The hybridization of Academic Discourse: 
the ‘About us’ section of British and Indian university websites

‘Promotional culture’ increasingly permeates contemporary discursive practices, one of these being the marketization of higher education. The ‘commodification’ of the process wherein universities have been induced to adopt a more entrepreneurial approach is mirrored at discourse level in the colonization of institutional orders of discourse by discourse types associated with commodity production. Moreover, the World Wide Web can contribute to the globalisation of promotional discursive practices since time-space compression makes materials accessible at once from all over the world, but also highlights the complex relationship between local and global perspectives.

This paper explores how universities create and project their corporate culture in the World Wide Web global context through the ‘About us’ sections (AB) of their websites which show promotional features, although they are mainly presented as informative texts. The corpus analysed consists of the verbal component of the AB sections of circa two hundred British and Indian university websites (UWs) which have been grouped into two subcorpora. The study focuses on evaluative language and on the discourse function of pronouns across the two subcorpora and aims to explore the strategies employed to mediate institutional local identities.

Starting from the notion that social practices exist in so far as they are talked about, the discourse as a place where verbalized content is shared and exchanged, can provide useful insights into meanings that are relevant as expression of both local social contexts and of the way they relate to the wider Web global hybrid context. Moreover, recent developments in the use of corpora stress the potential of corpus linguistics methodologies for the study of social meanings and the construction of social reality. Within the theoretical framework of corpus based discourse analysis, linguistic data are examined to observe the role they may play in the construction of meaning in relation to their cotextual and contextual environment with reference to the attitudinal discourse function they may perform.

References
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