

Company Brochures: Move-Specific Linguistic Realizations of the Self and the Other

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Abstract. The study examined a corpus of company brochures from the websites of major engineering companies in Hong Kong. It identified the move structure of the brochures, followed by the key semantic categories specific to the moves. It was found that pronouns are used in certain semantic categories in certain moves in the company brochures. The paper aims to examine the functions of the pronouns in expressing the self and the other in the company brochures in engineering companies which reflect the broader communicative purposes that characterise the genre of company brochures.

Keywords: Semantic categories

1 Introduction

This paper describes a corpus study of the use of pronouns and determiners in expressing the self and the other in the genre of web-based English company brochures in engineering companies in Hong Kong (Cheng, 2011). The design, construction and consumption of English company brochures constitute professional communication in English, which has been an important focus of teaching and research within the English Department of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The departments' Research Centre for Professional Communication (RCPCE) has been set up since 2006, with the mission "to pursue applied research and consultancy to deepen our understanding of professional communication in English and better serve the communication needs of professional communities."

The present study usefully combines the research approaches of genre analysis (Bhatia, 2004) and corpus linguistics (Sinclair, 1991), and combines different corpus linguistic programs. This study was designed to examine how *Ba* theory (場) can be employed in the discussion of project findings. *Ba* theory holds that "living organisms live in the *ba* of non-separation of the self and the other" (Professor Emeritus Hiroshi Shimizu) and stresses "non-separation of subject and object, and non-separation of the self and the other" and that "they do co-exist in their relativity" (Professor Otsuka's Lecture, 2011). In *ba*, both the subject and the object and both the self and the other are encompassed. So the subject "I," for instance, exists both independently and dependently with the other.

Otsuka (2011) compares the notion of "context" in Pragmatics and the *ba* theory. Context is considered to be "dynamic, not a static concept: it is to be understood as the continually changing surroundings, in the widest sense, that enable the participants in the communication process to interact, and in which the linguistic expressions of their interaction become intelligible" (Mey, 2001: 39). In *ba*, the "environment" includes, rather than between, both the speaker and the listener in the "shared ground beyond a mutual body perception held by both the speaker and the listener" (Otsuka, 2011). In *ba*, the unity of the self and the other is born.

Company brochures, similar to other publicity materials, such as booklets, leaflets/pamphlets and flyers, are brief, sales-oriented pieces of writing presented in a limited

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space with the widespread use of visuals (Bivins, 1999: 168; Newsom and Carrell, 2001: 413). Company brochures are found to fulfill multiple communicative purposes simultaneously: to inform or educate customers and clients, by answering questions and providing sources for additional information (Bivins, 1999; Newsom and Carrell, 2001; Osman, 2006), to persuade customers to buy a product, service or idea (Bhatia, 2004; Dyer, 1993; McLaren, 2001; Askehave & Swales, 2001; Osman, 2006), and to impress upon potential customers or trading partners for long-lasting trading relationships (Askehave, 1998: 199).

Cheng (2011) conducted a corpus linguistic genre study of company brochures (N=20) obtained from the websites of twenty companies with engineering or surveying operations in Hong Kong. The Corpus of Company Brochures (CCB) contained 49,228 words. The aim of Cheng's (2011) study was to describe the move-structure of the twenty brochures and the lexico-grammar and semantic fields that constitute the CCB and individual moves in order to reveal the "aboutness" (Phillips, 1983, 1989) of the engineering company brochures so that professionals and practitioners become competent members of their professional community.

The present corpus-based genre study, also based on the CCB, sets out to examine the use of pronouns and determiners in the moves of the company brochures, and findings will be accounted for in light of *Ba* theory. Pronouns and determiners are words that express meanings related to the self and the other. By examining the kinds of pronouns and determiners, as well as the relative distribution of use in the environments of specific moves within the broader environment of the company brochures in surveying and engineering in Hong Kong, the study aims to find out how the speakers, represented in the company brochures, perceive their relations with the listeners, represented by the intended readers of the company brochures.

2 Method of Study

The data examined in this study were twenty company brochures obtained from the websites of twenty companies with engineering or surveying operations in Hong Kong. Individual brochures in the Corpus of Company Brochures (CCB) (49,228 words) ranged from 486 to 10,478 words, with an average length of 2,530 words.

The corpus linguistic programs used were *ConcGram 1.0* (Greaves, 2009) and *Wmatrix* (Rayson 2008). *ConcGram 1.0* (Greaves, 2009) was designed specifically to fully automatically find co-occurrences of words and/or phrases, i.e. concgrams, across a wide span irrespective of constituency and/or positional variation. A concgram is made up of words which co-occur contiguously and/or non-contiguously, and includes all instances when one or more words are found between the co-occurring words (i.e. constituency variation), and if the co-occurring words are in different positions relative to one another (i.e. positional variation), e.g. "play a role," "play a key role," "have a role to play" (Cheng et al. 2006, 2009). *Wmatrix* (Rayson, 2008) is a software tool for corpus analysis and comparison (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Wmatrix

3 Findings and Discussion

In Cheng (2011), the twenty company brochures were analysed as a genre and seven moves, with Move 4 consisting of four steps, were identified (Table 1). Three moves, Move 1, Move 4 and Move 7, were found to be obligatory.

Table 1. Move-structure of company brochures in surveying and construction engineering in Hong Kong

Move Structure	%	Word count (49,228)
Move 1: Establishing the company's professional image	100% (obligatory)	267
Move 2: Introducing contents and organisation of brochure	35%	285
Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners	20%	1,058
Move 4: Promoting the company	100% (obligatory)	42,581

Step 1: Providing the company's background information	95% (obligatory)	14,160
Step 2: Detailing products and/or services	85%	14,840
Step 3: Highlighting the value of significant products or projects	35%	7,563
Step 4: Listing job reference	70%	6,018
Move 5: Describing corporate social responsibility	20%	2,134
Move 6: Looking to the future	10%	122
Move 7: Soliciting response	95% (obligatory)	2,781

Table 2. Most frequent twenty semantic fields in CBC

Semantic fields 1-10	Semantic fields 11-20
1. Grammatical bin	11. Location and direction
2. Unmatched	12. Business: Selling
3. Numbers	13. Objects generally
4. Personal names	14. Helping
5. Business: Generally	15. In power
6. Geographical names	16. Belonging to a group
7. Pronouns	17. Science and technology in general
8. General actions / making	18. Getting and possession

9. Architecture, houses and buildings	19. Time: Period
10. Places	20. Other proper names

Analysis of move-specific semantic fields in the CBC shows frequent use of “Pronouns” in a number of moves (Table 3), with the semantic field of “Pronouns” ranking second, after Grammatical bin, in Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners, Move 4 Step 3: Highlighting the value of significant products and projects, Move 5: Describing corporate social responsibility, and Move 6: Looking to the future. In Move 2: Introducing contents and organisation of brochure and Move 4 Step 2: Detailing products and/or services, “Pronouns” rank fourth.

Table 3. Move-specific semantic field analysis

Move Structure	Top ten semantic fields
Move 1: Establishing a professional image of the company	Grammatical bin; Unmatched; Architecture, houses and buildings; Business: Generally; General actions/making; Science and technology in general; Substances and materials: Solid; Personal names; (9) Pronouns ; Putting, pulling, pushing, transporting
Move 2: Introducing contents and organisation of brochure	Numbers; Grammatical bin; Paper documents and writing; (4) Pronouns ; Business: Generally; Geographical names; Speech acts; Science and technology in general; Personal names; Education in general
Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners	Grammatical bin; (2) Pronouns ; In power; Unmatched; Business: Selling; Belonging to a group; General actions / making; Helping; Architecture, houses and buildings; Location and direction

Move 4: Promoting the company	
Step 1: Providing background information of the company	1. Step 1: Grammatical bin; Unmatched; (3) Pronouns ; Business: Generally; Personal names; General actions/making; Numbers; Geographical names; Architecture, houses and buildings; In power
Step 2: Detailing products and/or services	2. Step 2: Grammatical bin; Unmatched; General actions/making; (4) Pronouns ; Objects generally; Helping; Business: Generally; Business: Selling; Geographical names; Education in general
Step 3: Highlighting the value of significant products or projects	3. Step 3: Grammatical bin; (2) Personal names ; Business: Generally; Unmatched; Architecture, houses and buildings; Numbers; Time: Period; Places; Geographical names; General actions/ making
Step 4: Listing job reference	4. Step 4: Unmatched; Personal names; Numbers; Business: Generally; Grammatical bin; Geographical names; Substances and materials: Solid; Places; Money generally; Architecture, houses and buildings
Move 5: Describing corporate social responsibility	Grammatical bin; (2) Pronouns ; Helping; Belonging to a group; Unmatched; Personal names; Green issues; Education in general;
	Giving; General actions/making
Move 6: Looking to the future	Grammatical bin; (2) Pronouns ; Time: Future; Numbers; Places; Location and direction; Residence; Existing; Unmatched; Personal names
Move 7: Soliciting response	Numbers; Unmatched; Personal names; Telecommunications; Geographical names; Business: Generally; Grammatical bin; Vehicles and transport on land; Location and direction; Information technology and computing

Also applying *Wmatrix*, the study analyses the CBC in terms of parts-of-speech (POS) in order further examine pronoun usage in the moves. As an illustration, Table 4 shows up to the top ten move-specific POSs in Moves 1-3. It is found that in Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners, “possessive pronouns” rank sixth.

Table 4. Top ten POSs in Moves 1-3

Move Structure	Up to top ten POSs
Move 1: Establishing a professional image of the company	single common noun; general adjective; plural common noun; singular proper noun; base form of lexical verb; article; general preposition; for (as prep); past tense of lexical verb; -ing participle of lexical verb
Move 2: Introducing contents and organisation of brochure	single common noun; cardinal number; general adjective; plural common noun; singular proper noun; base form of lexical verb; article; hyphenated number; single article; coordinating conjunction
Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners	single common noun; general adjective; plural common noun; general preposition; coordination conjunction; (6) possessive pronouns , pre-nominal; base form of lexical verb; article; infinitive
	[(11) 1st person plural subjective personal pronoun (we)]

Table 5 below shows move-specific POSs, meaning that some POSs are found in one move but are not shared between moves. It shows that in Move 3, the move-specific POS is the first person plural subjective personal pronoun (*we*) (ranked eleventh), and so “we” is used in these company brochures to achieve the communicative function of establishing relationships with potential partners.

Table 5. Move-specific POSs

Move	Part-of-speech
Move 1: Establishing a professional image of the company'	past tense of lexical verb
Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners	1st person plural subjective personal pronoun (we)
Move 4 Step 4: Listing job reference	unit of measurement

Move 7: Soliciting response	single locative nouns' 'unclassified words' containing addresses and URLs
Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners	'infinitive' to describe purpose and promise action
Move 6: Looking to the future'	'infinitive' to describe purpose and promise action

It has been noted in Table 3 Move-specific twenty semantic field analysis that “Pronouns” are frequently used in a few moves, ranking the second after “Grammatical bin.” Further analysis was hence carried out to find out what the pronouns were. Table 6 lists up to the top twenty pronouns in Move 3, Move 4 Step 1, Move 5, and Move 6.

Table 6. Top twenty pronouns and determiners in Moves 3-6

Move (percentage)	Up to top twenty pronouns and determiners
Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners (8.62%)	<i>our, we, its, their, that, us, them, I, they, which, it, this, you, ourselves, itself</i>
Move 4 Step 1: Providing background information of the company (2.69%)	<i>our, we, its, it, that, which, I, their, they, his, one, who, us, my, them, your, its own, what, everything, me</i>
Move 5: Describing corporate social responsibility (5.05%)	<i>our, we, its, it, their, that, which, his, those, who, us, they, everyone, their own, this, ourselves</i>
Move 6: Looking to the future (4.62%)	<i>our, we, that, it, you, our own, this, one, its</i>

It is found that across all the moves (and step), “our” and “we” are the most frequently used pronouns, followed by “its,” “it,” “that,” and “their.” As the present study is concerned with examining the linguistic realizations of the self and the other in company brochures, the CBC was analysed by identifying and quantifying pronouns that indicate the self and the other. Table 7 shows the pronouns that indicate the self (*our, we, us, ourselves, I, my, me, ourselves*) and the other (*you, your, they, their, they, them, his, everyone*). Findings show the much more frequent use of pronouns of the self, with “our” and “we” particularly used much more heavily, in the moves, compared to those of the other, particularly “they” and “their.”

Table 7. The self and the other

Move	Pronouns (frequency)
Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners (8.62%)	<input type="checkbox"/> our (31), we (31), us (2), I (2), ourselves (1) <input type="checkbox"/> they (1), you (1)
Move 4 Step 1: Providing background information of the company (2.69%)	<input type="checkbox"/> our (98), we (65), I (13), us (6), my (3), me (2) <input type="checkbox"/> their (11), they (8), his (5), them (3), your (2)
Move 5: Describing corporate social responsibility (5.05%)	<input type="checkbox"/> our (26), we (22), us (2), ourselves (1) <input type="checkbox"/> their (6), his (3), they (1), everyone (1)
Move 6: Looking to the future (4.62%)	<input type="checkbox"/> our (15), we (5) <input type="checkbox"/> you (1)

After discussing the findings about move and step-specific pronouns, the following discusses the findings from examining three-word congrams with pronouns, namely “our” and “we,” as the user-nominated search words in Moves 3, 4 (1) and 5. Tables 8-10 below illustrate how three-word congrams reveal the aboutness of the specific moves. Table 8 shows that in Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners, “our” is co-selected with positive words such as “achievements,” “advantage,” “appropriately,” “encouraging,” “satisfaction,” “reputation,” “achievements”, and with “reason.”

Table 8. Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners - Top 20 three-word congrams with ‘our’

our	achievements	believe	2
our	achievements	continue	2
our	achievements	Mr	2
our	achievements	operate	2
our	achievements	reputation	2
our	achievements	appropriately	5
our	achievements	because	4
our	achievements	clients	3

our	achievements	Encouraging	2
our	achievements	Mr	2
our	achievements	Nien	3
our	achievements	Robert	3
our	achievements	satisfaction”	2
our	advantage	important	2
our	advantage	most	2
our	advantage	quality	2
our	advantage	achievements	3
our	advantage	appropriately	3
our	advantage	because	2
our	advantage	more	2

Tables 9-10 show “our” and “we” co-selected with words in Move 4 Step 1. The pronouns “our” co-selects with “adheres” and “bears” (Table 9) and the pronoun “we” co-selects with “aspire” and “claim” (Table 10) and other words that provide background information of the company.

Table 9. Move 4 Step 1: Providing background information of the company – Top 20 three-word congrams with ‘our’

Our	adheres	aspect	2
Our	adheres	business	2
Our	adheres	core	2
Our	adheres	Every	2
Our	adheres	markets	2
Our	adheres	mission	2
Our	adheres	bears	4
Our	adheres	customers’	4
Our	adheres	ETHOS	4

Our	adheres	hints	3
Our	adheres	other	5
Our	adheres	trademarks	2
Our	adheres	we	4
Our	bears	Group	2
Our	bears	history	2
Our	bears	members	2
Our	bears	staff	2
Our	bears	thousand	2
Our	bears	witness	2
Our	bears	years	2

Table 10. Move 4 Step 1: Providing background information of the company – Top 20 three-word congrams with ‘we’

We	aspire	customer	2
We	aspire	dimension	2
We	aspire	do	2
We	aspire	provide	2
We	aspire	service	2
We	aspire	as	2
We	aspire	claim	5
We	aspire	dimension	5
We	aspire	formerly	3
We	aspire	improved	5
We	aspire	Kong’s	4
We	aspire	local	3
We	aspire	makes	2

We	aspire	Wah	9
We	aspire	wide	4
We	claim	pride	2
We	claim	provide	2
We	claim	Today	2
We	claim	truly	2
We	claim	as	2

The following Figures 2- show the concordance lines of pronouns used in some of the moves. Figure 2 shows the pronoun „we“ (N=31) in Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners.

1 improves work efficiency and professional ethics. **We** also believe organizational structure and discipli
2 ing service systems, maintenance and renovations. **We are** also backed by Hopewell Construction Company L
3 than just buildings, **we** are designing lifestyles. **We are** at all times understanding the needs and antic
4 ur customers, shareholders, and business partners **we are** constantly creating and providing excellent va
5 rson **We** are designing more than just buildings, **we are** designing lifestyles. **We** are at all times unde
6 g - Registered Architect and Authorized Person **We are** designing more than just buildings, **we** are des
7 and greatest contribution to the society. Today, **we are** full of proud that EMMIXR has become a top bra
8 ant advantage is in the quality of our staff, and **we are** proud to lead such a professional, energetic a
9 nstruction, and professional facility management. **We are** solution-focused, environmentally responsible
10 omotions and sponsorship of continuing education, **we award** and encourage younger members of our staff f
11 a small company to a diversified specialist firm. **We believe** that the reason for our growth and succes
12 ross the broad spectrum of businesses **we** operate, **we believe** our reputation and our achievements will c
13 e of philosophy and principles towards our work. **We believe** that teamwork is an unbeaten energy resour
14 (HITEC) "Fresh thinking comes from fresh minds. **We encourage** that internally at Hopewell in developin
15 d information on market potentials. Through them, **we envisage** our business opportunities." Mr. Andrea
16 lls through company sponsored education programs. **We frequently** participate in international competitio
17 relationship with our customers. It is from them **we get** our first hand information on market potential
18 serve our customers with expertise. Furthermore, **we have** also invested heavily in state-of-the-art har
19 n since its establishment. Driven by this vision, **we have** been increasingly committed to provide excell
20 ng services of construction materials since 1976. **We have** grown tremendously from a small company to a
21 staff. In order to maximize corporate potential, **we have** put in lots of effort to train up a professio
22 erience in corporate affairs and administration **We invested** in the people and created the professiona
23 's about where they live, work, shop, and play - **we** look at their lives as a whole and thus deliver co
24 tions to keep ourselves on the competitive edge. **We maintain** that our most important advantage is in t
25 hilosophy across the broad spectrum of businesses **we operate**, **we** believe our reputation and our achieve
26 ment system. Regardless of technology or quality, **we pledge** to excel in the industry. Customers Come F
27 ild a Better Future With our excellent products, **we pledge** to promote green construction for quality l
28 e strengthens staff loyalty and self-improvement. **We provide** ample incentive schemes to award our emplo
29 ssing needs in an immediate and flexible fashion. **We treasure** long-term relationship with our customers
30 et-oriented with a holistic approach to business. **We understand** market needs and tailor our services ap
31 naging Director's message As the founder of GCE, **we welcome** you to know more about our company. Throug

Figure 2. Move 3: Establishing relationships with potential partners: ‘we’ (N=31)

From the concordance for “we,” it is clearly evident that the company brochures describe people (*our clients, our customers, shareholders and business partners, our staff, etc.*) and vision, commitment, practices, achievements and ideologies (*invested in the people, solution-focused, environmentally responsible, award and encourage younger members of our staff, treasure long-term relationship with our customers, etc.*) as well as their products and services in order to build relationships with their potential partners. The pronoun “we” also co-selects words that show the relationships with the other, such as “*also backed by Hopewell Construction Company,*” “*Through them ... envisage our business opportunity,*” “*welcome you to know more about our company,*” “*are designing lifestyles,*” “*teamwork,*” “*understand market needs and tailor our services,*” explicitly revealing *ba*, where “the unity of the self and the other is born” (Otsuka, 2011).

Figure 3 below shows a pronoun of the other, i.e., “they” (N=8), in Move 4 Step 1: Providing background information of the company. The pronoun “they” can refer to projects, customers, or trading partners. Some instances of “they” are observed to coselect with pronouns of the self, i.e., “our business” (line 1), “more confident in us” (line 5), “think of nobody but us” (line 8).

1 ments are an important component of our business. **They** also realise Hongkong Electric’s commitment to gr
 2 ts SHKP developments apart in the market, whether **they** are large-scale residential projects, luxury resid
 3 ries has a distinct focus of expertise. Together, **they** drive the success of our group locally and oversea
 4 e to maintain the new Rolls-Royce engine types as **they** enter the market and become operational. HARSL is
 5 he clients are more confident in us, so that when **they** have Housing Authority projects to do and need a p
 6 parts back to a fully restored condition so that **they** have the same integrity and durability as new part
 7 ts have been comparatively more difficult because **they** require more new techniques and equipment. However
 8 to do and need a plumbing engineering contractor, **they** will think of nobody but us." Having built his ca

Figure 3. Move 4 Step 1: Providing background information of the company: ‘they’ (N=8)

The last concordance discussed in this paper is “our” (N=15) taken from Move 6: Looking to the future (Figure 4). The unity of the self and the other is clearly revealed in some instances of word co-selection with “our,” including “customers and the community” (line 3), “endeavour to be a good neighbor” (line 6), and “environment” (line 7).

1 n this remarkable success, we will continue to do **our** best not only to surpass **our** own standards of reli
 2 ample recreation and green space. Demonstrating **our** commitment and confidence in China, Hopewell New T
 3 service and quality, but also the expectations of **our** customers and the community. 36 Into the future,
 4 effective and environmentally friendly energy to **our** customers. This remains a constant goal - one that
 5 ability, and that of **our** environment, is based on **our** effective adoption of new and proven technologies
 6 customer service will continue unabated, as will **our** endeavour to be a good neighbour and corporate cit
 7 for excellence. **Our** sustainability, and that of **our** environment, is based on **our** effective adoption of
 8 r the years and intend to surpass in the future. **Our** focus on setting new benchmarks in excellence for
 9 serviced residences, and hotels. Here are some of **our** future projects. Hopewell New Town in Guangzhou H
 10 lace to work and live, while continuing to expand **our** international business, building upon **our** worldwid
 11 will continue to do **our** best not only to surpass **our** own standards of reliability, service and quality,
 12 success and will be a momentum for future growth. **Our** property portfolio will include office and retail
 13 s and the community. 36 Into the future, we see **our** role as continuing to work conscientiously to prov
 14 ng upon **our** worldwide reputation for excellence. **Our** sustainability, and that of **our** environment, is ba
 15 expand **our** international business, building upon **our** worldwide reputation for excellence. **Our** sustaina

Figure 4. Move 6: Looking to the future: ‘our’ (N=15)

4 Conclusion

The present corpus-based genre study has analysed a corpus of twenty company brochures in the field of surveying and engineering in Hong Kong. Focusing on pronouns of the self and the other, the study shows important findings about the non-separation of the self and the other. Corpus textual evidence shows that such pronouns co-select with words that emphasise the inter-relations between the self and the other; how they and their thinking and behaviours influence each other; how they co-exist in the professional and business environment; and how they form intricate co-operative and collaborative relationships to work toward common goals.

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