

# Recruitment Advertising as an Instrument of Employer Branding



# Recruitment Advertising as an Instrument of Employer Branding:

*A Linguistic Perspective*

By

Jolanta Łącka-Badura

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“The only thing your competitors cannot copy – your only truly unique and lasting competitive edge – is your people.”

– J. Leary-Joyce 2004



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# INTRODUCTION

In the era of increased global competition and rapidly changing business environment, corporate success depends to a large degree on recruiting and retaining high-quality individuals whose contribution will add a considerable value to the employing company or institution (Cooper et al. 2003; Newell 2005). Organisational scholars claim that recruitment through *advertising* is probably the most frequently used method of attracting candidates in the last few decades (e.g. Cooper et al. 2003; van Meurs 2010). Numerous studies in the field of Human Resource Management confirm the high status of job advertising among external recruitment methods, both from the point of view of employers and potential candidates (Aswathappa 2007; Byars and Rue 2000; Dale 2003; Dessler and Phillipps 2008; Roberts 1997; Ryan et al. 2000; Thoms 2005; Wiktorowicz 2009). In this connection, employment ads should be regarded as socially significant texts, produced and/or consumed by a large proportion of job market participants.

It may thus be surprising that, although the study of *recruitment* as an academic pursuit has increased considerably over the past decades, one of its key methods, i.e. *recruitment advertising*, seems to have been neglected by researchers. Some organisational scholars indicate that academic interest in job advertising is clearly insufficient, resulting in a lack of adequate empirical research and, consequently, limited amount of literature (e.g. Arcodia and Barker 2002; Belin and Wang 2010; Ryan et al. 2000; Secord 2003). Not so long ago, Asprey (2005: 268) made the following observation:

“Recruitment advertising has always been seen as the poor relation to ‘mainstream’ advertising. This is reflected in the availability of reading resources about recruitment advertising – only a handful of books are available to buy which are even vaguely related to recruitment advertising, and nothing new has been published since 1994”.

Apart from being somewhat neglected by organisational scholars, job advertising seems to remain a rather unexplored territory in linguistic studies as well (if compared with product and service advertising). The above is despite the fact that HR researchers and practitioners investigating

various recruitment methods, including employment ads, emphasise that the effectiveness of the latter largely depends on the *language* used to communicate the message to potential candidates (Arthur 2006; Asprey 2005; Barrow and Mosley 2005; Brown and Swain 2009; Cooper et al. 2003; Dale 2003; Foster 2003; Głowicka 2009; Hornberger 2010; Martin and Hetrick 2005; Rafaeli 2001; Taylor 2005).

Among the relatively rare examples of linguistic research related to recruitment advertising, Bruthiaux (1996), investigating the linguistic simplicity in the discourse of classified advertisements, proposes the core components of classified job ads. Bruthiaux (2005) offers some comments on the differences between classified job advertisements and other types of classified ads, indicating a markedly lower degree of text condensation and syntactic minimalism in the former text type. Bhatia (2004) classifies job ads as primary members of the colony of promotional genres, beside marketing-type advertisements, promotional letters and job applications. Fairclough (1995) discusses several interesting instances of academic job advertisements and the latter's propensity to become increasingly promotional. Wolny-Peirs (2005) examines the language of success in a variety of text types, including job advertisements.

As regards the studies that place recruitment advertising at the centre of attention, Skibińska (2002) examines the evolution of the genre of job advertisements in Poland after the year 1989, demonstrating how the structural components and their linguistic realisations changed together with the development of the capitalist market. Solly (2008) uses a small corpus of print ads advertising primary school teaching posts to investigate the way schools' identities are presented and shaped by the ads; Loth et al. (2010) apply state-of-the-art text-mining techniques to the analysis of a corpus of job advertisements, aiming to extract the 'ontological' features of the jobs announced.

Drawing on the framework of axiological linguistics and the conceptual theory of metaphor, Łacka-Badura (2012a) investigates the linguistic representation and idealised cognitive model of an employer reflected in job advertisements; in a later study (2013), the author examines the realisation of indirect speech acts and their persuasive potential in recruitment ads. At the intersection of business and academic discourse, Łacka-Badura (2012b) analyses the textual conventions of academic discourse reflected in academic job postings, whereas in (2014b) the author investigates English-language academic job announcements placed by higher education institutions in 5 Anglophone and 26 other countries, with a view to determining whether the job ads in modern academia may plausibly be regarded as acultural. Closely related to the

subject of the present study, Łacka-Badura (2014b) examines the extremely positive nature of the business register identified in job ads; the author's later paper (2014c) reports on a comparative analysis between recruitment ads and the 'central' promotional genre, i.e. marketing-type/commercial advertisements.

Two studies are particularly worthy of mention in connection with the present work, highlighting (as does this book) the *less obvious* communicative functions of recruitment ads. Norlyk (2006) investigates the use of narrative elements in job advertisements, and the former's role in transforming the post-modern job ads from traditional logos-based messages to texts relying on pathos appeals; addressed at both external and internal audiences, job advertisements are seen by the scholar as revealing the presence of different occupational cultures within organisations, serving as examples of linguistic manifestations of those cultures. Askehave (2014) views bank manager job advertisements as conveyors of certain beliefs and values, rather than simply conventional textual manifestations of recurrent recruitment practices in the banking context; besides promoting the available position, recruitment ads simultaneously portray the 'real' bank manager. The ethnographic analysis reveals that such ideological construction may lead to different perceptions of the desirable candidate among potential male and female applicants, encouraging the former to apply, and discouraging the latter.

The above mentioned papers and book chapters notwithstanding, the only larger, comprehensive, monograph-length work (known to the author at the time of writing) devoted *entirely* to the discourse of job advertising, is the study by van Meurs (2010), who investigates how, why, and to what effect English is used in job advertisements in the Netherlands. Three perspectives are adopted in the study: that of the sender of the job ad message, the message itself, and the perspective of the target audience. The analysis reveals that most senders use English in Dutch job advertisements consciously, assuming that understanding English (or partly English) ads will pose no comprehension problems for the receivers. The reasons for using English provided by job ad makers encompass both symbolic and non-symbolic ones. From the perspective of the target audience, it was found that the use of English had little effect on attitudes towards the ads, and no effect on the recruitment outcomes. The study provides a good reference point for the investigation of the use of English in job advertisements (and professional communication) in other countries and cultures.

Without aspiring to be complete and exhaustive, the present book seeks to contribute to the body of research summarised above, investigating the

*genre* and *register* of recruitment ads, with particular emphasis on their *employer branding* function.

The corpus analysed for the purposes of the book was gathered in two stages; in the period from July 2010 to April 2012, 400 job advertisements were extracted at different time intervals from five Internet sources: the job sections of the Internet editions of three British quality newspapers: telegraph.co.uk, guardian.co.uk, and thetimes.co.uk, as well as two popular British job search websites: jobsite.co.uk and totaljobs.com. In order to ensure sufficient diversity, balance, and representativeness of the corpus, an equal number of 80 texts were retrieved from each source, with great care taken to spread the sample evenly across various types of jobs and different sectors of the economy. No other selection criteria were used in the compilation of the initial corpus.

In view of the aim of the present study, i.e. investigating recruitment advertising as an instrument of *employer branding*, the second stage involved a selection of those ads that could plausibly be regarded as performing (at least potentially) an *employer branding* function. Since it would be hard to classify anonymous ads as ‘branded’, only texts revealing the names of the employing organisations were deemed relevant for the analysis, forming the final corpus (henceforth referred to as *the corpus*) comprising a total of 236 ads.<sup>1</sup>

The final size of the corpus comes to 74,949 running words, placing the sample in the category of small, specialised corpora (cf. e.g. Nelson 2000). Corpus researchers investigating specialised language samples indicate that, depending on the text type and length, a corpus of 20,000 – 50,000 running words is large enough to be representative of a *genre* (see e.g. Goźdz-Roszkowski 2005; Nelson 2000, 2010). In accordance with the above, the size of the corpus used in the present study seems sufficiently large to achieve a representative picture of the genre of job advertising.

As the majority of online recruitment ads do not remain on the job-search websites for more than a few weeks, and thus the URLs become inactive after a relatively short time, it has been deemed reasonable to provide in Appendix 1 only the addresses of the websites from which the texts were extracted. The entire corpus is, however, available upon request at jolanta.lacka-badura@ue.katowice.pl.

Methodologically, the investigation involves elements of broadly understood discourse analysis, genre and register analysis, the study of

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<sup>1</sup> Although not the subject of this book, the fact alone that only 59% of the ads constituting the initial corpus disclose the employers’ names is an interesting issue that deserves more research attention (see chapter 1).

persuasion and evaluation as well as some aspects of axiological linguistics, providing the methodology for the examination of the language of values reflected in job ads. As the analysis is based on a corpus, care has been taken to abide by the rules and conventions commonly observed in the domain of corpus linguistics (see e.g. Biber et al. 2007; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2005; Sinclair 1991; Stubbs 2003). Drawing on several different methodological frameworks, and thus running the risk of departing from descriptive accuracy, the study, nevertheless, does not promote uncritical eclecticism in discourse analysis. It views the above methodologies as complementary rather than mutually exclusive, constituting an attempt to contribute to the voices claiming that the use of a range of perspectives renders the analysis more comprehensive and reliable.

Since many aspects of persuasion and evaluation can only be correctly understood and interpreted when looking at their *context*, the research required a great deal of manual analysis, as well as timely and careful verification of the results obtained using computational tools (WordSmith Tools 3.0 and Microsoft Office 2007). The analysis is primarily qualitative, with quantitative measures used mostly to investigate to what degree certain linguistic means and strategies are employed to create employers' positive image in recruitment ads.

The book contains three theoretical chapters intended to provide the background and methodological framework for the analysis, and four analytical chapters accounting for the empirical investigation of the corpus. No separate chapter is devoted to the summary of the research tools chosen for the analysis; they are described in the concluding remarks to the three theoretical chapters. The study ends with a summary of results, offering a proposal for a model *employer branding* advertisement.

It must be emphasised that the analytical chapters overlap at many points; consequently, their organisation is largely arbitrary, with particular chapters serving a function of foregrounding certain research perspectives, and highlighting particular linguistic means and strategies identified in the corpus.

Following the present introductory chapter, chapter 1 views job advertisements from the perspective of Human Resource Management, providing the background for the linguistic analysis of job ads and their *employer branding* potential. In the first instance, the chapter reviews the concepts pertaining to the recruitment process, with job advertising presented as a recruitment method widely used by both employers and potential employees. Secondly, chapter 1 looks at the Internet as a medium of recruitment, briefly describing its forms, advantages, and drawbacks, an



issue which seems significant given that the study examines a corpus of online job announcements. What follows is a brief overview of concepts related to *employer branding*, its integration with corporate and consumer branding, as well as with PR communication strategies, completed with a short summary of the benefits that organisations can gain from building strong *employer brands*. Finally, the chapter attempts to show job advertising as one of the instruments of *employer branding*, thus providing a platform for the investigation of linguistic means and strategies used in recruitment ads to project a positive image of employers.

Chapter 2 offers a theoretical and methodological framework for the investigation of job advertisements as *discourse* and *genre*. It begins with an overview of theories and ideas related to the notion of discourse, followed by a brief account of various approaches to discourse analysis, with particular emphasis on organisational/workplace discourse. As the investigation performed in the analytical parts of the study views job advertising as a persuasive/promotional genre, chapter 2 then seeks to review the prevailing approaches to *genre* and *register* analysis, with the colony of promotional genres placed in the focus of attention. Since the corpus under study has been compiled from recruitment ads found in the Internet, certain aspects of web-mediated communication and web-mediated genres are also briefly discussed, followed by a few comments on multimodal discourse analysis; the latter is becoming increasingly relevant, given the propensity of online job ads to use multi-modal representation of meaning and thus increasingly resemble the discourse of marketing-type advertising.

The *persuasive* dimension of job advertisements being central to the study, chapter 3 offers an overview of the theories and approaches pertaining to the concept of *persuasion*, as well as an outline of the linguistic strategies commonly employed in persuasive and promotional discourse. As *evaluation* and the language of *values* are viewed as playing a pivotal role in the creation of *employer brand*, the evaluative and axiological orientations in discourse analysis are briefly reviewed, seen as intrinsic to the study of persuasion and promotion. Finally, chapter 3 addresses the issue of *organisational values*, preparing the platform for investigating such values as communicated in the discourse of job advertisements.

The first of the analytical chapters, chapter 4 begins with an investigation of recruitment advertising as an increasingly multi-modal, business-oriented type of discourse. The main focus, however, is placed on the analysis of job advertising as a *genre*, a member of the system of job search genres, accounting for the rhetorical structure of prototypical

recruitment ads, and demonstrating which structural features carry persuasive force and thus contribute to the creation of strong *employer brands*.

Since the remaining analytical chapters demonstrate a high degree of overlap, investigating recruitment ads and their *employer branding* function from three slightly different perspectives, some arbitrary decisions had to be made regarding their organisation. Chapter 5 accounts for the *register* of job advertising, discussing the situational characteristics of recruitment ads, their lexico-grammar, including business-related lexis, and exponents of evaluation, with the focus of attention placed on the examination of those linguistic resources identified at the level of register that most significantly contribute to the projection of employers' positive image.

Chapter 6 places particular emphasis on the *persuasive strategies* used in recruitment advertising, viewing them as central to the creation and reinforcement of *employer brands*. The chapter thus seeks to rationalise job ads as *persuasive discourse*, further on investigating the persuasive mechanisms from the marketing perspective, as well as exploring the linguistic means of persuasion identified in the corpus.

The last of the analytical chapters, chapter 7 places *the language of values* at the centre of attention, examining what types of employer values and components of the Employee Value Proposition play the most significant role in building strong *employer brands*, and how those values are linguistically expressed or invoked in the corpus of job advertisements. The chapter also seeks to investigate whether the findings are consistent with the organisational studies addressing the issue of *employer* and *employee values* viewed as having the strongest impact on potential candidates' perceptions of the employing organisations.

The concluding chapter provides a brief summary of the findings accounted for in the analytical chapters; it also offers a proposal for a *model employer branding advertisement*, which may hopefully be used as a reference point for linguists, as well as HR scholars and practitioners, in further research on the discourse of recruitment advertising.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDA	Attention, Interest, Desire, Action
DAGMAR	Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
EVP	Employee Value Proposition
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
JA	Job Advertisement
LDCE	The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
OALD	The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary



# CHAPTER ONE

## RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING AND EMPLOYER BRANDING: A HRM PERSPECTIVE

This chapter aims to set the scene for further linguistic analysis of web-based recruitment advertisements and their *employer branding* potential. More specifically, it constitutes an attempt at investigating which aspects of job advertising as viewed from the perspective of Human Resource Management could be instrumental for the forthcoming study of the job ad corpus, performed within the framework of genre analysis, register analysis as well as the analysis of the language of persuasion and evaluation.

At the outset, chapter 1 briefly reviews the concept of recruitment as one of key Human Resource Management functions, with particular emphasis on job advertising and its aims, as well as the position it occupies among other widely used recruitment methods. The chapter then offers a cursory overview of the forms, advantages, and drawbacks of the Internet as a recruitment medium, an issue which seems significant for the forthcoming analysis of a corpus of online job announcements. It further on discusses the concept of *employer branding*, briefly exploring its interrelations with marketing and PR communication strategies, as well as the benefits organisations gain from building and reinforcing strong *employer brands*. Finally, the chapter attempts to present job advertising as an important channel for *employer branding* and, in particular, communicating the *Employee Value Proposition*, i.e. (in simplified terms) the reasons for present and prospective employees to commit themselves to an organisation. The concept of *job branding*, foregrounding the significance of the job itself in the recruitment process, is also introduced and regarded as an extension to *employer branding*.

### 1.1 Employee recruitment: definition, aims, and methods

Researchers investigating the field of Human Resource Management, whether from an academic or practitioners' perspective, commonly

express the belief that people are a company's most valuable asset (see e.g. Arcodia and Barker 2002; Głowicka 2009; Leary-Joyce 2004; Pocztowski 1998; Price 2007; Renckly 2004). Even if other resources, money in particular, are indispensable for the smooth running of a business, it is the *people* who decide how the resources are to be accessed and used. Hence, Human Resource Management is regarded as a "great art" (Pocztowski 1998: 10, transl. J.L-B) and "the basis of all management activity" (Torrington et al. 2005:4), the fundamental idea of management being understood as "getting the people of the business to make things happen in a productive way, so that the business prospers and the people thrive" (ibid.).

The aspect of Human Resource Management which is of particular interest for the purposes of this work is *employee recruitment*. Whether seen as part of the selection process (e.g. Roberts 1997), or more commonly perceived as a preceding activity, related and complementary to selection (see e.g. Graham and Bennett 1992; Lewis 1992; Newell 2005; Taylor 2005), recruitment is viewed by many scholars as the most important element and the key function of HRM (Pocztowski 1998; Roberts 1997) or, even more significantly, as one of the key aspects of overall company's operations (Lewis 1992); in other words, "a critical activity" (Cowling, 1990: 41) or "a top priority" (Byars and Rue 2000: 150) in most organisations. Newell claims that, in the era of increased global competition, growing customer expectations, and rapidly changing business environment, continued success is "dependent on attracting and retaining high-quality individuals who can respond effectively to this changing environment" (2005: 15). The author goes on to state that hiring competent people is "of paramount importance" and "should not be underestimated" (ibid.).

In general terms, recruitment may be defined as the process of searching for applicants for jobs, from among whom the right candidates will be selected. Aswathappa (2007: 132) offers a more elaborate definition:

"It is the process of finding and attracting capable applicants for employment. The process begins when new recruits are sought and ends when applications are submitted. The result is a pool of applicants from which new employees are selected".

In a similar vein, Newell views recruitment as "the process of attracting people who might make an organisational contribution to fill a particular role or job" (2005: 117). The author also perceives recruitment from an 'exchange perspective': its anticipated outcome is the exchange and negotiation between the candidate and the recruiting manager, rather than

simply matching the applicant to a job profile or description. Nevertheless she admits that the traditional person-fit approach remains dominant, despite some inherent limitations.

It follows then from the definitions that the aim of recruitment is to provide a pool of suitable candidates for the job opening. Researchers, however, emphasise another role that recruitment is meant to perform, namely to project or reinforce a positive image of the employer among the current and existing employees as well as other job market participants (see e.g. Aswathappa 2007; Beardwell and Holden 1994; Taylor 2005; Torrington et al. 2005). This aspect, being of utmost importance for the present work, will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent parts of the book.

It is worth noting that recruitment is governed by both *external* and *internal* forces. The former comprise supply and demand of potential candidates, the current unemployment rate, labour market conditions, political and social factors, the company's image; internal factors include the organisation's size, its HR and recruitment policy, costs of recruiting, and the rate of growth and expansion (Aswathappa 2007: 133-135). In order to ensure that the recruitment process is cost-effective and supports the overall corporate strategy, an organisation needs to carefully consider all the factors and then decide which recruitment strategies and methods should be adopted to best satisfy the organisation's needs and requirements. As Byars and Rue (2000: 157) maintain,

“it seems safe to say that research has not identified a single best source of recruitment. Thus, each organisation should take steps to identify its most effective recruitment sources”.

A key decision that recruiting managers have to take is whether to recruit *internally*, i.e. from among existing staff, or *externally*, i.e. from outside the organisation. Among the internal sources and methods, those mentioned most frequently by researchers and practitioners dealing with recruitment include present employees, rotation schemes, re-hiring former employees (Arthur 2006; Aswathappa 2007; Byars and Rue 2000; Taylor 2005). Although such methods, often favoured by organisations that are keen to develop their internal human capital, display many advantages, internal sources often prove to be insufficient to supply a suitable pool of candidates; thus most organisations make use of external resources, of which they have a wider range at their disposal (Byars and Rue 2000; Newell 2005). The most frequently mentioned external recruitment methods encompass recruitment advertising, using the services of external agencies and professional or trade associations, employee referrals, liaison

with educational institutions, walk-ins, write-ins and talk-ins, job fairs, open houses, job board mining (Arthur 2006; Aswathappa 2007; Brown and Swain 2009; Byars and Rue 2000; Dale 2003; Graham and Bennett 1992; Newell 2005).

As mentioned earlier, there is probably no method that may safely be regarded as ideal. Consequently, not only do employers resort to different strategies dependent on various factors and conditions governing a particular recruitment situation, but they frequently combine several techniques in the course of a single recruitment campaign, with a view to enhancing the prospects of attracting the most valuable candidates.

Importantly, most of the researchers cited so far highlight the role of *e-recruitment* as an approach or method, and *the Internet* as a recruitment and job advertising medium; since the text corpus analysed for the purposes of this work is a collection of web-based job announcements, and thus the use of the Internet is of high significance for the forthcoming analysis, this issue will be discussed in a separate section of this chapter.

## 1.2 Recruitment advertising

Job advertising is widely regarded as one of the most popular recruitment methods, both from the point of view of employers and potential candidates (Aswathappa 2007; Byars and Rue 2000; Cooper et al. 2003; Dale 2003; Dessler and Phillipps 2008; Roberts 1997; Ryan et al. 2000; Thoms 2005; Wiktorowicz 2009). Van Meurs, investigating the use of English in employment ads in the Netherlands, reports on studies demonstrating that “job advertisements are used by a larger percentage of employers than the other [recruitment] sources” (2010: 4); equally significant, surveys conducted among job seekers show that job ads “were one of the most frequently used means of job orientation, with job sites becoming increasingly important” (ibid.: 5).

Traditionally, job advertising has been defined as “the placement of help-wanted advertisements in daily newspapers, in trade and professional publications, or on radio and television” (Byars and Rue 2000: 155). Given the broad array of available methods and media, the definition provided by Brown and Swain, albeit remarkably brief and unsophisticated, seems to render the concept of job advertising more accurately: “placing press, online or other media advertising to attract potential candidates to respond” (2009: 224).

From a functional perspective, job advertising is perceived as a recruitment method whose aim is



“to attract the attention of the best candidates who may not even be seeking another role, while not raising false expectations and allowing a healthy amount of self-selection. Notwithstanding, recruitment advertising is also advertising for the organisation itself. The form and content will project an image of the organisation”.

(Secord, 2003:355)

The definition quoted above specifies the aim most immediately associated with job advertising, i.e. to attract the attention of suitable candidates; yet it also emphasises two other functions that recruitment ads are intended to perform. One of those is to discourage candidates whose lack of desired qualifications, experience, and personality renders them unsuitable, a function that contributes significantly to reducing the risk of hiring wrong people, as well as the time and costs involved in the recruitment process. Deterring unwanted applicants, leading to employee self-selection, is indicated as a job advertising function by many other researchers (see e.g. Foster 2003; Graham and Bennett 1992; Roberts 1997; Taylor 2005, among others).

In accordance with the aims of recruitment in general (see 1.1), another role that recruitment advertisements are meant to perform is to project a positive image of the employing organisation. Rafaeli (2001: 248) seems to highlight this last function and its significance in the recruitment process:

“The function of ads is (...) argued here to be not only, and perhaps even not primarily, to recruit employees. Rather, ads are proposed to be a means of helping individuals in the job market learn about available employment relationships and make a choice among these alternatives”.

Since this way of looking at job advertisements is of utmost importance for the present study, it will be discussed in more detail further in this chapter.

### **1.2.1 The content and design of recruitment ads: a HRM perspective**

Given that a recruitment ad is often “the first place where potential applicants are told what the organisation is looking for and what skills, abilities, and experience they should evidence” (Dale 2003: 65), the message needs to include relevant information in order to effectively perform the above stated functions. Although the format, graphic design, amount of white space are important factors, Cooper at al. observe that

“[t]he content of job adverts is probably the most important determinant of their success in attracting well-matched candidates” (2003: 83). Similarly, Secord maintains that “the information and design of the advertisement are crucial” (2003: 356). Drawing on five studies within the domain of recruitment and selection, as well as the guidelines provided by two Internet websites and online HR resources, Table 1-1 summarises the views on what should be included in an effective job advertisement.

As can be seen from Table 1-1, the obligatory components of recruitment ads as proposed by HR researchers and practitioners comprise information about the organisation, job description, benefits, and instructions for application. Specifying job requirements is recommended in seven out of eight models and thus may plausibly be classified as obligatory. The ‘job title’ section is considered mandatory in five out of eight models, whereas including job identification and the name of an employing organisation is recommended in three and four models, respectively. Layout features are mentioned in only one model, similarly to training, the latter most probably being viewed in other models as part of *benefits*. Announcing job opportunity is recommended only by Foster (2003).

The general model of job ad content that emerges from the above analysis is presented in Table 1-2.

For the purposes of the forthcoming analysis of recruitment advertising as a genre, an assumption has been made that the above components (or stages) of job ads correspond with the *moves* realising core communicative functions of the genre (sensu Swales 1990, 2004, and Bhatia 1993, 2004, 2005). The general model of recruitment advertisements presented in Table 1-2 will thus be treated as the departure point for the move-step analysis to be performed in chapter 4. An attempt will also be made to examine whether, and to what degree, the obligatory/optional nature of particular moves is reflected in the corpus under study.

**Table 1-1. The content of job advertisements: summary of different models**

Job ad component	Secord	Cowling	Torrington et al	Dejnaka	Foster	van Meurs	Isbister	hiring. monster
Job identification*	+				+			+
Job title**		+		+	+	+	+	
Announcing job opportunity***					+			
Training to be provided			+					
Name of organisation		(+)	+	+	+			
Information about organisation	+	(+)	+	+	+	+	+	+
Job description/ responsibilities****	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Requirements / competencies	+		+	+	+	+	+	+
Benefits	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Instructions for application	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Layout features*****						+	+	+

\* (overview of the position / vacancy summary)

\*\* (most often highlighted in the 'headline' section)

\*\*\* (e.g. We are looking for .../ An opportunity has arisen for ...)

\*\*\*\* (and person specification)

\*\*\*\*\* (logo and illustrations)

\*\*\*\*\* (fancy designs not recommended)

**Table 1-2. The content of job advertisements: general model (based on the summary provided in Table 1-1)**

Job ad component	Status
job identification	optional
announcing availability of the position job title announcing the job opportunity ( <i>We are looking for...</i> )	optional
presenting the organisation	obligatory (but <i>name</i> – optional)
specifying responsibilities and requirements involved	obligatory
offering benefits	obligatory
instructing candidates how to apply	obligatory

There are obviously numerous departures from the standard (or prototypical) model summarised in Table 1-2, depending on a variety of factors. Moreover, researchers, as well as HR practitioners, are not entirely unanimous with regard to how detailed and specific the information included in job ads should be.<sup>1</sup> This is a very broad issue whose discussion would go well beyond the scope of this work, therefore just a few comments will be made for the sake of exemplification. Brown and Swain claim that “a job advert is only a snapshot” and thus must be kept brief, for much of the detail presented in longer messages is ignored by potential applicants (2009: 226). By contrast, Foster (2003) and Hornberger (2010) opt for providing detailed, exhaustive descriptions of the job and organisation, claiming that such an approach enhances the credibility of an ad. Similarly, although with some reservations, Rynes and Cable (2003) report on several studies indicating that corporate recruitment image is improved by ads providing more information about the employer. In an interesting study investigating the manner in which recruitment message specificity affects applicant attraction to organisations, Roberson et al.

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<sup>1</sup> Belin and Wang (2010) provide a detailed account of the incoherence between different Internet sources (mostly HRM and recruitment websites) concerning the suggested size, content, and level of explicitness of job advertisements.

(2005) confirm that explicit and detailed ads produce more favourable reactions on the part of potential candidates than do non-specific or general messages. A closer investigation reveals, however, that while such a positive correlation is found with regard to the applicants' perception of the company's attributes and person-organisation fit, providing more details may not lead to better perceptions of the organisation's attractiveness. A more unambiguous viewpoint is presented by Foster who claims that "the more clearly you describe your organisation, the more you're liable to attract the right candidates and repel the wrong ones" (2005: 135).

Specifying the amount or range of salary might be a controversial issue; while researchers and HR practitioners seem to share the conviction that being explicit about the remuneration is very well perceived by potential applicants (see e.g. Belin and Wang 2010; Brown and Swain 2009; Dale 2003; Hornberger 2010; Isbister 2010; Lewis 1992; Torrington et al. 2005), yet they also provide a clear reason for many employers being vague about this important aspect of the job offered.<sup>2</sup> The justification lies in "the frequent need to preserve confidentiality" (Taylor 2005: 174). Potential problems may arise when existing employees see the advertisement and compare their own salaries unfavourably with the package offered.

Confidentiality issues may also be the reason behind another frequently used practice of placing ads in which there is no identification of the employer; Aswathappa (2007) labels such messages as *blind ads*. Although research shows that candidates react positively to ads which reveal the employer's name (see e.g. Belin and Wang 2010), the possible justification of many organisations deciding not to disclose their identity is their reluctance to publicise the fact that they are seeking to fill a position; another reason might be that the contract they have signed with the recruitment agency acting on their behalf stipulates that only the agency's name will be disclosed.

All things considered, it seems most reasonable to find the right balance between satisfying applicants' need to learn as many details as possible about the position advertised and the employer's recruitment strategy. The extent to which the organisation, job responsibilities, and benefits are specified in detail should be well considered, taking into account both internal and external factors. The degree of explicitness or vagueness of recruitment messages, as well as the linguistic and textual

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<sup>2</sup> Isbister (2010) observes that a high amount of salary not only attracts the suitable candidates, but may also act as a filter for those who, being aware of the job market realities, feel that such a remuneration is beyond their reach.

strategies employed by their writers, will be discussed more thoroughly in the analytical part of the book.

### 1.2.2 Job advertising - a marketing perspective

Scholars increasingly approach recruitment advertising not only from the HRM perspective, but also (sometimes mainly) from the *marketing* standpoint. Pocztowski (1998) claims that ‘acquiring’ employees may resemble the process of buying resources and supplies, and thus it should primarily be a marketing activity aimed at affecting the job market and offering the vacancy and organisation as a sort of ‘product’ which may enable people to satisfy their needs. Ryan et al. (2000), as well as York and Kim (2005), propose that HR managers should see organisations as providers of *employment products* (jobs), and employees as *employment customers* who may choose a supplier of employment in the same way as a typical consumer chooses a product. Taylor (2005) and Tokarz (2006) propose that job market participants engaging in the recruitment process play double roles, resembling those performed by sellers and buyers in a sales transaction: a job seeker is both a ‘product’ that some company may wish to ‘buy’, and a ‘seller’ trying to ‘sell’ him/herself on the job market; on the other hand, a potential employer also performs a double role: that of a ‘seller’ aiming to ‘sell’ the job offered, and that of a ‘buyer’ interested in attracting the most valuable candidates for the position advertised. Recruitment and job advertising perceived as *selling* vacancies to suitable candidates is frequently brought up by researchers (e.g. Asprey 2005; Aswathappa 2007; Dale 2003; Piotrowska 2009; Roberts 2007; Thoms 2005; Torrington et al. 2005), who increasingly tend to use terms such as ‘recruitment marketing’, ‘personnel marketing’ or ‘employment marketing’ when referring to employee recruitment activities (see e.g. Asprey 2005; Dobrowolska 2009; Price 2007; Roberts 1997; Ryan et al. 2000; Siniakowicz 2009).<sup>3</sup>

It follows from the above that recruitment advertising “now shares more with ‘mainstream’ advertising than ever”,<sup>4</sup> it shares “much of the

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<sup>3</sup> Viewing the job advertised as a *product* and the job seeker as a *customer* is also the prevailing standpoint at HR and recruitment websites (see e.g. <http://hiring.monster.ie/hr/hr-best-practices/recruiting-hiring-advice/acquiring-job-candidates/how-do-i-write-an-effective-job-advert-ie.aspx>, Accessed 11 July, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> The term ‘mainstream advertising’ will be used throughout the study interchangeably with ‘marketing-type advertising’, ‘commercial advertising’ and ‘product or service advertising’.