	1	our growth
9	23	1	future growth
10	20	1	business growth
11	20	1	sales growth
12	20	1	sustainable growth
13	17	1	global growth
14	16	1	career growth
15	16	1	professional growth
16	15	1	revenue growth
17	15	1	term growth
18	13	1	earnings growth
19	12	1	new growth
20	12	1	organic growth
21	11	1	on growth
22	11	1	strong growth
23	9	1	a growth
24	9	1	annual growth
25	9	1	rapid growth
26	9	1	sales growth
27	9	1	strategic growth

28	8	1	accelerate growth
29	8	1	continued growth
30	8	1	personal growth
31	7	1	dividend growth
32	7	1	with growth
33	7	1	your growth

In numerous cases companies openly declare their pursuit of growth that is often synonymous with profitability. This correlation is explicitly expressed in “profitable growth” concordances (see “growth” concordances 25, 79, 104). Growth and its subsequent profitability are also presented as a positive outcome of globalisation (concordance 26). The centrality of growth for business is most strongly emphasised in concordance 38, rendering it “the lifeblood of business”.

Table 5.94. “Growth”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
25	Profitable Growth. Cummins will seek profitable growth by leveraging our assets and capabilities
26	This global presence has been key to growth ; in the past three years, half of
38	We Help You Grow Relationships Through Data. Growth is the lifeblood of business, and its
59	To capture the potential for accelerated growth over the long term, and will benefit
69	Sales in emerging markets 10 % annual growth in earnings per share We have define
79	forward. We remain focused on driving profitable growth by investing into our own R&D
104	The company said it will drive profitable growth through our strategic focus on market penetration
170	costs by one-third and accelerated its growth investments as a result.

Negative consequences of growth and development have been verbalised by only one company (Schneider Electric), expressing its concern with excessive exploitation of natural resources. Such an approach resonates with the principles of deep ecology and the ecology underlying this volume.

Extract (61)

At the same time, we know that the quest for **economic growth and development is straining our world** resources. It’s imperative that Schneider Electric help customers achieve the most efficient and sustainable use of their resources, assets, processes, and infrastructures with innovative technologies, solutions, and services. (Schneider Electric, App. 1, item 33 emphasis added)

Even though the consequences of growth are generally not exposed, there might be, however, discerned certain attempts to balance growth and sustainable development (Table 5.95).

Table 5.95. “Growth”: Selected concordances (sustainable development)

Hit	KWIC
29	We develop technologies not only with growth in mind, but responsibility too. From sustainability
99	sustainable solutions which demonstrate that economic growth is feasible without increasing energy consumption
131	leaders who are working to ensure the growth and vitality of our communities.

The negative aspects of growth are minimised by the use of the adjectival pre-modifier “sustainable” that evokes immensely positive connotations and minimises any possible negative tone of “growth”. Admittedly, the very cluster “sustainable growth” might come across as an oxymoron, yet, it has appeared 23 times in the corpus and its use might be exemplified by the concordances presented in Table 5.96:

Table 5.96. “Sustainable growth”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
7	Aramark and its 270,000 employees are poised for sustainable growth through new business generation
14	We are committed to empowering sustainable growth for ourselves and for our stakeholders

An apparent conflict between growth and sustainability was illustratively expressed by Jacek Krawiec, the then President of the PKN ORLEN Management Board, the only Polish company in the analysed corpus:

Extract (62)

Giving the floor to Mr Krawiec, Joschka Fischer quoted from the CEO’s article written one and a half year earlier for Project Syndicate: We are still lagging behind because of mistaken political decisions, made in the belief that it is society and the environment that need protection, growth will come of its own accord. These decisions have turned **sustainable growth into sustainable stagnation**. Jacek Krawiec admitted that the observation, unfortunately, still remains very relevant, also in the oil sector: The oil industry supports some 600,000 jobs directly and more than two million indirectly. With fuel consumption driven by 2.3 billion passenger cars and 34 million trucks, the industry each year creates an added value of USD 23bn in the EU. The taxes, excise duties and other charges we pay account for 7% (USD 270bn) of the European Union’s central budget. Given these figures, it is shocking that the oil sector has been com-

pletely overlooked in the preparation of the energy agenda, argued Jacek Krawiec, President of the PKN ORLEN Management Board. (PKN ORLEN SA, App. 1, item 105; emphasis added)

The above extract is a unique instance of open criticism of the policy of sustainable development in the corpus. Sustainability is interpreted here as a factor impeding development and leading to stagnation. As Jacek Krawiec expressed it, “sustainable growth” equals “sustainable stagnation”. This perspective is undoubtedly informed by neoliberal ideology, giving primacy to the market and unconstrained growth. Markedly, it has been verbalised by the president of the major Polish oil company. Such fierce criticism of sustainability, unique in the whole corpus, might be explicated in the context of Polish history, especially its political and economic aspects. After over forty years of a centrally planned socialist economy, in the early 1990s Poland “converted” to capitalism, with eagerness and devotion characterising any novice. Since then neoliberalism has gained a status similar to religion and has been positioned as the only unquestionable way to the society’s well-being that is almost solely dependent on economic growth and profitability; this approach apparently clashes with the principles of the assumed ecosophy. In fact, Krawiec’s words do stand out from the polished corporate identity discourse, meticulously developed by PR specialists in accordance with the principles of contemporary political correctness that cherishes environmentalism. For this reason, extract 62 might be considered a unique case offering an insight into real standpoints of corporate leaders.

Semantically, the word “growth” is not limited to economics and profitability as it also appears in the context of employees’ “career” and collocates with “professional” or “personal” growth, exemplified by the concordances below:

Career growth (16 hits)

Table 5.97. “Career growth”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
5	our focus on employees’ wellbeing and career growth all of the above have
13	work environment and exciting possibilities for career growth. Paths for every career

Professional growth (16 hits)

Table 5.98. “Professional growth”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
3	identify the most attractive areas for your professional growth. The programmes are designed
18	company and supporting our employees in their professional growth. Our goal is to be the

Personal growth (8 hits)

Table 5.99. "Personal growth": Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
3	Parenting resources, scholarship programs, and personal growth resources. Adoption assistance
6	At Timken, associates pursue professional and personal growth through any number of programs inc

Your growth (7 hits)

Table 5.100. "Your growth growth": Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	At U.S. Bank, we invest in your growth with education and development resources
2	professional skills, Rockwell Automation is dedicated to your growth, development and success as a young

The above concordances position the company as an enhancer of their employees' careers. The very career is understood holistically and embraces all aspects of employees' lives. This approach stands in sharp contrast with the work-centred and consumption-obsessed yuppie culture of the 1980s and drifts towards balancing private and personal life.

Similar observations have been made on the basis of the analysis of the use of the word "increase" that is semantically similar to "grow/growth". The number of occurrences of "increase" (661 hits) is much lower than that of "growth" and the word holds a very distant position in the keyness rank (1175). The most frequent clusters of "increase" have been presented in Table 5.101.

Table 5.101. "Increase": Top 14 clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 204			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 661			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	114	1	increase the
2	107	1	increase in
3	23	1	increase of
4	21	1	increase our
5	17	1	increase awareness
6	16	1	increase its

7	16	1	increase their
8	15	1	increase efficiency
9	14	1	increase over
10	11	1	increase from
11	11	1	increase productivity
12	9	1	increase Access
13	7	1	increase energy
14	6	1	increase business

Markedly, the most frequent cluster “increase the number” (76 hits) has been used in reference to stores, women, elderly, girls, minority and female labourers, math classes, students, suppliers, showing corporate concern for diversity and inclusion issues rather than profitability. This focus is illustrated by the following extract:

Extract (63)

National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), whose mission is to **increase the number** of culturally responsible black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally, and positively impact the community.

National Black MBA Association (NBMBA), whose goal is to implement programs that develop the best black business leaders and managers, promote and develop technical business skills, **increase social awareness** of members, and sustain and strengthen the economic structure of the black community, expanding to all targeted populations. (Delphi Automotive PLC, App. 1, item 7; emphasis added)

The second most frequent cluster “increase in” collocates with “resource efficiency”, “revenue”, as well as “the number of women”, “volume(s) of waste”, “the amount of recyclables generated”. In a similar vein, the cluster “increase of” collocates with numerical values in reference to revenue, earnings or investment, employee number, exemplified by extract 64.

Extract (64)

As executive vice president and director of sales for Employees Benefit Group, he realized a 595 percent year-over-year growth rate, an earnings **increase of** 602 percent with in-force premiums increasing by more than 320 percent from 2000 through 2010. (Aflac Incorporated, App.1, item 83; emphasis added)

A brief look at the concordances for of “increase our” (21 hits) and “increase its” (16 hits) also unveils companies’ simultaneous concern with enhancing their competitive position in the market along with sustainability (see selected examples in Table 5.102 and Table 5.103).

Table 5.102. “Increase our”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	increase our efficiency and enhance our competitiveness
3	increase our economic success on the basis of
8	increase our value to our shareholders and Tom
11	increase our market competitiveness globally.
13	increase our green resources, Wyndham Worldwide
14	increase our transparency and accountability to

Table 5.103. “Increase its”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
1	Dun & Bradstreet needed to take risks and increase its range of products and services. Overa
3	ing 2015, IBERDROLA Distribution has continued to increase its efforts in R&D projects, related
4	has embarked on an ambitious strategy to increase its global distribution network. The Ric
6	000, Allstate has helped Impact Community Capital increase its ability to finance affordable housing
7	It reflects a company’s capacity to increase its workforce loyalty and productivity
11	future, the company plans to continue to increase its capacity significantly through both
14	community involvement. The TIAA continues to increase its emphasis on volunteerism through its
15	leading the company’s strategic initiative to increase its global logistics capabilities. During

It might be concluded that “growthism”, the key concept of neoliberalism, has been veiled or re-interpreted in contemporary corporate identity discourse. “Growth” or “increase” do not appear in typical capitalist or economic contexts, in reference to elevated levels of profitability, consumption or corporate expansion. Quite the contrary, the words tend to illustrate the company’s sustainability figures, materialised in the numbers showing a growth in traditionally immeasurable concepts, such as diversity and inclusion, equality, or awareness. The façade of these discursive practices seems congruent with the principles of sustainable development. Yet, translating the core ecosophical concepts into numbers might be interpreted as another attempt to colonise environmental and sustainability discourse by corporations in order to camouflage problematic issues and take control over any possible discussion on them.

5.7.2.8.3. Profit

The frequency of the word profit, one of the keywords of neoliberal discourse and the major goal of capitalism, seems strikingly low in the analysed corpus (353 occurrences), especially taking into consideration the fact that this number embraces the clusters “non-profit” (139 occurrences) and “not-for-profit” (66 occurrences). An analysis of “profit” concordances (see selected examples in Table 5.104 below) has shown that companies do not openly admit that profit making is the main goal of their activity. While communicating their goals, the companies enumerate profit along with the planet and people (see concordance 22). It must be stressed, though, that the well-being of the planet is set as a priority. In fact, “the blind pursuit of profit at all costs” might even be frowned upon (see concordance 69).

Table 5.104. “Profit”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC	
22	We track objectives along three pillars: planet,	profit , and people. Through continued responsible
69	corporation forward. But the blind pursuit of	profit at all costs is untenable. It is
98	be a „Great Depression miracle,” making a	profit while overall the company sustained losses.
128	17 jobs in struggling neighborhoods and turned a	profit in its first year of operation
138	manufacturing methods and processes; pricing and	profit information; and information about future
224	On an annual basis, we provide a	profit-sharing contribution equal to a percentage
238	are treated as staff costs in the	profit and loss account and are expensed over
248	delivering shared value for people, planet, and	profit . It is critical to our success that
311	He oversees operations including maximizing	profit , establishing innovative and world-class
315	aspects of our company: people, products and	profit .

In most cases, however, “profit” appears in the context of reporting on the company’s performance that might be illustratively exemplified by the following extract:

Extract (65)

In Q2 2015, NH Hotel Group saw a 12.0% increase in the consolidated RevPAR, mainly driven by an increase ADR (11.2%). Revenues increased 6.8% reaching 80371.5 million and EBITDA improved 25% totalling \8063.5 million, as a result of the behaviours of Italy and Spain business units and the good progress of the strategic plan initiatives. NH has improved its recurring net profit in Q2 2015 by 85.5% resulting in a net profit of 8015.7 million. (The Rezidor Hotel Group, App. 1, item 96)

“Non-profit” and “not-for-profit” typically collocate with the noun “organization” as its pre-modifiers. Such organisations are positioned as the companies’ beneficiaries or partners in charitable endeavours.

Table 5.105. “Non-profit”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC	
119	Baptist Health is the highest-ranking	non-profit and the top healthcare provider on the
156	92 participation, we actively engage in the	non-profit organization’s meetings throughout
163	by The Timken Company. We support	non-profit , tax-exempt organizations in the communities
217	MassMutual) has awarded \$155,000 to eligible	non-profit organizations through its annual Community

Corporate cooperation with non-profit organisations is usually aimed at local communities and addresses their specific needs:

Extract (66)

Kennametal is proud of our long tradition of supporting communities and partnering with **non-profit organizations** to address the important needs of our local communities. The United Way one of our most important partners in helping us reach this goal. A national organization with ties to every city and town, the United Way makes it possible for Kennametal and its employees to give back all year long. The donations we make stay right in each local community and are disbursed to the charities and non-profit organizations that are helping our own friends and neighbors. (Kennametal Inc, App. 1, item 99; emphasis added)

Such activities are part of typical public relations initiatives undertaken as a part of managing corporate reputation and corporate external relations, deemed crucial for corporate legitimate existence. Apparently, words unparalleled by actions might solely play the function of camouflage or retouching that enhances imperfect corporate image or simply instrumentally covers foul actions.

5.7.2.8.4. Globalisation

The adjective “global” has turned out to be one of the top keywords in the corpus (keyness rank: 5; frequency: 3,985). As shown in Table 5.106, the adjective is most frequently used in self-referential clusters to describe the company’s position in the market (e.g. “global leader”, “global supplier”, “global company”), the scope of its activity (e.g. “global operations”, “global investment”, “global reporting”) or employees (e.g. “global workplace”, “global team”, “global workforce”).

Table 5.106. “Global”: Top 40 right clusters

Total No. of Cluster Types: 935			
Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 3985			
Rank	Freq.	Range	Cluster
1	106	1	global compact
2	86	1	global leader
3	82	1	global business
4	70	1	global supplier
5	68	1	global code
6	54	1	global company
7	54	1	global operations
8	52	1	global supply
9	52	1	global workplace
10	42	1	global reporting
11	39	1	global real
12	35	1	global market
13	35	1	global team
14	34	1	global investors
15	34	1	global warming
16	33	1	global brands
17	33	1	global corporate
18	32	1	global energy
19	31	1	global and
20	30	1	global workforce
21	29	1	global financial
22	28	1	global head
23	28	1	global trade
24	27	1	global sales

25	25	1	global director
26	25	1	global environmental
27	25	1	global markets
28	25	1	global sustainability
29	24	1	global operating
30	24	1	global services
31	23	1	global citizenship
32	23	1	global presence
33	22	1	global diversity
34	22	1	global standards
35	22	1	global steel
36	21	1	global marketplace
37	21	1	global Reach
38	20	1	global community
39	20	1	global human
40	20	1	global investment

It must be noted, though, that the top position in the ranking is held by the cluster “global compact”, which is part of the name of the organisation called “United Nations Global Compact” promoting sustainable business practices. The mission of the organisation declares what follows: “Business as a force for good. By committing to sustainability, business can take shared responsibility for achieving a better world.” (United Nations Global Compact). The companies under study expose their membership in the organisation by announcing to “participate in”, be “part of”, be “involved” in the Global Compact. The participation in the UN Global Compact initiative is rendered prestigious and as such used to construct a positive image. Again, the corporations use the mechanism of the halo effect by declaring their membership in a reputable organisation.

Another discernible feature is the presence of clusters of the adjective “global” and nouns semantically related to environmental problems (e.g. “global warming”) or sustainability issues (e.g. “global sustainability”, “global citizenship”, “global diversity”).

By contrast, the occurrences of the noun “globalization/sation” are very rare as only 19 concordances of the word have been identified in the corpus.

The dominating representation of globalisation is the economic one (cf. Sandberg, 2006). In most cases, globalisation is rendered as a phenomenon strongly affecting people’s lives and corporations show their concern about these, predominantly negative, effects.

Table 5.107. “Globalization”: Selected concordance

Hit	KWIC		
1	Alliance with academia The Chair for the	Globalization	of Basic Power Services
2	for growth, especially in the context of	Globalization	and expanding operations. With great
3	traditional hierarchy of cities is breaking down.	Globalization,	urbanisation and technological advancement
4	products and customers are strongly affected by	Globalization	proven by the fact that they are
5	Diversity & Inclusion makes business sense. As	Globalization	increases, demographics and lifestyle
6	Hair Salon business, we are continuing our	Globalization	strategy, with particular focus on
7	ethical issues that have emerged due to	globalization	Reference.
8	of change from technological innovation and	globalization	to resource scarcity, climate change
9	consumers with limited resources. A changing world	Globalization,	urbanization, shifts in the balance
10	Internet change the world, while customer focus,	globalization	and outsourcing shape the business
11	Workstyles are evolving, driven by increased	globalization,	growth of emerging economies and a

Extract (67)

Recognizing the dependence of its businesses on natural capital, Kao commits to zero deforestation at the source in its procurement of raw materials including palm oil and paper. Over the medium-to-long term, Kao strives to reduce its use of natural capital by reducing the amount of raw materials used in its business and shifting to alternative raw materials such as algae or other non-edible biomass sources, in addition to working toward sustainable procurement that also takes into account ethical issues that have emerged due to **globalization**. (KAO Corporation, App. 1, item 30; emphasis added)

Contrary to expectations, globalisation is not presented in line with the neoliberal agenda, i.e. as a phenomenon contributing to economic growth and offering new opportunities to companies and individuals. Instead, it is blamed for climate change and the progressing exploitation of natural resources as well as socio-economic problems related to the growing competition for the provision of services and labour. It must be emphasised, though, that such concerns are indeed isolated in the corpus: only 19 hits compared to, for example, 2431 occurrences of “sustainability”. This disproportion might

be interpreted as a certain attempt to erase the phenomenon from the corporate identity discourse in order to detach the company from any possible negative connotations the very word “globalization” might evoke.

The frequency of “entrepreneur”, another keyword in neoliberal ideology (cf. Holborow, 2012: 46), is also low as the word appears only 56 times in the corpus (keyness rank: 1472; keyness: 39.284). Among 56 identified concordances of “entrepreneurs” only one refers directly to the company’s self-definition (item 22). The most frequent clusters are “social entrepreneurs” (5 tokens) and “women entrepreneurs (4 tokens).

Table 5.108. “Entrepreneurs”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
22	We’re a company of entrepreneurs who share in each other’s successes
4	Kao supports the development of social entrepreneurs who attempt to solve social
32	DCC plc continues to support Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (,SEI’), an independent
53	a worldwide leadership organization for women entrepreneurs and corporate leader
55	Committee of 200, an organization of preeminent women entrepreneurs and corporate leader

These occurrences cannot be qualified as carrying typically neoliberal values, as they point to the empowerment of usually disadvantaged female entrepreneurs as well as to the support and encouragement of social leaders who attempt to solve the problems of their communities. Such an attitude might be interpreted as a support for the principles of sustainable development.

The adjective “entrepreneurial” appears 50 times in the corpus (keyness rank: 1403; keyness 42.159) and forms 29 different cluster types. The frequent ones are as follows: “entrepreneurial spirit” (12 tokens) and “entrepreneurial environment” (7 tokens). The cluster “entrepreneurial spirit” is typically used in a positive sense to characterise the company or its founders:

Extract (68)

We lead in the world of work. We dare to innovate, to pioneer and to evolve. We never accept the status quo. We constantly challenge the norm to find new and better ways of doing things. We thrive on our **entrepreneurial spirit** and speed of response - taking risks, knowing that we will not always succeed, but never exposing our clients to risk. (Manpower Group, App. 1, item 120; emphasis added)

The noun “entrepreneurship” has been recorded in 42 concordances (keyness rank: 1573; keyness: 35.413). The companies typically emphasise a positive role of entrepreneurship in society and position themselves as those who support and encourage it.

Table 5.109. “Entrepreneurship”: Selected concordances

Hit	KWIC
6	offers, promote equal opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship . IBERDROLA today is one of the
14	The Amazonia Programme, a vehicle for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Science, aims to create a group
39	to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship , and financial literacy through

In conclusion, references to entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship are relatively infrequent in the corpus and do not seem to play a significant role in the construction of corporate identity. Additionally, their use does not seem to be saturated with neoliberal ideology.

In fact, the top keywords of neoliberal ideology do not definitely play key roles in corporate identity discourse. For example, the neoliberal fetish word “market” does not seem to be strongly ideologised in corporate narrations since, contrary to the discourse of economics where it is deemed the major, almost inanimate, force regulating economy and politics, in the studied corpus it is most often used as a nominal pre-modifier describing companies’ business activity. In a similar vein, the word “profit” often appears in the cluster “non-profit”, exposing CSR initiatives. Globalisation, another keyword of neoliberalism, is posited as an environmental and social challenge that has to be faced by business organisations, rather than an opportunity for further growth and profits. Summing up, in corporate identity discourse neoliberal keywords tend to be embedded in contexts that reveal a distinct slant towards the values of sustainable development and the very ideology of neoliberalism seems to be purposefully silenced or occluded.

5.7.2.9. Conclusion

The study has provided “crudely quantifiable data” (Alexander, 2009: 32) that has revealed the dominating ideology underpinning the discursive construction of corporate identity. One of the general trends that has emerged from the data is a visible domination of the new eco-social paradigm (Jonker and Marberg, 2007), symbolically represented at the lexical level by *sustainability* and *environment*, the keywords that have gained the status of a fetish in corporate identity discourse. Accordingly, the main assumption underlying the current study that corporations construct their identities based on ecological appeals has been corroborated. In fact, the analysed corporate identity discourse is saturated with lexical items related semantically to environmentalism that might be interpreted as “surface ecologization” (Fill, 2001: 50) of

corporate discourse. This phenomenon has, actually, taken an absurd form since ecology-related issues have been identified to be the main building block of corporate identity. Accordingly, corporations consistently advance their neatly tailored narrations on their new eco-friendly identities, conventionalised into the main corporate discourse. Applying Goffman's metaphor of the theatre, in the backstage the companies are still for-profit organisations doing their job to grow and earn money but in the frontstage they are wearing the masks of environmentalists, obfuscating their real aims and activities in order to win social support and legitimise their actions. The analysis was guided by van Dijk's (1995) ideology schema, and focused on KWIC searches that were followed by critical interpretation in relation to the assumed ecosophy.

One of the major qualities of the corporate identity discourse of the "About us" cybergenre is its auto-narrative, self-referential character and positive semantic prosody. The self-representation of the companies is highly personified since the multinationals use their proper names and personal collective pronouns to refer to themselves. The companies assume agentive roles to indicate that they are able to act, express themselves and pursue abstract goals. Even though collective identities are often underlain with ideologies entailing in-group vs. out-group polarisation (van Dijk, 1995: 151), the construction of corporate identities is based on a positive auto-narration rather than a negative presentation of any out-group members.

The companies promote a false sense of their identity and position themselves as non-profit rather than for-profit business organisations. Distancing themselves from business activity and money-making, corporations advance social and environmental goals as the core signpost guiding and legitimising their very existence. Their goals are underpinned by values that are orchestrated with the eco-social rather than neoliberal agenda. Corporations have almost unanimously taken a worldview celebrating sustainability that, at the declarative level, complies with the principles of the assumed ecosophy. In their political dimension, the values represented are congruent with those contained in the manifestos of the green, left-wing movements. Accordingly, as evidenced in textual data, corporate discourse powerfully endorses sustainability, environmental and social responsibility, social justice, human rights, equal opportunities, integrity, honesty and accountability. Special emphasis is placed on diversity and inclusion and women's rights, particularly in the context of a diversified workplace that ensures equal opportunities, irrespective of the employee's gender or sexual orientation, as well as socio-economic, ethnic or religious background. The presence of diversity and inclusion issues in corporate discourse is part of a wider socio-cultural trend promoting the centrality of diversity in late postmodernism (cf. Sandberg, 2006: 218), which

is represented in discourse by appeals to autonomy, flexibility, heterogeneity and pluralism. The social support for these values has materialised in legislative solutions imposed on organisations that bind them to follow specific regulations concerning their employment policies. Therefore, the celebration of the inclusion and diversity is, to a large extent, dictated by law and social pressure rather than corporate benevolence.

As far as the representation of internal stakeholders is concerned, corporations present their employees as empowered, competent and creative individuals who contribute to the company's success. Yet, the frequencies of particular lexical items have clearly showed that corporate discourse focuses on the corporate leaders rather than grassroots workers, pointing to the established, yet hidden, power relations. As regards external stakeholders, companies most frequently refer to their suppliers and business partners. Corporations put themselves in the role of ethical watchdogs, supervising the observation of corporate norms and values by their subcontractors who are expected to enjoy a flawless reputation since any possible distortions in their image could have a negative impact on their principal's reputation. Another important stakeholder that has emerged from the corpus is the community, represented as rather passive and inert and requiring corporate support, which is, in fact, generously provided by corporate players. Therefore, even though communities are among the most essential corporate stakeholders, they are not treated as partners but voiceless beneficiaries of their patrons' care and attention. This positioning offers corporations certain advantages, as their charitable activities and programmes silence any possible criticism and enable the companies to take full control over any possible debate on the socio-economic and environmental effects of their activity.

Despite the fact that the power of organisations lies in their resources, and in the case of corporations mainly their financial resources, the analysis of concordances of the lexical item "resources" and its synonyms showed that the noun was rarely used in reference to corporate resources, especially the tangible ones. Companies avoid showing off their financial resources or other possessions but they frequently refer to intangible resources, such as the human capital and knowhow, rendered as the most valuable assets that significantly contribute to corporate success. Such a representation might be interpreted as an attempt to obscure the real power of corporations that would collide with the assumed identity of a green non-profit organisation and possibly lead to an uncomfortable feeling of cognitive dissonance in the audience. By concealing their real power and bringing to light corporate social and environmental commitment, the companies win social support and legitimisation that allow them to carry on their performance and accumulate capital, undisturbed by any wider social protest or criticism.

Ecology has turned out to be the most important pillar of corporate identity. The companies build their strong ecological identity that is based on the declared sustainable relations with their ecosystem, enmeshing a large group of traditional corporate stakeholders with the natural environment. Ecological claims are, in fact, central in corporate narrations and the companies label themselves “green”, “sustainable” or “environmentally-friendly”. This representation is concomitant with the proposed Ecological Model of Corporate Identity embedding the company in its environmental and anthropomorphic ecosystems. Companies declare their concern with environmental issues and the well-being of the planet, skillfully steering clear of admitting their participation in ecological destruction. Any possible negative impact of the corporations on the environment is minimised while epideictic accounts of corporate ecological commitment are in the limelight. Balancing global and local concerns, the companies present themselves as the defenders of environmental and socio-economic sustainability. Ironically, it might be even stated that corporations have usurped the environmental discourse and are taking credit for environmental initiatives. Interpreting this practice, I remain critical and agree with the Greenpeace activists Greer and Bruno (1996: 12) who see it as a greenwashing strategy attempting to “manipulate the definition of environmentalism and of sustainable development, and to ensure that trade and environment agreements are shaped, if not dictated, by the corporate agenda”.

At the discursive level, corporate identity discourse aligns to a great extent with the assumed ecosophy. Nevertheless, I would be far from dubbing corporations deep ecologists due to their real, yet veiled, intentions underlying their activity. The neoliberal agenda is not exposed, not to say covert, in corporate identity discourse, which has been quantitatively verified by relatively low frequency and keyness of neoliberal keywords in the corpus.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that the current study has demonstrated that the main functions of corporate identity discourse boil down to conveying positive corporate auto-narration, underlain with widely accepted ideology that has currently shifted towards environmentalism and sustainable development. Yet, the ultimate goals of such self-projections are underpinned by corporate business ends. Therefore, owing to the fact that companies have complete control of the form and content of their auto-narrations, the self-published “About us” webpage cannot be treated as a completely reliable source of information about the organisation. Apparently, the now dominating eco-social paradigm competes with other alternative paradigms, in accordance with Foucault’s (1998) idea of simultaneous coexistence of discourses of hegemony and resistance. The current situation, however, is unprecedented since the currently dominating eco-social paradigm, once peripheral, has been usurped by corporations and incorporated into mainstream discourse to

serve corporate ends as the main pillar of corporate identity. Thus, it might be concluded that the analysed corporate identity discourse resonates with the assumed ecosophy, especially the concept of sustainable development, and illustrates the domination of the generally accepted eco-social paradigm. However, practical verification of the goals and initiatives expressed in discourse lies beyond the capacities of a discourse analyst as it resides in the hands of critical audiences.

Final Remarks

This book aimed at deconstructing the process of the discursive formation of corporate identity in cyberspace from the perspective of ecolinguistics. As delineated in chapter 1, the understanding of ecolinguistics in the present work swerves from the traditional compartmentalisation of the field into its two major metaphoric and non-metaphoric strands, and takes a more integrative approach tuned to Alexander and Stibbe's (2014: 105) definition classifying it as "the study of the impact of language on the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment" and striving for "preserving relationships which sustain life". Within this integrative paradigm, ecolinguistics goes beyond "the analysis of ecological discourse", i.e. the analysis of texts that deal with environmental problems or ecological concerns, and extends the target domain of the metaphor of "language ecology" (ibidem: 104) to all forms of interaction within the ecosystem. Such an approach allows studying all discourses or forms of language contact that might potentially have an impact on human behaviour and, in consequence, on literally understood ecosystems. For this reason, the integrative ecolinguistic paradigm seemed appropriate to study the discursive construction of identity of corporations, one of the most powerful players in the global arena, exerting real influence on the ecosystem.

The proposed Ecological Model of Corporate Identity assumed the ecological embedding of corporate identity that shapes and is shaped by the ecosystem, embracing the natural and anthropomorphic environment and consisting of a range of social, economic, political, cultural, technological and legislative aspects. Within the communicological perspective, *identity* is understood as a message created and sent by the *source* (company) to its stakeholders (*recipients*). Therefore, its form and content, and to some extent distribution, are controlled by the *source*, which raises certain doubts as to its credibility. For this reason, corporate identity does, in fact, stand for a company's "self-representation" to *recipients* (stakeholders) and differs from *image* (or *images*, to be more accurate), which conveys a multitude of fleeting and diversified perceptions of the company by the public, informed by corporate communication and behaviour as well as an assortment of their own experiences and media representations. Owing to the fact that corporate image is ultimately constructed by recipients while the construction of corporate identity is fully controlled by the company itself, the two constructs might be completely di-

vergent, leading to the unwanted dissonance. From the corporate perspective, the consistency of corporate identity and image(s) is essential for the company's good reputation that materialises into profitability. The very concept of *reputation*, the key word in corporate communication, is defined as a more widespread, consistent and permanent construct that has emerged from the evaluation of the company's past and present performance.

The proposed model challenges the static perception of corporate identity (see Albert-Whetten, 1985) and posits it as a dynamic construct that interacts with the ecosystem. Accordingly, corporate identity discourse is seen as litmus paper signalling social changes, followed by a shift in the dominating discourse paradigm. One of the main assumptions underlying the current work was a change in the discourse of economics, implied, for example, by Stibbe (2005), challenging the principles of neoliberalism and shifting towards more altruistic and environmentally oriented values. The symptoms indicating the rise of the new eco-social paradigm, opposing the hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism, were also observed by Jonker and Marberg (2007). Yet, I posited that nowadays the new paradigm had already permeated the public space and informed the construction of corporate identity, manifested in the ecologisation of corporate discourse and erasing the neoliberal agenda.

Recently, the Internet has become the main arena for corporate communication. The new medium has offered specific affordances that have transformed the ecology of communication. Contrary to the optimistic predictions of communication theorists (e.g. Habermas, 1989; Grossman, 1995), concerning the contribution of the recent technological advancements to the empowerment of the citizen, the new medium has been adapted for commercial purposes, serving corporate ends. Making pretence of honest, bilateral communication with their stakeholders, corporations persistently advance self-aggrandising and self-praising discourses in order to enhance their social perception. The scrutiny of the discursive construction of corporate identity was narrowed to the content of the "About us" section, deemed the main carrier of corporate identity. The section was categorised as a web-migrated subgenre within the macro-genre of the webpage in the family of cybergenres and remained the basic unit of analysis.

Taking an ecolinguistic approach was deemed crucial to see corporate discursive practices from a wider perspective, not only narrowed to the criticism of capitalism and the hegemony of certain groups offered by CDA. Despite certain similarities between CDA and EDA, the former tends to analyse discourses from the perspective of the exploited, disadvantaged groups, while the latter goes beyond the oppressor/oppressed paradigm and takes into account the impact of discourses on all forms of life, not only limited to humans. Therefore, EDA criticises discourses in relation to an ecosophy assumed by

a researcher, which is the case of this study entailing primarily Arne Næss's deep ecology and the concept of sustainable development (Baker, 2006).

Due to a lack of subsequent large-scale ecolinguistic research on the discursive construction of corporate identity, the current study faced not only theoretical but also methodological challenges and required the specification of a methodological framework and adequate research procedures. In view of the inherent bias accompanying any critical study (e.g. Breeze, 2011), in order to gain multiple perspectives (Stake, 1994: 241; after Pollach, 2005: 24), I resorted to the triangulation of data and supported Ecological Discourse Analysis (EDA) with Corpus Linguistics (CL). Such a combination enabled me to verify the researcher's assumptions with "crudely quantifiable data" (Alexander, 2009: 32) and was regarded effective and applicable for further studies. The undertaken study addressed three research questions, pertaining to the characteristics of the "About us" genre (RQ1), discursive construction of corporate identity (RQ2), focused on the identification of keywords (RSQ2a) and dominating themes (RSQ2b), as well as the ideological underpinning of corporate identity discourse (RQ3). The major findings will be briefly summarised in the following paragraphs.

The communicative purpose and the form and content of "About us" sections have turned out to parallel with the previous studies (Pollach, 2005; Breeze, 2013). Accordingly, the primary communicative purpose of the genre is to provide a statement of corporate identity and to enhance corporate ethos. The genre might be classified as epideictic (Aristotle, 1991) since corporate discourse is self-centred and self-extolling. As far as corporate goals are concerned, the genre plays an essential role in reputation management as well as the management of the relationships with the company's stakeholders. One of the strategies aimed at winning social support entails appealing to established, commonly accepted values. Accordingly, two thirds of the analysed websites contain subsections devoted to the specification of ethical and value stances as well as separate subsections on CSR/sustainability, pointing to the importance of these issues in constructing corporate identity. Gaining social support and legitimisation for corporate activity is, in fact, the primary goal of corporate communication due to the fact that it creates a business-friendly environment which enables the company to accomplish its objectives. Additionally, overtly declared ecological commitment enhances corporate image and deflects criticism. The headings of particular subsections, dubbed moves in the study, to a great extent overlap with those specified by Lam (2009) and Casañ-Pitarch (2015) but their distribution in particular sections significantly differs. Only five moves, out of 21 identified in the corpus, are present in the majority of "About us" sections. The use of the remaining 16 moves depends on the needs and specificity of the companies under study and indicates the

structural diversification of the genre. Summing up, corporate “About us” sections first and foremost serve to maintain corporate face, which seems to negate Goffman’s (1967: 12) observation that “[o]rdinarily, maintenance of face is a condition of interaction, not its objective...”.

The top 10 keywords, including the collective possessive pronoun “our” and personal pronoun “we”, typical of business discourse, as well as the noun “company” and “business”, have confirmed the self-referential character of the corpus. A wider analysis of the top 100 words has allowed discerning the major themes in the corpus and has provided valuable preliminary insights into the ideological underpinning of the corpus under study. The thematic scope of the top keywords in the corpus is largely congruent with the headings of the major moves in the “About us” genre. The top keywords have exposed the most essential issues from the perspective of the company, i.e. corporate activity, leaders, stakeholders, values, as well as orientation towards sustainability and the market.

One of the major findings of EDA is the emergence of the ecological identity of corporations, which construct their sense of identity on the basis on their relations with the ecosystem. Companies position themselves in a self-endorsing light as benevolent, almost philanthropic organisations, and ecological claims act as building blocks of their identity. The way to the ecological identity of corporations has been undoubtedly paved by environmentalists and growing social pressure. This green turn was not initially welcomed by corporations, which perceived any environmental pressure and subsequent initiatives as possible cost-generating pitfalls, posing risk to growth and profitability. Over the course of time, though, corporations left their defensive positions and began offensive communication campaigns to take control over the ongoing environmental debate. Their efforts have, in fact, brought spectacular outcomes since nowadays the main self-appointed players in the global environmental debate are multinational corporations, which have re-positioned themselves as the main protectors of sustainability and the well-being of the planet. Corporations have taken control over environmental discourse and transformed it for their own purposes. Initially, it was probably done under social pressure and the strong presence of environmental issues in the public sphere and the agenda of governments and political parties. Nowadays, it might even be postulated that environmental claims, once considered marginal, have colonised mainstream discourses and have been anchored in the awareness of the majority.

This shift of the dominating paradigm in corporate discourse is particularly visible in the over-lexicalisation of corporate discourse with environmental terms, dubbed by Fill (1998 12) “surface ecologization” of discourse. Accordingly, the current keywords in corporate discourse are “environmen-

tal", "sustainability", "diversity", "communities", "commitment", "environment", "sustainable" or "ethics". Superficially, corporate discourse and its underlying ideology resonate with the assumed ecosophy, negating anthropocentrism and promoting sustainable development. As far as the competitive, neoliberal agenda is concerned, it seems to be silenced and hidden in the entire corpus. Its absence, however, cannot be automatically translated into its complete disappearance from the public sphere since, following Foucault (1998), both power and resistance are situated in discourse. Thus, any production of hegemonic discourses is paralleled with the emergence of the discourses of resistance.

Since the corporate identity discourse is primarily self-referential and aims at legitimising the company and enhancing its reputation, it is constructed to satisfy the expectations of the stakeholders and their value systems. Thus, the ideological underpinning in the entire corpus is outstandingly consistent and resembles a ready-made PR packet directed at western audiences. As such, it makes the western audiences feel better and offers them a sense of satisfaction, dispelling any possible doubts and appeasing critics. Besides, ecological commitment of business might be considered both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it contributes to the environmental public debate and possibly increases public awareness of environmental issues. On the other hand, the colonisation of corporate discourse with environmental discourse pacifies the audience who accepts the fact that the real problem-makers self-regulate their activity and their possible influence on the environment and take control of the debate, silencing their opponents and leaving little room for criticism. Additionally, it must be emphasised that the integration of ecological appeals into corporate identity claims is instrumental and serves primarily corporate ends. Therefore, in Stibbe's (2015) terms, I regard the highly ecologised corporate identity discourse as an ambivalent discourse. This ambivalence might be summarised with Bateson's (1979: 27) words:

We are beginning to play with ideas of ecology, and although we immediately trivialize these ideas into commerce or politics, there is at least an impulse still in the human breast to unify and thereby sanctify the total natural world, of which we are.

The undertaken study has focused solely on the construction of the corporate identity by the company. Thus, its major limitation is the lack of the recipient perspective, which would provide a full picture of the process of the construction of corporate identity, especially taking into account the active participation of stakeholders in constructing image. These limitations, however, have already inspired further research that is now in progress. The preliminary findings of the undertaken research on the perception of corporate websites, based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with selected partic-

ipants from Poland, focused on the “About us” and CSR sections, indicate scepticism and reservation of consumers towards organisational narratives treated as “corporate talk” or “PR wind-up” aimed at creating a particular, overwhelmingly, positive image (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2017b). The “identity” sections were, in fact, hardly ever consulted by the interviewees and treated as a conventionalised PR genre that, as one of the participants expressed it, “must be present due to certain expectations and conventions but nobody really believes it or reads its content”. The rare circumstance attracting the participants to become familiarised with identity sections was a job interview that required obtaining information about a potential employer. Even though the self-referential webpage content did not seem to motivate consumer choices that were rather informed by external sources and private recommendations, one third of the participants revealed that a company’s ethical and ecological orientation played a certain role in accepting it as a potential employer. In other words, corporate identity, at least at the declarative level, did not seem to exert any significant influence on consumer choices but did resonate with personal identities and value systems. This study has delineated directions for further research that will bend towards the perception of organisational identities and, hopefully, pave the way to its pedagogical applications aimed at developing critical language awareness, especially towards persuasive professional discourse.

Developing critical language awareness, including its ecological dimension, appears particularly essential in the contemporary postmodern world, characterised with fluidity and relativism and accompanied by a clash of values, crisis of democracy, a turn towards extremism, nationalism and a deep polarisation of societies worldwide. Political disturbances might challenge the eco-social paradigm and bring new dominating paradigms to public discourse. Well-established western values are nowadays confronted with the growing criticism of democracy, multiculturalism, political correctness, the rebirth of nationalist sentiments, de-integration tendencies within the EU, negating the output of the last decades celebrating diversity and the struggle for the rights of the minority. These challenges will be a great test to the commitment of corporations to the declared values and their stability. In this context critical language awareness has gained significant importance, enhanced by the fact that corporations as remarkably powerful organisations are able to change the world and have enormous impact on all aspects of our lives. Therefore, the ability to critically read the discourses produced by corporations and decipher their ideological underpinning seems to be one of the fundamental skills of the global citizen and one of the major educational goals.

Multinational corporations have nowadays re-positioned themselves as the main protectors of sustainability and well-being of the planet that might

be illustratively summarised with Alexander's (2007: 67) words inspired by Athanasiou's (1996) research: "the greening of corporations has reached near surreal lengths". Thus, contrary to the discourse of public institutions, reflecting deep changes in the public sector, which since the 1990s has been undergoing the process of marketisation worldwide (Fairclough, 1995), corporate discourse has taken the opposite direction towards *de-marketisation* and *ecologisation*. This new trend has been verified in the current study combining CL and EDA, offering statistically significant textual data and its eco-critical interpretation. The newly emerged corporate ecological identity has not been enthusiastically welcomed in this book but approached with certain reservations pertaining to the real corporate intentions, possibly interpreted as another attempt to advance greenwashing. The linguist's role, however, is limited to deconstructing discourses and unveiling ideologies underlying them. Yet, in democracies, citizens are empowered to look under meticulously polished façades and verify the truthfulness of the statements contained in corporate communications. In contemporary civic society having instant access to cybermedia, the power of public opinion cannot be ignored or over-estimated. Therefore, critical language awareness followed by social action are, in fact, the master keys to make corporations bridge their frontstages with the backstages and enforce deep eco-social change.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Analysed corpus

No	Name	Industry	Country	www
1	Elbit Systems of America	Aerospace & Defense	USA	http://www.elbitsystems-us.com/
2	Rockwell Collins	Aerospace & Defense	USA	https://www.rockwellcollins.com/
3	Gap Inc.	Apparel	USA	http://www.gapinc.com/content/gapinc/html.html
4	Hennes & Mauritz AB (H&M)	Apparel	Sweden	http://about.hm.com/en/About.html
5	Levi Strauss & Co.	Apparel	USA	http://www.levistrauss.com/
6	Cummins Inc.	Automotive	USA	http://www.cummins.com/
7	Delphi Automotive PLC	Automotive	USA	http://www.delphi.com/
8	Ford Motor Company	Automotive	USA	http://corporate.ford.com/homepage.html
9	Banco do Brasil S.A.	Banks: National	Brazil	http://www.bb.com.br/portalbb/jsp/eng/index.jsp
10	National Australia Bank	Banks: National	Australia	http://www.nab.com.au/
11	Teachers Mutual Bank	Banks: National	Australia	https://www.tmbank.com.au/
12	U.S. Bank	Banks: Regional	USA	https://www.usbank.com/careers/about-us-bank.html
13	Dun & Bradstreet	Business Services	USA	http://www.dnb.com/
14	Eastman Chemical Company	Chemicals	USA	http://www.eastman.com/Pages/Home.aspx
15	Ecolab Inc	Chemicals	USA	http://www.ecolab.com/
16	Dell Inc.	Computer Hardware	USA	http://www.dell.com/learn/us/en/uscorp1/about-dell?c=us&l=en&s=corp
17	Hitachi Data Systems	Computer Hardware	USA	https://www.hds.com/corporate/about-hds/
18	TE Connectivity	Computer Hardware	Switzerland	http://www.te.com/usa-en/about-te/our-company.html

19	Google Inc.	Computer Services	USA	https://translate.google.pl/translate?hl=pl&sl=en&tl=pl&u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Fabout%2Fcompany%2F&anno=2
20	Adobe Systems Incorporated	Computer Software	USA	http://www.adobe.com/about-adobe/fast-facts.html
21	Microsoft	Computer Software	USA	http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/about
22	Symantec Corporation	Computer Software	USA	https://www.symantec.com/about/
23	Teradata Corporation	Computer Software	USA	http://www.teradata.com/about-us/
24	Cementos Progreso	Construction & Building Materials	Guatemala	http://www.cempro.com/qui-nes-somos
25	Granite Construction Incorporated	Construction & Building Materials	USA	http://www.graniteconstruction.com/Our_Company
26	Accenture, LLC	Consulting Services	Ireland	https://www.accenture.com/pl-en/strategy-index.aspx
27	Capgemini	Consulting Services	France	https://www.capgemini.com/about-capgemini
28	Colgate-Palmolive Company	Consumer Products	USA	http://www.colgate.com/app/Colgate/US/Corp/HomePage.cvsp
29	Henkel AG & Co KGaA	Consumer Products	Germany	http://www.henkel.com/company
30	Kao Corporation	Consumer Products	Japan	http://www.kao.com/jp/en/corp/
31	ABB Group	Diversified Machinery	Switzerland	http://new.abb.com/about
32	Rockwell Automation	Diversified Machinery	USA	http://www.rockwellautomation.com/global/about-us/overview.page
33	Schneider Electric SE	Diversified Machinery	France	http://www.schneider-electric.com/en/about-us/company-profile.jsp
34	Avnet, Inc.	Electronics Wholesale	USA	http://www.avnet.com/en-us/who-we-are/Pages/default.aspx
35	National Grid	Energy And Utilities: Natural Gas	USA	http://www2.nationalgrid.com/About-us/
36	Sempre Energy	Energy And Utilities: Natural Gas	USA	http://www.sempra.com/about/
37	EDP Energias de Portugal, SA	Energy And Utilities: Electric	Portugal	http://www.edp.pt/EN/aedp/Pages/aedp.aspx
38	Iberdrola, S.A.	Energy And Utilities: Electric	Spain	http://www.iberdrola.es/about-us/

39	NextEra Energy, Inc.	Energy And Utilities: Electric	USA	http://www.nexteraenergy.com/company/our_company.shtml
40	The AES Corporation	Energy And Utilities: Electric	USA	http://www.aes.com/about-us/about-us-overview/default.aspx
41	The Tata Power Company Limited	Energy And Utilities: Electric	India	http://www.tatapower.com/aboutus/profile.aspx
42	Northumbrian Water Group	Energy And Utilities: Water	UK	http://www.nwg.co.uk/About-us.aspx
43	CH2M HILL	Engineering And Design	USA	http://www.ch2m.com/who-we-are
44	Fluor Corporation	Engineering And Design	USA	http://www.fluor.com/about_fluor/Pages/default.aspx
45	Parsons Corporation	Engineering And Design	USA	http://www.parsons.com/about-parsons/pages/default.aspx
46	Waste Management Inc.	Environmental Services	USA	https://www.wm.com/about/index.jsp
47	Northern Trust	Financial Services	USA	https://www.northerntrust.com/about-northern-trust
48	Prudential Financial, Inc.	Financial Services	USA	http://corporate.prudential.com/view/page/corp/31826
49	TIAA-CREF	Financial Services	USA	https://www.tiaa-cref.org/public/about-us
50	Thrivent Financial	Financial Services	USA	https://www.thrivent.com/about-us/
51	Voya Financial	Financial Services	USA	http://corporate.voya.com/#
52	Ingredion Incorporated	Food And Beverage	USA	http://www.ingredion.com/about-us/overview/
53	Kellogg Company	Food And Beverage	USA	http://www.kelloggcompany.com/en_US/about-kellogg-company.html
54	PepsiCo, Inc.	Food And Beverage	USA	http://www.pepsico.com/company
55	The Hershey Company	Food And Beverage	USA	https://www.thehersheycompany.com/about-hershey.aspx
56	illycaffé spa	Food And Beverage	Italy	http://www.illy.com/wps/wcm/connect/en/company/the-company
57	Aramark	Food Service	USA	http://www.aramark.com/about-us
58	International Paper Company	Forestry, Paper And Packaging	USA	http://www.internationalpaper.com/US/EN/Company/
59	SCA	Forestry, Paper And Packaging	Sweden	http://www.sca.com/en/About_SCA/

60	Weyerhaeuser Company	Forestry, Paper And Packaging	USA	http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/company/
61	Autoridad del Canal de Panama	Government Services	Panama	http://www.bnamericas.com/company-profile/en/autoridad-del-canal-de-panama-acp
62	Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano	Government Services	Colombia	http://www.edu.gov.co/site/visitors/edu-76406
63	L'ORÉAL	Health And Beauty	France	http://www.loreal.com/group
64	Natura Cosméticos	Health And Beauty	Brazil	https://www.naturabrasil.fr/en
65	Shiseido Co., LTD.	Health And Beauty	Japan	http://www.shiseidogroup.com/company/?rt_bt=menu-company_001
66	Henry Schein, Inc.	Healthcare Products	USA	http://investor.henryschein.com/phoenix.zhtm-l?c=74322&p=aboutus&hsi_domain=www.henryschein.com&hsi_locale=us-en
67	Novation, LLC	Healthcare Services	USA	https://www.novationco.com/about/
68	Premier, Inc	Healthcare Services	USA	https://www.premierinc.com/about-premier/about-us/
69	Baptist Health South Florida	Hospitals	USA	https://baptisthealth.net/en/about-baptist-health/pages/history-of-baptist-health-south-florida.aspx
70	Cleveland Clinic	Hospitals	USA	http://my.clevelandclinic.org/about-cleveland-clinic
71	Hospital Corporation of America (HCA)	Hospitals	USA	http://hcahealthcare.com/about/
72	North Shore- LIJ Health System	Hospitals	USA	https://www.northshorelij.com/about
73	University Hospitals	Hospitals	USA	http://www.uhhospitals.org/about
74	3M Company	Industrial Manufacturing	USA	http://solutions.3m.com/wps/portal/3M/en_WW/About3/3M/
75	Deere & Company	Industrial Manufacturing	USA	https://www.deere.com/en_US/corporate/our_company/about_us/about_us.page
76	GE	Industrial Manufacturing	USA	http://www.ge.com/about-us/building
77	USA Johnson Controls, Inc.	Industrial Manufacturing	USA	http://www.johnsoncontrols.com/content/us/en/about/our_company/company_profile.html

78	Milliken & Company	Industrial Manufacturing	USA	http://www.milliken.com/en-us/ourcompany/about-us/Pages/about-us.aspx
79	The Timken Company USA	Industrial Manufacturing	USA	http://www.timken.com/en-us/about/Pages/default.aspx
80	Ricoh Company, Ltd.	Information Technology Services	Japan	https://www.ricoh.com/
81	Wipro Limited	Information Technology Services	India	Wipro Limited
82	Xerox Corporation	Information Technology Services	USA	http://www.xerox.com/about-xerox/company-facts/enus.html
83	Aflac Incorporated	Insurance: Accident & Health	USA	https://www.aflac.com/about-aflac/
84	Wisconsin Physicians Service Insurance Corporation US	Insurance: Accident & Health	USA	https://www.wpsic.com/about/index.shtml#.Vmqg9k10y00
85	Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.	Insurance: Brokerage	USA	http://www.ajg.com/about-us/
86	Blue Shield of California	Insurance: Health	USA	https://www.blueshieldca.com/bzca/about-blue-shield/corporate/home.sp
87	BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina	Insurance: Health	USA	https://www.bcbsnc.com/about
88	CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield	Insurance: Health	USA	https://member.carefirst.com/individuals/about-us/company-overview.page
89	Knights of Columbus	Insurance: Life	USA	https://www.kofc.org/uns/en/about/index.html
90	Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company	Insurance: Life	USA	https://www.massmutual.com/about-us/contact-us
91	The Principal Financial Group	Insurance: Life	USA	https://www.principal.com/about-us
92	Allstate Insurance Company	Insurance: Property And Casualty	USA	https://www.allstate.com/about.aspx
93	The Hartford	Insurance: Property And Casualty	USA	http://www.thehartford.com/our-company/
94	Holland America Line	Lodging, Leisure And Recreation	USA	http://www.hollandamerica.com/about-best-cruise-lines/Main.action
95	Marriott International, Inc.	Lodging, Leisure And Recreation	USA	http://www.marriott.com/marriott/aboutmarriott.mi

96	The Rezidor Hotel Group	Lodging, Leisure And Recreation	Belgium	http://www.rezidor.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=205430&p=about
97	Wyndham Worldwide Corporation USA	Lodging, Leisure And Recreation	USA	http://www.wyndhamworldwide.com/category/about-wyndham
98	Hypertherm Inc.	Machine Tools & Accessories	USA	http://www.hypertherm.com/en-us/About_us/Our_company/
99	Kennametal Inc.	Machine Tools & Accessories	USA	http://www.kennametal.com/en/about-us.html
100	Thomson Reuters TR	Media And Publishing	USA	http://thomsonreuters.com/en/about-us.html
101	Schnitzer Steel Industries, Inc. a	Metals	USA	http://www.schnitzersteel.com/company_about.aspx
102	Tata Steel Limited	Metals	India	http://www.tatasteel.com/corporate/index.asp
103	Alyeska Pipeline Service Company	Oil And Gas	USA	
104	DCC plc	Oil And Gas	Ireland	http://www.dcc.ie/about-us.aspx
105	PKN ORLEN S.A.	Oil And Gas	Poland	http://www.orlen.pl/EN/Company/Pages/default.aspx
106	Spectra Energy	Oil And Gas	USA	http://www.spectraenergy.com/About-Us/
107	TSYS	Payment Card Services	USA	http://tsys.com/about-us/index.html
108	Visa Inc.	Payment Card Services	USA	https://usa.visa.com/about-visa.html
109	The Nature Conservancy SA	Philanthropy	USA	http://www.nature.org/about-us/index.htm?intc=nature.tnav.about
110	CBRE Group, Inc.	Real Estate	USA	http://www.cbre.com/about
111	Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporated	Real Estate	USA	http://www.us.jll.com/united-states/en-us/about
112	Realogy Holdings Corporation USA	Real Estate	USA	https://www.realogy.com/about/
113	Marks and Spencer	Retail	UK	http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/aboutus
114	Petco Animal Supplies, Inc.	Retail	USA	http://about.petco.com/
115	Applied Materials, Inc.	Semiconductor Equipment & Materials	USA	http://www.appliedmaterials.com/company/about

116	Intel Corporation	Semiconductor Equipment & Materials	USA	http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/company-overview/company-overview.html
117	Texas Instruments Inc	Semiconductor Equipment & Materials	USA	http://www.ti.com/corp/docs/investor_relations/contact_us.html
118	William E. Connor & Associates Ltd.	Sourcing Services	Hong Kong	http://www.weconnor.com/home
119	Starbucks Coffee Company	Specialty Eateries	USA	http://en.starbucks.pl/about-us
120	ManpowerGroup	Staffing And Outsourcing Services	USA	http://www.manpower.us/en/About-Us.htm
121	Paychex Inc	Staffing And Outsourcing Services	USA	http://www.paychex.com/corporate/about-us.aspx
122	Cisco	Telecommunications Equipment	USA	http://www.cisco.com/c/r/weare/about-us.html http://www.cisco.com/web/about/index.html?_ga=1.236421825.1502429269.1449867114
123	SingTel	Telecommunications Services	Singapore	http://info.singtel.com/About-Us
124	T-Mobile US, Inc.	Telecommunications Services	USA	http://www.t-mobile.com/company/
125	Hasbro, Inc.	Toys And Games	USA	http://corporate.hasbro.com/en-us/about-hasbro/
126	Mattel, Inc	Toys And Games	USA	http://corporate.mattel.com/about-us/default.aspx
127	United Parcel Service	Transportation And Logistics	USA	https://www.ups.com/content/us/en/about/index.html?WT.svl=SecNav
128	NiSource Inc.	Utilities	USA	https://www.nisource.com/about-us
129	Concurrent Technologies Corporation	Scientific & Technical Services	USA	http://www.ctc.com/Public/About/Default.aspx
130	GIA (Gemological Institute of America)	Scientific & Technical Services	USA	http://www.gia.edu/gia-about
131	MSA Safety Incorporated	Safety equipment	USA	http://investors.msasafety.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=95379&p=irol-homeprofile
132	Old National Bancorp	Banks: Regional	USA	https://www.oldnational.com/About-Us/Index.asp

Appendix 2: Corpus details: Countries

Country	Number of companies	%
USA	101	76.52
France	3	2.27
India	3	2.27
Japan	3	2.27
Australia	2	1.52
Brazil	2	1.52
Ireland	2	1.52
Switzerland	2	1.52
UK	2	1.52
Belgium	1	0.76
Colombia	1	0.76
Germany	1	0.76
Guatemala	1	0.76
Hong Kong	1	0.76
Italy	1	0.76
Panama	1	0.76
Poland	1	0.76
Portugal	1	0.76
Singapore	1	0.76
Spain	1	0.76
Sweden	1	0.76
Total	132	100.00

Appendix 3: Corpus details: Industry

Name of industry	Number of companies	%
Insurance	11	8.33
Energy And Utilites	9	6.82
Computer (Hardware, Services, Software)	8	6.06
Food And Beverage/Food Service	6	4.55
Industrial Manufacturing	6	4.55
Banks	5	3.79
Financial Services	5	3.79
Hospitals	5	3.79
Oil And Gas	4	3.03
Apparel	3	2.27
Automotive	3	2.27
Diversified Machinery	3	2.27
Engineering And Design	3	2.27
Forestry, Paper And Packaging	3	2.27
Health And Beauty	3	2.27
Healthcare Products and Services	3	2.27
Information Technology Services	3	2.27
Lodging, Leisure And Recreation	3	2.27
Real Estate	3	2.27
Semiconductor Equipment & Materials	3	2.27
Sourcing Services	3	2.27
Telecommunications Equipment	3	2.27
Aerospace & Defense	2	1.52
Chemicals	2	1.52
Construction & Building Materials	2	1.52
Consumer Products	2	1.52
Government Services	2	1.52
Machine Tools & Accessories	2	1.52
Metals	2	1.52
Payment Card Services	2	1.52
Retail	2	1.52
Scientific & Technical Services	2	1.52
Staffing And Outsourcing Services	2	1.52
Toys And Games	2	1.52
Business Services	1	0.76

Consulting Services	1	0.76
Electronics Wholesale	1	0.76
Environmental Services	1	0.76
Media And Publishing	1	0.76
Philanthropy	1	0.76
Safety equipment	1	0.76
Specialty Eateries	1	0.76
Transportation And Logistics	1	0.76
Utilities	1	0.76
Total		100.00

Appendix 4: Top 100 keywords

Types Before Cut: 39848			
Types After Cut: 28738			
Search Hits: 0			
Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Word
1	21871	11372.680	our
2	8611	5184.627	company
3	8069	4450.254	business
4	80946	3310.995	and
5	3985	3305.362	global
6	4503	3247.309	employees
7	15249	3184.200	we
8	3981	3156.044	corporate
9	4636	3130.794	management
10	4237	2812.870	energy
11	3863	2346.638	services
12	3610	2312.065	health
13	3225	2271.824	executive
14	2704	2197.481	environmental
15	3451	2162.996	products
16	2431	2049.764	sustainability
17	3085	1994.618	financial
18	2719	1847.251	vice
19	3716	1814.519	board
20	2482	1761.130	customers
21	4421	1735.379	president
22	2497	1731.583	safety
23	2428	1705.358	technology
24	2105	1644.288	diversity
25	1975	1637.961	com
26	3490	1573.449	information
27	2436	1482.785	companies
28	2482	1400.531	officer
29	2522	1382.091	chief
30	2365	1353.747	director
31	1558	1313.670	pdf
32	1766	1312.281	inc

33	1844	1247.316	communities
34	3459	1204.671	group
35	1667	1186.127	employee
36	1597	1180.485	directors
37	1476	1179.247	compliance
38	1542	1177.642	commitment
39	1752	1163.143	environment
40	1353	1140.819	www
41	2360	1119.501	care
42	1399	1106.343	innovation
43	2361	1103.791	including
44	1908	1091.751	operations
45	2365	1077.707	suport
46	1593	1074.337	senior
47	1540	1071.453	solutions
48	1284	1057.046	suppliers
49	1252	1055.658	sustainable
50	1615	1039.231	award
51	2025	1027.542	performance
52	2246	1026.467	committee
53	1996	1020.893	quality
54	1855	1019.247	leadership
55	1743	1017.505	resources
56	2863	986.136	development
57	2426	979.867	university
58	2451	974.339	community
59	1767	969.449	team
60	1616	938.006	chairman
61	2994	927.411	program
62	1095	923.279	http
63	1271	914.228	ethics
64	1072	903.886	governance
65	1326	899.604	customer
66	1059	892.925	emissions
67	1896	880.953	member
68	1060	879.969	worldwide
69	1410	855.313	opportunities
70	1083	851.584	supplier

71	964	812.823	pe psico
72	1735	806.782	based
73	947	798.489	ceo
74	1106	780.346	businesses
75	1321	777.973	practices
76	1010	775.207	ensure
77	1242	771.697	code
78	1302	767.825	foundation
79	1395	759.338	responsible
80	1719	757.957	programs
81	1185	756.289	waste
82	1092	751.455	strategy
83	1853	746.720	report
84	1769	741.520	international
85	1278	740.860	risk
86	1026	733.853	partners
87	1461	726.273	product
88	1488	721.494	gas
89	1568	715.599	responsibility
90	1203	714.051	insurance
91	1103	711.871	network
92	844	711.642	initiatives
93	1561	707.571	server
94	1241	704.399	conduct
95	966	704.067	diverse
96	996	703.400	awards
97	1296	701.393	impast
98	1806	678.420	industry
99	786	662.737	healthcare
100	786	662.737	innovative

Appendix 5: Frequency rank (top 100 word tokens)

word Types: 39848		
Word Tokens: 1953491		
Search Hits: 0		
Rank	Frequency	Word
1	85353	the
2	80946	and
3	59293	of
4	49604	to
5	41292	in
6	32125	a
7	22184	for
8	21871	our
9	15740	is
10	15249	we
11	14716	with
12	13256	as
13	11506	that
14	11244	on
15	9367	are
16	9031	by
17	8611	company
18	8339	at
19	8288	from
20	8069	business
21	7690	or
22	6132	more
23	6091	an
24	5587	has
25	5226	this
26	4964	was
27	4779	be
28	4649	it
29	4636	management
30	4608	you
31	4547	all

32	4503	employees
33	4481	he
34	4421	president
35	4406	its
36	4361	their
37	4346	have
38	4256	new
39	4237	energy
40	3985	global
41	3981	corporate
42	3933	also
43	3863	services
44	3716	board
45	3616	through
46	3610	health
47	3516	which
48	3490	information
49	3459	group
50	3451	products
51	3405	word
52	3378	work
53	3350	about
54	3312	will
55	3270	your
56	3225	executive
57	3085	financial
58	3078	can
59	3074	other
60	3067	year
61	2994	program
62	2966	one
63	2953	than
64	2863	development
65	2719	vice
66	2704	environmental
67	2668	not
68	2624	us

69	2522	chief
70	2497	safety
71	2482	customers
72	2482	officer
73	2451	community
74	2436	companies
75	2435	people
76	2431	sustainability
77	2428	technology
78	2426	university
79	2392	use
80	2365	director
81	2365	support
82	2361	including
83	2360	care
84	2339	these
85	2246	committee
86	2198	first
87	2191	years
88	2190	most
89	2176	help
90	2167	service
91	2138	best
92	2105	diversity
93	2097	they
94	2040	where
95	2025	performance
96	2019	well
97	2017	been
98	1996	quality
99	1985	i
100	1975	com
101	1962	time
102	1955	may
103	1944	do
104	1933	his

105	1908	operations
106	1896	member
107	1894	who
108	1855	leadership
109	1853	report
110	1844	communities

O (de)konstrukcji tożsamości korporacyjnej

Podejście ekolingwistyczne

Streszczenie

Niniejszą monografię poświęcono zagadnieniom tożsamości, dyskursu, ideologii i ekologii w odniesieniu do komunikacji korporacyjnej. Jej głównym celem jest dekonstrukcja mechanizmów kształtowania tożsamości korporacyjnej poprzez dyskurs z perspektywy ekolingwistycznej. Wybór paradygmatu ekolingwistycznego motywowany był założeniem, że wszelka działalność człowieka ma nie tylko wymiar społeczno-kulturowy czy ekonomiczny, ale również ekologiczny (cf. Stibbe, 2010; Biersack, 2006). Widoczne jest to szczególnie wyraźnie we współczesnym dyskursie korporacyjnym, w którym w ostatnich latach punkt ciężkości przesunął się w kierunku większej wrażliwości społecznej i ekologicznej, kosztem dominującego wcześniej neoliberalizmu (Holborow, 2012; Jonker i Marberg, 2007).

Tom podzielono na pięć rozdziałów. Rozdział pierwszy poświęcono wyjaśnieniu teoretycznych założeń podejścia ekolingwistycznego, stanowiącego punkt odniesienia dla dalszych rozważań. Samo rozumienie ekolingwistyki można określić mianem integracyjnego, ponieważ odbiega od tradycyjnego podziału dyscypliny na nurt metaforyczny (Haugenowski) oraz niemetaforyczny, rozwinięty przez Hallidaya. W takim ujęciu ekolingwistyka nie ogranicza się jedynie do analizy dyskursu związanego z tematyką ekologiczną w rozumieniu dosłownym, tzn. głównie tekstów dotyczących kwestii destrukcji i ochrony środowiska, lecz nabiera wymiaru metaforycznego poprzez zastosowanie przenośni „ekologii języka” (Alexander i Stibbe, 2014: 105) w odniesieniu do wszelkich form interakcji w ekosystemie, rozumianym jako środowisko naturalne i antropologiczne, obejmujące wszelkie aspekty działalności człowieka. Integracyjny paradygmat ekolingwistyczny wydaje się szczególnie adekwatny w odniesieniu do dyskursywnej analizy konstrukcji tożsamości korporacyjnej, ponieważ pozwala na uchwycenie całej złożoności i dynamiki tego procesu. Podkreślić należy, że proces ten jest kształtowany przede wszystkim przez same korporacje, które bez wątpienia są jednymi z najważniejszych graczy na globalnym rynku, wywierającymi istotny wpływ na ekosystem.

Rozdział drugi koncentruje się na pojęciu tożsamości osadzonym w kontekście organizacyjnym, definiowanym z perspektywy interdyscyplinarnej, zgodnie z zaleceniem Hallidaya (1978: 11), że wszelkie badania nad językiem wymagają odniesienia do innych dyscyplin. Z tego względu, podjęta w rozdziale dyskusja, oparta na integracyjnym paradygmacie ekolingwistycznym, bierze pod uwagę wkład takich dyscyplin jak psychologia społeczna, socjologia, badania and dyskursem, organizacjami oraz komunikacją korporacyjną. Celem rozdziału jest również zdefiniowanie kluczowych dla pracy pojęć, tj. tożsamości, wizerunku i reputacji, których rozumienie w wyszczególnionych powyżej dziedzinach nie jest spójne. Dodatkowym wyzwaniem było uwzględnienie aspektów związanych z ochroną środowiska oraz etyką, które stosunkowo niedawno zaczęły odgrywać istotną

rolę w procesie dyskursywnego konstruowania tożsamości korporacyjnej. Rozdział drugi wieńczy przedstawienie Ekologicznego Modelu Tożsamości Korporacyjnej (EMTK), który stanowi teoretyczną ramę referencyjną dla eko-krytycznej analizy ideologicznych aspektów dyskursu korporacyjnego omówionej w rozdziale piątym.

Motywytem przewodnim rozdziału trzeciego, poświęconego procesom kształtowania tożsamości korporacyjnej w cyberprzestrzeni, oferującej nowe afordancje, które w istotny sposób wpływają na kształt obecnej komunikacji przedsiębiorstw, są słynne słowa Marshalla McLuhana (1962) „medium jest przekazem”. Ramy dyskusji w rozdziale trzecim wyznaczone zostały przez teorie determinizmu technologicznego i społecznego konstrukttywizmu. Dalsze rozważania odnoszą się ściśle do kontekstu korporacyjnego i dotyczą głównie pojęcia gatunku (ang. *genre*) i jego transformacji w przestrzeni wirtualnej. Korporacyjna strona internetowa, zawężona do sekcji „O nas”, została uznana za podstawowe narzędzie służące do komunikowania tożsamości korporacyjnej w Internecie.

Rozdział czwarty skupia się na zagadnieniach związanych z ideologicznymi aspektami dyskursu oraz sposobach ich analizowania. Na postrzeganie kluczowego dla tej części pracy pojęcia dyskursu wpłynęły głównie prace Fairclougha i Foucaulta, podkreślające konstytutywny charakter dyskursu i jego wiodącą rolę w tworzeniu i regulowaniu relacji społecznych, w szczególności tych opartych na dominacji i oporze. Dyskurs jest również określany jako forma reprezentacji świata przez daną grupę, co wpisane jest zarówno w Krytyczną Analizę Dyskursu (KAD) (np. Fairclough, 1992b), jak i ekolingwistykę (np. Stibbe, 2015). Dyskurs jest też nośnikiem władzy i ideologii (Foucault, 1998), stanowiąc fundament procesu konstruowania tożsamości. Z kolei rozumienie pojęcia ideologii najbliższe jest propozycjom van Dijka (1998, 2013), pozbawionym jednoznacznie negatywnej interpretacji tego terminu. W tym ujęciu ideologię postrzega się nie tylko jako narzędzie dominacji i władzy, ale również walki i oporu, które jest wrażliwe na zmiany w otaczającej, dynamicznej rzeczywistości (Gramsci, 1971; Pennycook, 2007; van Dijk, 2008; Holborow, 2012). Taka interpretacja wydaje się wysoce zasadna w kontekście organizacyjnym, gdzie dyskurs wyraża, utrzymuje i wzmacnia tożsamość danej grupy. Dyskurs korporacyjny, jak każdy inny typ dyskursu (cf. Fairclough, 1992b; Garzone i Sarangi, 2007; Lemke, 1995; Hodge i Kress, 1993), jest silnie nacechowany ideologicznie. Jego główne funkcje sprowadzają się do promowania przedsiębiorstwa i legitymizowania jego działalności, jak również wzmacniania tożsamości grupowej. W dalszej części rozdziału omówiono KAD oraz Ekologiczną Analizę Dyskursu (EAD), niedawno zaproponowaną przez Stibbe (2014) i Alexandra i Stibbe (2014). KAD i EAD mają wiele wspólnych cech. Obydwa podejścia mają charakter krytyczny i badają, w jaki sposób ideologie są konstruowane i przekazywane w dyskursie w celu zdobycia, legitymizowania lub zapewnienia dominacji, która prowadzi do społecznej niesprawiedliwości i nierówności. Obydwie perspektywy przyjmują również określoną filozofię do analizy dyskursu, która obnaża istniejące struktury społeczne i wzywa do zmian eliminujących niesprawiedliwość społeczną. EAD została uznana za szersze niż KAD podejście, które poza analizą aspektów społecznych, kulturowych i ekonomicznych dodatkowo zakłada ekologiczne ukonstytuowanie wszelkich form życia i bada, w jaki sposób dyskurs wpływa na ekosystem. Z tego względu EAD wydaje się adekwatna do analizowania dyskursu zanurzonego w złożonej rzeczywistości społecznej, politycznej, kulturowej, ekonomicznej i ekologicznej współczesnego świata, jakim bez wątpienia jest dyskurs korporacyjny. EAD znalazła więc zastosowanie w podjętej w dalszej części monografii analizie dyskursu służącego budowaniu tożsamości korporacyjnej, która według przyjętego EMTK jest silnie osadzona w szeroko rozumianym ekosystemie, obejmującym zarówno czynniki środowiskowe jak i antropologiczne.

Przyjęta w analizie ekozofia (ang. *ecosophy*) bazuje na koncepcie ekologii głębokiej, który rozwinął Naess (1973), oraz koncepcji zrównoważonego rozwoju w ujęciu Baker (2006).

Ostatni piąty rozdział przedstawia wyniki przeprowadzonego badania, którego celem była weryfikacja za pomocą „twardych” danych językowych hipotezy zakładającej ideologiczne przesunięcie dyskursu służącego budowaniu tożsamości korporacyjnej w kierunku paradygmatu eko-społecznego (Jonker i Marberg, 2007). Zgodnie z moją wiedzą jest to pierwsze tego typu ekolingwistyczne badanie ideologicznych aspektów dyskursu korporacyjnego łączące EAD z lingwistyką korpusową, które wymagało opracowania odpowiednich procedur badawczych dostosowanych do jego głównych celów i charakteru korpusu. Postawiono trzy główne pytania badawcze (PB) dotyczące charakterystyki gatunkowej sekcji „O nas” jako głównego nośnika tożsamości korporacyjnej (PB1), dyskursywnej konstrukcji tożsamości korporacyjnej w oparciu o analizę słów kluczowych w korpusie i dominujących w nim wątków tematycznych (PB2) oraz ideologicznego podłoża dyskursu jako nośnika tożsamości korporacyjnej (PB3). Wyniki badania zostaną pokrótce omówione poniżej.

Podstawowym celem komunikacyjnym sekcji „O nas”, klasyfikowanej jako osobny podgatunek korporacyjnej strony internetowej, jest deklaracja tożsamości korporacyjnej i wzmacnianie korporacyjnego etosu, co zostało wskazane we wcześniejszych badaniach (Pollach, 2005; Breeze, 2013). Stosując nomenklaturę Arystotelesowską, można zatem określić ten gatunek jako epideiktyczny, skoncentrowany na samym nadawcy (korporacji) i ukazujący go w pozytywnym świetle. Z perspektywy korporacyjnych celów komunikacyjnych, gatunek ten odgrywa istotną rolę w zarządzaniu reputacją przedsiębiorstwa, legitymizowaniu jego działalności i budowaniu jego relacji z otoczeniem, co w dalszej perspektywie decyduje o stworzeniu pozytywnego klimatu dla działalności korporacji i osiągnięcia postawionych przez nią celów. Jego główna strategia komunikacyjna opiera się na zdobyciu społecznego poparcia i odwołania do ogólnie przyjętych wartości. W istocie, dwie trzecie analizowanych stron internetowych zawiera sekcje poświęcone społecznej odpowiedzialności przedsiębiorstwa lub odnoszące się do zrównoważonego rozwoju, wyraźnie wskazując na rolę tych kwestii w kształtowaniu tożsamości korporacyjnej. Wyrażenie swojego zaangażowania w sprawy związane z ekologią pozytywnie wpływa na wizerunek korporacji oraz tłumi potencjalną krytykę pod adresem ich działalności.

Wśród dziesięciu najczęstszych słów kluczowych w korpusie znalazły się zaimki „we” i „our”, typowe dla dyskursu biznesowego, oraz rzeczowniki „company” i „business”, co potwierdza autoreferencyjny charakter badanego dyskursu. Szersza analiza stu słów kluczowych pozwoliła na wyłonienie głównych wątków tematycznych w korpusie i dała wstępny wgląd w orientację ideologiczną analizowanego dyskursu. Wyniki EAD wskazały na pojawienie się ekologicznej tożsamości korporacji, która konstruowana jest na podstawie relacji przedsiębiorstw z ich szeroko rozumianym ekosystemem. Ukrywając prawdziwe cele swojej działalności biznesowej, firmy pozycjonują się niemalże jako organizacje filantropijne czy też organizacje zajmujące się ochroną środowiska. Tak silne zaznaczenie ekologicznej tożsamości korporacji to z pewnością efekt długoletniej aktywności środowisk ekologów i rosnącej świadomości ekologicznej społeczeństwa, przekładającej się na realną siłę społecznego nacisku. Początkowo zwrot w kierunku ekologii wynikający z presji społecznej nie wzbudzał entuzjazmu korporacji i był traktowany jako element generujący wyższe koszty ich działalności i ograniczający ich potencjalny rozwój i dochodowość. Jednak z czasem korporacje porzuciły swoje defensywne pozycje i przeszły do ofensywy w globalnej komunikacji społecznej dotyczącej ochrony środowiska. Wychodząc z roli podmiotów oskarżanych o degradację środowiska i przejmując kontrolę w debacie pub-

licznej, korporacje przypisały sobie rolę liderów zrównoważonego rozwoju mających realny wpływ na kondycję planety. W rezultacie przejęły dyskurs ekologiczny i dostosowały go do własnych potrzeb.

Obecnie można wręcz mówić, że dyskurs ekologiczny skolonizował dyskurs korporacyjny. Pod względem ideologicznym pozornie nastąpił odwrót od silnie zakorzenionego, dominującego neoliberalizmu w stronę rosnącego w siłę paradygmatu eko-społecznego (Jonker i Marberg, 2007), co materializuje się w „powierzchownej ekologizacji” dyskursu (Fill, 1998: 12). Zjawisko to jest wyraźnie widoczne w warstwie leksykalnej. W analizowanym korpusie słowami kluczowymi okazały się terminy pierwotnie stosowane w ekologii tj.: „environmental”, „environment”, „sustainability”, „diversity”, czy też działalności społecznej, np.: „communities”, „commitment”, „ethics”. Wydaje się zatem, iż warstwa ideologiczna analizowanego dyskursu nie przeczy założeniom przyjętej w badaniu ekologii, opartej głównie na ekologii głębokiej zaproponowanej przez Naess (1973) i doktrynie zrównoważonego rozwoju w ujęciu Baker (2006). Mimo tego, ta pozorna zgodność nie jest interpretowana w sposób jednoznacznie pozytywny, lecz jest raczej traktowana jako zjawisko o charakterze ambiwalentnym w terminologii Stibbe (2015), służące przede wszystkim celom korporacji i zdobyciu przychylności ich interesariuszy. Pod względem ideologicznym dyskurs korporacyjny jest niezwykle spójny i przypomina wręcz gotowy pakiet przygotowany przez służby public relations zgodnie z zasadami paradygmatu eko-społecznego, spójnego z systemem wartości zachodniego odbiorcy. Taka spójność w pewnym sensie daje odbiorcom komunikatów wysyłanych przez korporacje poczucie samozadowolenia i neutralizuje wszelkie wątpliwości czy też ewentualną krytykę. Podobną zresztą rolę pełni odcięcie się od ideologii neoliberalnej, przynajmniej w warstwie leksykalnej, która została poddana głębokiej krytyce po globalnym kryzysie gospodarczym w 2008 roku.

Podsumowując, na podstawie przeprowadzonego badania można stwierdzić, iż dyskurs korporacyjny podąża za nieco innymi trendami niż dyskurs publiczny, charakteryzujący się odejściem w stronę „urynkowienia” (Fairclough, 1993), gdyż kierunek, który obrał można określić jako ekologizację i „odrynkowienie”. Trendy te zostały wyszczególnione dzięki połączeniu analizy korpusowej z EAD, integrującemu statystyczną analizę danych tekstowych i ich eko-krytyczną interpretację. Zaznaczyć jednak należy, że dominacja wyszczególnionego w analizie nowego eko-społecznego paradygmatu nie jest postrzegana jako jednoznacznie pozytywne zjawisko, lecz traktowana z rezerwą, jako jedna ze strategii promujących firmę czy wręcz „ekościema” (ang. *greenwashing*). Ostateczna interpretacja dyskursu korporacyjnego i zgodność zawartych w nim deklaracji z rzeczywistością nie należy jednak do językoznawców, których zadaniem jest dekonstrukcja dyskursu i identyfikacja jego warstwy ideologicznej, lecz świadomych, krytycznych odbiorców mających na wyciągnięcie ręki dostęp do mediów o zasięgu globalnym.

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ISBN 978-83-232-3225-4
ISSN 0137-1444

