Corporate self-presentation on the WWW: a contrastive analysis of Anglo-American and Russian corporations

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Bilingual corporate websites provide a valuable resource for investigating how corporate identity is constructed in computer-mediated discourse in the source language and the language of the target audience. The objective of my study is to find out whether companies transfer the communicative strategies from their original website to their website in a target language, or adopt the communicative patterns of the target language. A bilingual corpus was formed by the texts collected from the "About us" sections of corporate websites of 25 Russian and 25 Anglo-American corporations. A triangular approach was applied comprising textual statistics (Biber, 1988), systemic-functional theory (Halliday, 1978), and cross-cultural discourse analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2005). Through a close investigation of lexical and grammatical features in their discourse-specific functions, I have identified the dominance of the Anglo-American standard in the global structure of the "About us" section (layout and navigation menu) on both Russian and Anglo-American websites. At the same time, the text within smaller units (sections and subsections) has exhibited the transfer of communicative strategies from the source language into the target language. The higher the number of clicks needed to reach the text, the more source language features were likely to be found. This tendency has been especially strong on the English websites of the Russian corporations. Still to be proved empirically by larger amount of data, these findings already pose interesting questions: How do companies deal with the challenges of a new form of communication in their native and foreign language? What cultural, historical, and social factors stand behind the choice of communicative strategies? How does the nature of the medium affect the discourse structure and language use? Does computer-mediated corporate discourse lead to globalization of communication and eliminating intercultural differences? These and other questions will be addressed in the paper.

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