

## JOB ADVERTISEMENTS ON LINKEDIN Generic integrity and evolution \*

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**Abstract** – This paper focuses on job advertisements posted on LinkedIn, a Social Networking Site (SNS) tailored to the workplace environment. The job advertisement is a long-lived genre, which existed mainly in the daily/weekly press environment in the form of classified ad until it migrated to the Web. A further development came from the rise of SNSs: the job advert moved to an online community context, with all the social implications of this fact. The aim is to describe the peculiarities of the LinkedIn job advertisement as a sub-genre, identifying similarities with and differences from job ads posted on other online platforms, as well as from the traditional printed job ads published in newspapers. Findings provide evidence of a significant degree of generic integrity, with some changes due to the migration to the web environment, and even more meaningful changes due to the re-contextualization of the genre in a SNS.

**Keywords:** Job advertisement; employment ad; Social Networking Sites; LinkedIn; genre analysis.

### 1. Introduction

In the digital age the nature of companies' communication has changed out of all recognition not only because of the affordances made available by the spread of the Internet, but also on account of the introduction of new communicative environments, and in particular social media. This pervasive process of change and adaptation in communicative practices has had an especially significant impact on existing genres in business communication.

The job advertisement (or job announcement) is a long-lived genre, which for most of its life has existed mainly in the daily/weekly press environment in the form of classified ad. The advent of the Internet has brought about important changes, first and foremost the birth of specialised job search sites like *monster* (<https://www.monster.co.uk/>),<sup>1</sup> *totaljobs* ([www.totaljobs.com](http://www.totaljobs.com)) and *indeed* ([indeed.com](http://indeed.com)), which in time have become increasingly popular for companies and jobseekers alike. In parallel, there has been an expansion of the Job Sections of online newspapers, like *Guardian Jobs* (<https://jobs.theguardian.com/>), *Telegraph Jobs* (<https://jobs.telegraph.co.uk/>) or *Independent Jobs* (<http://independentjobs.independent.co.uk/>).

A further development has come from the rise of Social Networking Sites (SNSs), and in particular of LinkedIn, which is tailored to the workplace environment, being specialized in the offer of careers content and having recruitment as one of its most important functions. In light of previous studies on web-mediated genres (cf. e.g. Garzone

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all websites were last accessed on 25 November 2017.

2007), it can be expected that in itself the migration to a new medium has had an impact on the characteristics of the job ad genre, and further changes can be expected to have been caused by its recontextualization in LinkedIn.

The main focus of this article is on such changes, looking in particular at job ads published on LinkedIn. The aim is to identify the distinctive features of the LinkedIn job advertisement as a sub-genre, pinpointing similarities with and differences from job ads posted on other online platforms as well as traditional printed job ads published in newspapers.

## 2. Materials and method

This study is based on the analysis of a corpus of 172 job advertisements originally posted on LinkedIn, with reference to four selected locations – London, Amsterdam, New York and Melbourne – to have global representativeness and avoid geographical distortions. The job functions considered are Project Manager (PM) and similar middle management positions. Fifty ads were downloaded for each location from 15<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017, with the exception of Amsterdam, for which only twenty-two ads for the kind of position chosen were found. The corpus consists of a total of 99,598 running words, Standardized Type Token ratio 48.94, with each single advertisement varying in length from 182 to 1,287 words, for an average length of 571 words.

The corpus is first submitted to qualitative investigation, looking in particular at the macro-structure of job ads in a genre-analytical perspective. Then a finer-grained analysis of the way the moves constituting the genre are realized on LinkedIn is carried out, also using the Wordsmith Tools 6.0 software suite (Scott 2012) in order to avoid unwarranted generalizations. In particular, the tools used are Wordlist, to check frequencies of lexical items, and the Concord Tool to check collocations and context.

The study is set in a discourse-analytical framework, with special reference to genre analysis (Bhatia 1993, 2004/2014; Swales 1990, 2004), and in particular to notions set forth in the ESP [English for Specific Purposes] tradition<sup>2</sup> that are considered especially useful, and to later developments aimed at adapting the genre-analytical approach to web-mediated communication (Askehave, Ellerup Nielsen 2004; Askehave, Swales 2001; Garzone 2007). Reference is also made to other notions in discourse analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that are deemed to be useful for the sake of the investigation (e.g., Brown, Yule 1983; Hyland 2005; Schiffrin *et al.* 2001). The study also takes account of discourse analytical and linguistic research on social media interaction, and in particular on SNSs (e.g., boyd, Ellison 2007; Papacharissi 2011; Thelwall, Stuart 2010), which so far have given little attention to LinkedIn, with very few studies devoted to it, e.g. a research by Papacharissi (2009) comparing Facebook, LinkedIn and AsmallWorld, Garzone's (2016) comparative investigation of professional groups on LinkedIn and Facebook, and – more specifically relevant to this study – Sameen and Cornelius' (2013) work on employers' use of SNSs (including LinkedIn) to screen candidates in the hiring process.

As regards specifically job announcements, for contextualization purposes account has also been taken of reports produced within the corporate world investigating the impact of social media on the recruitment process and on job seekers' behaviour (e.g., Broughton *et al.* 2013; Nigel Wright Recruitment 2011). Of interest are also studies on employer branding, a notion that brings together Human Resources (HR) and brand management (Ambler, Barrow 1996; Barrow, Mosley 2005) and refers to “the process of building an

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the various traditions in genre analysis cf. Garzone 2013.

identifiable and unique employer identity” (Backhaus, Tikoo 2004, p. 502) enacted by a company to attract applications from the most suitable and capable candidates.

Job ads have been dealt with in scholarly papers in corporate communication research and advertising studies (e.g., Asprey 2005; Feldman *et al.* 2006; Ryan *et al.* 2000). But for the sake of this discussion of special interest are studies that focus on the makeup of job announcements as a genre. Some of them are chapters in Human Resource Management handbooks (e.g., Armstrong 2006, pp. 409-438; Bratton, Gold 2007, pp. 211-243), which essentially present them as part of a stage in the People Resourcing Process that includes Recruitment and Selection. Some others are scholarly papers in organizational communication studies. Particularly relevant is a study by Rafaeli and Oliver (1998) which, on the basis of an empirical investigation of a large number of job ads published in newspapers in various English-speaking countries, have identified a skeleton of four elements that was common to most of the ads analyzed, consisting of four elements: 1) an organizational identity; 2) its human resources needs, 3) information about what is required to fulfil these needs, and 4) information about how to contact the organization. According to them this skeleton accomplishes the core function of announcing an employment opportunity, but in many cases the ads are “richer” as they contain more elements that are not part of the recruiting message, but rather convey an impression management message aimed not only at job seekers but also at the general public (customers, shareholders, investors), and internal or current employees.

Rafaeli and Oliver’s skeleton is the starting point for Walters and Fage-Butler (2014) who analyse three Danish job ads for each of three selected years spanning half a century (1961, 1991, 2011), and find that some elements are constantly present, i.e. company name, job, title, requirements for educational qualifications and experience and contact information, while some others were not there originally and others yet disappeared in time. The resulting structure is as follows: Organizational identity, Job description, Personnel specifications, Practical information, Contact information.

In linguistics and discourse analysis the literature on job advertisements in English is relatively limited. Apart from case studies presented in general works whose main focus is on other topics (e.g., Bhatia 2004/2014, pp. 62, dealing with the job ad in his discussion and classification of promotional genres; Fairclough 1995/2010, pp. 142-148, discussing advertisements for positions in the university as evidence of the marketization of the academic world), there have been isolated studies on single aspects, e.g. Solly (2005) on identity construction in primary school job ads, or investigations on specific countries and languages, e.g. Lago and Hewitt (2004), presenting a comparative analysis of English and Spanish ads, and van Meurs’ (2010) book-length study on the role and effects of the use of English in job ads in the Netherlands.

More specifically relevant to the scope of this study is the monograph on classifieds by Bruthiaux (1996), which first introduced the study of the job advertisement as a genre in its own right as a classified ad, and was followed by Gillaerts (2012), centred on job announcements in Dutch in Belgium. In a similar vein, but characterized by a more systematic approach, Łacka-Badura’s (2015) book-length study deals with recruitment advertising from the viewpoint of employer branding.

After this brief overview of various strands of previous research that are considered potentially useful for the sake of the analysis presented here, in the next section a more detailed account will be given of the findings of discourse analytical studies of the job ad genre so far.

### 3. The job advertisement as a genre

The “job ad[vert[isement]]” or “job announcement” is a highly restrained genre that has been around for a very long time. Originally published in newspapers or (more rarely) in magazines, often among the Classifieds or on the careers page, job ads were heavily conditioned by space limitations because of the expensiveness of advertising space, their publication being subject to a fee calculated per word. This of course was a good reason for brevity and simplicity. Indeed, in a study of classifieds conducted on a 1991-1992 corpus including 200 job ads, Bruthiaux (1996, p. 90) sees job ads and other classifieds as instances of “linguistic simplicity”. Their traditional style is concise and standardized, characterized by “conventionalised prefabricated segments ... in more or less predictable sequences”, a feature made possible by their “narrow communicative function” (Bruthiaux 1996, p. 91). These recurrent idiomatic sequences and fixed collocations also function as register markers. When published in classifieds, job ads also frequently utilize recurrent conventional abbreviations such as: *xln*t = excellent, *secy* = secretary, *exp* = experience, & = and, *wtd* = wanted, *pls* = please, etc. (Bruthiaux 1996, p. 123).

As regards the structure of the standard job ad, Bruthiaux identifies five main components: *the target*, i.e. job description; *the recruiter*, i.e. information about the company or the individual placing the ad; *the requirements*, i.e. specifying qualifications and experience; *the reward*, i.e. salary and benefits, if any; and *a contact segment*.

A different perspective to the discursive description of job ads emerged thanks to the application of genre analysis, which rather than simply detailing a list of components in these texts, provides the analytical tools to describe their structure in terms of “moves,” i.e. of the different cognitive and rhetorical actions performed through discourse, each of which in turn is realized by means of smaller “steps” (or “strategies”) that the writer selects from among a set of choices available (Bhatia 1993, p. 13). This approach will be relied on in this study, being especially suitable for the description of the LinkedIn job ad, also because it makes it possible to compare findings with those of previous studies set within the same analytical perspective.

One of such studies is Gillaerts’ (2012) diachronic investigation on job announcements in Dutch from 1944 to 2010, where he identifies moves that partially correspond to the elements found Bruthiaux (1996), but are categorized in rhetorical and cognitive terms, focusing on the actions that are performed in each part of the ad.

According to Gillaerts, before 1950 such moves were: 1. specifying the function (Bruthiaux’s *target*); 2. outlining the profile (Bruthiaux’s *requirements*); 3. specifying the offer (Bruthiaux’s *reward*); and 4. detailing contact information (Bruthiaux’s *contact segment*). Information about the Company was mostly missing, with only very general indications. For instance, in ads published on the careers page of the *Guardian* or the *Daily Telegraph* it was customary to find simply the name of the Company with no further specifications or, more frequently, wordings like “a British manufacturing Company”, “a busy advertising agency”, “a privately owned West Country Group”, while the name of the Company was mentioned only in the contact information, or not at all when the ad had been posted by a recruitment agency.

After 1950, however, information about the recruiting Company became a conventional part of every ad, often being presented before all other moves. According to Gillaerts, this is the main structural change undergone by job ads in the course of the years. Thus the standard move structure now is: 1. introducing the Company; 2. specifying the function; 3. outlining the profile; 4. specifying the offer; and 5. detailing contact information (Gillaerts 2012, pp. 267-270).

In her research, Łącka-Badura (2015) analyses the structure of the genre working on a corpus consisting entirely of job ads posted online (on *telegaph.co.uk*, *guardian.co.uk*, *thetimes.co.uk*, *jobsite.co.uk* and *totaljobs.co.uk*). Although she discusses the growing importance of e-recruitment (Łącka-Badura 2015, pp. 15-16), she does not question the genre status of the online job advertisement, which she considers as an ‘extant’ genre (Shepherd, Watters 1998, pp. 98; see Łącka-Badura 2015, pp. 51), i.e. unchanged in its electronic realization. Although she recognises the usefulness of hyperlinks, she declaredly analyses texts exclusively in the “reading mode” (Askehave, Ellerup Nielsen 2004), and is not interested in identifying the distinctive features of online ads. Therefore she does not seem to problematize the fact that all the employment announcements included in her corpus are posted online, and on websites with variable characteristics, all factors that in line of principle may have an impact on the stability of the genre.

The “general model” of the content of job ads that Łącka-Badura proposes and uses as a starting point for a minute analysis of the steps included in each move is very similar to Gillaerts’ (2012) (which incidentally does not appear in her references), with only a few differences. Table 1 compares the two move structures:

Gillaerts 2012 – printed ads	Łącka-Badura 2015 – online ads
1. Introducing the Company	0. Job identification (job overview/summary)
2. Specifying the function	1. Announcing availability of the position
3. Outlining the profile	2. Presenting the organization – building credibility
4. Specifying the offer	3. Specifying responsibilities and requirements involved
5. Detailing contact information	4. Offering benefits
	5. Instructing candidates how to apply

Table 1  
 Moves in job ads according to Gillaerts (2012) and Łącka-Badura (2015).

As anticipated, in terms of general move structure Łącka-Badura’s scheme does not differ greatly from Gillaerts’, the main differences being the order in which the elements are listed (the “Introducing the company” move being postponed to position 2) and the split of the “Specifying the function” move into “0. Job identification (job overview/summary)” and “1. Announcing availability of the position” (See Table 1). As regards the labels given to the various moves, Gillaerts’ seem to be somewhat clearer. For instance, where Gillaerts uses “Specifying the offer”, Łącka-Badura prefers “Offering benefits”, which is not always the case, as in many cases benefits are not actually offered. While the addition of an optional move “Announcing availability of the position” appears reasonable, it seems odd that the exposition of responsibilities (“Specifying the function”) and requirements (“Outlining the profile”) should be collapsed into a single move (“Specifying responsibilities and requirements involved”), although in adverts these two moves are mostly realized separately and at length, plenty of attention being set aside for each of them in most cases.

To sum up, it can be stated that comparing the analyses of printed and online job ads as put forth by various scholars in time, and especially Gillaerts’ and Łącka-Badura’s recent studies, some elements of continuity emerge which provide evidence of a degree of generic integrity characterizing the genre in its history on printed paper, and even after migration to the Internet.



### 3.1. The online job advert

In this section, a brief overview of the main features of online job advertisements will be offered, so as to identify their distinctive features and at the same time set the ground for the identification of the peculiarities of job ads posted on LinkedIn.

The first obvious effect of the migration of job ads to the Internet was to put an end to text length restrictions, which – as discussed when reporting on Bruthiaux's (1996) study – derived from the high cost per word of placing classifieds in newspapers. In contrast, posting job ads on online boards is either free or subject to a flat rate, or a two- or three- tier rate, so that they may vary in terms of length and graphics but there is certainly no reason to spare words. So recruiters are now in a position to provide all the information they deem necessary or desirable, a dramatic change from a not too distant past when job ads could be considered instances of linguistic simplicity (Bruthiaux 1996, pp. 123).

As regards the structure of job ads, both on independent sites (e.g. *indeed*, *monster*, *careerbuilder*, *jobsonline*) and on job platforms connected with online newspapers like the *Times & Sunday Times* and *Guardianjobs*, there is a standard template for advertisements, as in Figure 1, showing a job advert on [www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk), and Figure 2, showing an ad on *Guardiansjob* (<https://jobs.theguardian.com/>):

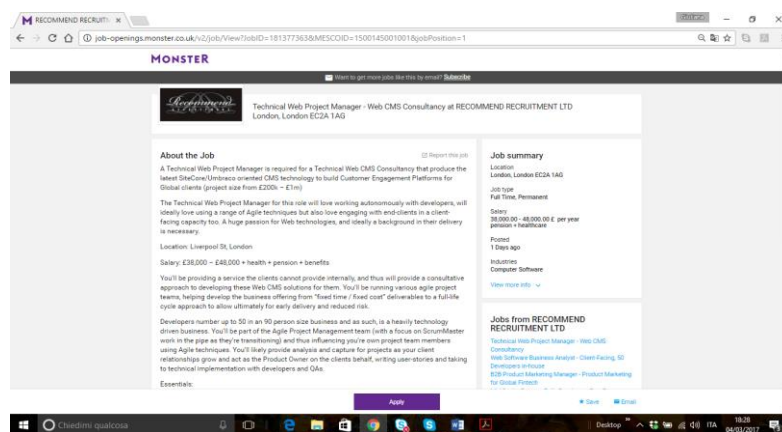


Figure 1  
Standard job ad on [www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk) (posted 03/03/2017).

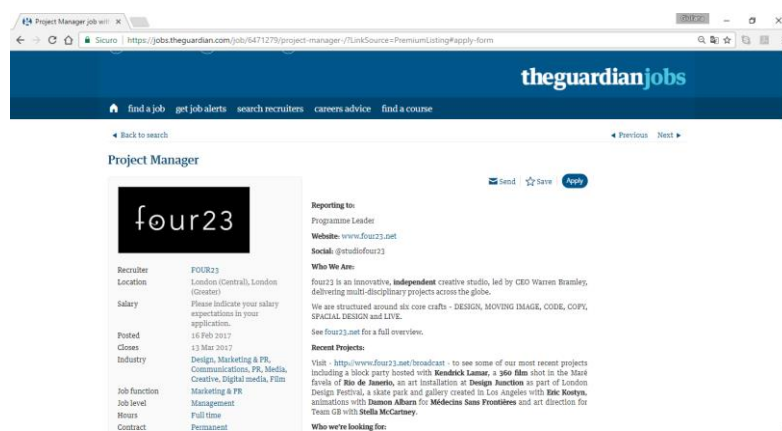


Figure 2  
Standard Job Ad at <https://jobs.theguardian.com/> (posted on 16/02/2017).

A quick look at the ads shows that the analysis cannot be limited to alphabetic text (cf. Garzone 2007, pp. 15-16), but should consider the overall textuality of the page as a semiotic complex resulting from the integration between linguistic elements, their disposition on the page, visual elements (if any) and the superimposed level of hypertextuality (hyperlinks, toolbars, buttons, etc.), i.e. the “navigating mode” (Askehave, Swales 2001).

Both in Figure 1 and 2 the main text of the advert takes up the main content column (i.e. the centre column), and the logo of the company posting the advertisement – be it a recruitment firm as in Figure 1 (Recommend Recruitment Ltd.), or a potential employer as in Figure 2 (four23) – appears in small size in the header together with the job title; in actual fact, this logo is a hyperlink leading to the recruiting company’s website. In one of the scan columns on the sides (in the right scan column in the case of Monster in Fig. 1, and the left scan column in the case of Guardian jobs in Fig. 2) there appears a Job Summary, which is a peculiar (although not obligatory) feature of online job adverts, and summarizes, in points, the main characteristics of the position offered with varying degrees of detail.

In the case of independent job sites, companies are also offered the option to design their advertisement format, using their own graphics and organizing the text as they wish, paying a higher rate. This option is often taken advantage of by large companies and by recruitment firms, who use their own template, graphics and iconography, i.e. their own visual identity.

An interesting aspect of job ads posted by recruitment agencies, which on independent job sites tend to be a majority, is that in most cases they do not introduce the company that is actually offering the position, if not cursorily (e.g. “Great opportunity to join *this professional, yet fun Telecoms company...*”, “Our client is the *largest independent engineering, construction and services company in the UK...*”, emphasis added), while in many cases they feature an “About us” that introduces the recruitment agency itself, thus preferring “recruiter branding” to “employer branding”, probably on the basis of the idea that good candidates trust recruitment firms with a solid reputation.

The other move that seems to have lost prominence in comparison with traditional job announcements is “Detailing the offer”. It is often missing or is realized very briefly, e.g. “Salary: £38,000 – £48,000 + health + pension + benefits”, or simply by means of the indication, in the Job Summary, of the exact pay (“Salary: £57,000”) or a general statement about salary or salary and benefits (“Attractive package”, “Attractive salary”). In the Job description, the moves that are always present are “Specifying the function” and “Outlining the profile”, being often set out in sub-titled sections (e.g. “Key tasks and Responsibilities”, “Role”, “Competencies”, etc.). It is interesting that in most cases the invitation to apply is not realized verbally, but rather by means of an “Apply” button which leads to an online form to be filled in, sometimes visible by scrolling at the foot of the advert.

Overall the analysis of job advertisements posted on online job boards indicates that they are characterized by a degree of continuity with the traditional printed job advertisement, although elements of change are not missing. The moves are basically the same, but the order in which they are set out and their realization may vary considerably, with some important differences connected with the peculiarities and affordances of the medium, and in particular the addition of the job summary section, and the realization of some of the moves by means of hyperlinks, i.e. in the navigating mode. Of course, given the great variety of job boards, sites and job listings, there is ample scope for variation, but these are the main general trends.

Attention will now be turned to job advertisements posted on LinkedIn. This SNS will be introduced in general terms, before going on to analyze the job adverts included in the corpus.

#### 4. LinkedIn

Founded in 2003 (see boyd, Ellison 2007, pp. 212), LinkedIn is the most important professionally oriented social networking site. Its membership, which also includes corporate and institutional subjects, has grown exponentially in the last few years, reaching 467 million in the second quarter of 2016 (the latest statistics available), up from 450 million members in the preceding quarter.<sup>3</sup>

It is tailored specifically to the workplace environment, and offers the opportunity to connect with professional people of one's interest (colleagues, former schoolmates, etc.), publish posts and participate in discussions. It also features a jobs section which not only can be searched, but also automatically selects the offers that potentially fit each user's profile and offers various tools to support users seeking a job and companies searching for suitable employees.

LinkedIn is open to all, but some of its parts are subject to various levels of gated access and control that mimic those of the "real" professional world.

According to CEO Jeff Weiner (2014), LinkedIn's core value proposition is "connect talent with opportunities at massive scale". It enables customers to connect with the professional world, stay informed through professional news and knowledge, get hired and build their careers (Weiner 2014). According to Weiner, this is achieved thanks to three main components: Identity, manifested through the professional profile of record, i.e. a permanent public profile posted on the site, Network, as it connects all the world's professionals, and Knowledge, qualifying as the "definitive professional publishing platform" (Slideshare, Groups, Pulse).

LinkedIn offers various useful instruments for businesses, with four main Business Solutions: Hire (Talent Solutions), Market (Marketing Solutions), Sell (Sales Solutions), and Learn (Learning Solutions).

Within this context, Talent Solutions offers a whole set of tools to recruit candidates, source talent and build one's brand (cf. <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions>, 16/10/2017). Among these, the most important, readily available function is job posting. Companies can post their openings on LinkedIn, and this enables them to reach suitable candidates. One of its great advantages is that it automatically advertises job postings to LinkedIn members with profiles that match them, and this puts job ads directly on the desktop of candidates with the right skills and experience, even if they are not active job seekers. The recruiting Company will also receive a list of members who could be a good fit for their hiring needs.

An important option to support a company's HR recruiting efforts is the possibility to maintain a Career Page on LinkedIn (part of Talent Solutions) where it can promote its Employer Brand, giving candidates an authentic view into the corporate culture and letting them explore company life. The layout of Career pages was renewed in October 2016 with a new design that "puts the spotlight on company culture and job opportunities," with three main tabs, the "Overview" tab, similar to the traditional company description, with new features such as Recent Updates and the renewed Company Photos section, the "Life" tab with contents illustrating what life is really like at the company, including employee-

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statista.com/statistics/274050/quarterly-numbers-of-linkedin-members/> (16.10.2017).



created content, videos and photos, and the “Jobs” tab, which displays all job adverts the company has posted on LinkedIn, presenting first the jobs that match the viewers’ skills and expertise (<https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/product-updates/2016/introducing-the-next-generation-of-linkedin-career-pages>, 30.11.2017). Another valuable support to job posting in terms of Employer Branding are the Showcase pages which, although not specifically aimed at recruiting (they are classified as Marketing Solutions), can be of great value and have the advantage of being free of charge. Showcase Pages are extensions of the Company Page that deal with specific aspects, promote specific business units or initiatives, address specific target groups or audience segments, use different languages, etc.

Thus, on LinkedIn job advertisements are set in a complex environment and are therefore fully contextualized. In the next section they will be analysed in detail.

#### 4.1. Job ads on LinkedIn

Job advertisements on LinkedIn, which are subject to a standard template, seem similar in appearance to the basic format of the job ads posted on other recruitment sites as discussed above, but they are accompanied by various extra sections, mainly located below the main text and mostly accessible through scrolling: Highlights, the Premium Careers feature, Meet the Team, About Us.

As in other online ads, on LinkedIn the job description is in the main content column and the job summary in the right sidebar column. At first the job description appears only partially, in excerpt form (its top part) (see Figure 3), but in its full version (accessible by clicking on the “See more” link, circled in Figure 3) it can be several hundred words long, with the lower part accessible by scrolling, and is mostly divided into titled sub-sections (“Job overview”, “Job description”, “Skills and qualifications”, etc.)

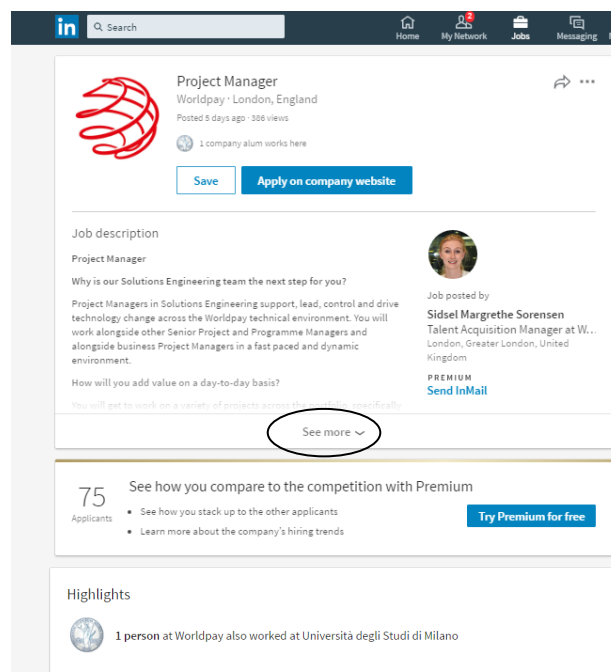


Figure 3  
Top part of a job ad on LinkedIn (excerpt).

A first glance at the ad in Figure 3 immediately identifies a peculiarity of LinkedIn, i.e. the fact that in many cases at the top of the right scan column, which hosts the Job Summary, there appears the name of the person who posted the job (“Job posted by...”) with his/her position, and a photograph. Below this specification, in the lower part of that same column, there is the Job Summary (not visible in Figure 3, being positioned under the “Posted by ...” section), which specifies concisely the Seniority Level, Industry, Employment Type and Job Functions characterizing the post offered.

Just below this main section hosting the Job Description, there is a sequence of graphically separate tabs with various features. The first one is the Premium tab showing the number of candidates who have already applied, and introducing the paid Premium Career Feature, which is advertised as enabling you to “get hired an average of 2X as fast”. Having a Premium account subscription (<https://premium.linkedin.com/>) gives applicants a chance to learn more about the company’s hiring trends, enables them to see how they “stack up” to other candidates, and learn who has viewed their profiles so far. It also offers the jobseeker the opportunity to be placed at the top of the applicant list when s/he applies for a job on LinkedIn, thus standing out among other candidates. Also available is the option to interact directly with the recruiter and other people in the LinkedIn network through the InMail service. Quite importantly, in many cases the Premium account offers the only possibility of getting access to salary details that otherwise are accessible only when one actually applies or sends in a query, which incidentally also entails disclosing one’s personal details.

After the Premium tab, in some cases (as in Figure 3 above, cf. its lower part) there is a Highlights tab informing the applicants if there is anyone working in the recruiting company who attended the same educational institutions or worked for the same organization they worked for. This feature is part of LinkedIn customizing functions which match the information regarding the advertisement and the recruiting company with the user’s general search criteria and previous positions, providing personalized information.

This section is followed by an optional tab called “Meet the team” (cf. Figure 4), which offers the applicant the possibility of “meeting” some of the recruiting company’s employees working in the corporate sector for which the job is advertised. Usually this involves the pictures, names, functions and occasionally background details (e.g. education, previous positions) of two or three employees, but in some cases (as in the one at hand here) a “See all” link enables you to view the pictures, names and functions of more employees, sometimes a dozen or more.

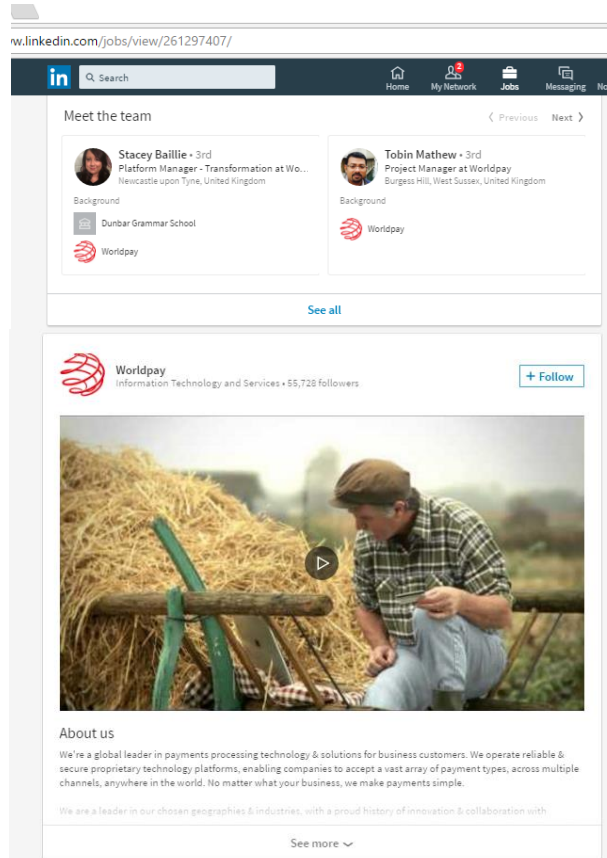


Figure 4  
Meet the Team and About Us.

The final tab is the “About us”, introducing the recruiting company by means of a text of variable length, from a few to several hundred words, often (but not always) collected from the recruiter’s Career Page. Always collected from the Career Page is the picture or the video that mostly accompanies the verbal description (see the lower part of Fig. 4).

The overall structure of a LinkedIn job advert can be schematized as follows, also taking account of its graphic organization on the web page, with the solid line representing the demarcation between separate tabs, and the dashed line delimiting a separate area within the same tab:

Company Logo	Job Title Name of Company Date when ad posted “Apply” button
Job description	Posted by ... (optional) Job Summary
Introduction to Premium Careers feature	
Highlights (optional)	
Meet the team (optional)	
About us - Picture or video (optional) - Text	

Figure 5  
Structure of the LinkedIn job advertisement.

In terms of moves, this corresponds to the following generic structure, where the moves realized within the main Job description (highlighted in gray in Figures 5 and 6) are in normal-font style, while those in italics are additional moves realized in separate tabs:

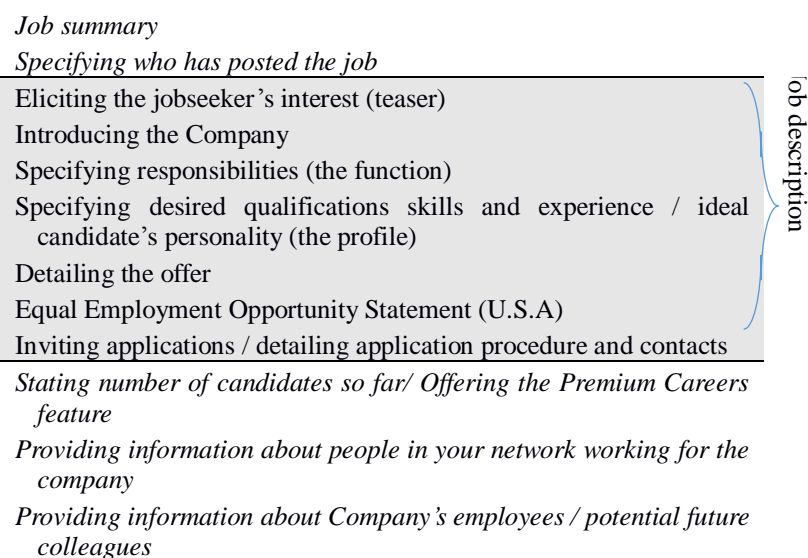


Figure 6  
Moves in the LinkedIn job advertisement.

This complex overall structure sets LinkedIn job ads apart from those posted on any other online job boards, not only because of the complexity of the features (and services) offered, but above all because the job announcement proper is accompanied by a number of extra features that set it within the context of the LinkedIn virtual community. The job advert is no more only a decontextualized piece of text offering a working opportunity, but is presented as the result of the action of a real person who has materially posted the job putting you in touch with an organization comprising real people, and as an opportunity for you to set in motion a process that will potentially lead you to work within the context of a professional community. In other words, a LinkedIn job advert is clearly set within a SNS with all the social implications of this fact.

Thus, the job announcement is moved from the social vacuum of the newspaper page or the online job board to an online community context, where potential applicants can clearly perceive the presence of competing candidates and that of the recruiter as a functioning organization made up of people that may potentially become their colleagues.

In the next section the peculiarities in the linguistic realization of the main moves in the LinkedIn job ads will be discussed, leaving a minute examination of the steps realizing each single move for a further study.

#### **4.2. Move realization**

In this section, the linguistic realization of the move structure of LinkedIn job adverts will be discussed, looking in particular at peculiar distinctive features.

While in Gillaerts' model of the printed job ad the first move was "Introducing the Company", reflecting the practice that prevailed in printed job ads in the more recent decades, LinkedIn adverts open in a variety of different ways.

One relatively popular opening is by means of a 'teaser text', which realizes the "Eliciting the jobseeker's interest" move, usually in the form of questions aimed at verifying if the jobseeker is the ideal candidate for the position offered, with an

overwhelming presence of interactional metadiscourse (Hyland 2005, pp. 48-50). See the following example, where the two questions already clarify the qualities the ideal candidate should have, followed by a statement addressed directly to the candidate, if s/he has replied positively to them:

- (1) Have you got the drive and experience to take on the challenging and complex world of finance?  
Do you love taking on great levels of responsibility and delivering successful outcomes for the business?  
Then we've got a IT Project Manager position for you. (Senior IT PM, Eligo Recruitment, Amsterdam Area)

Here the first question focuses on experience (i.e. on a component of the profile), while the second one has more to do with the ideal candidate's attitude and ambitions. This pattern recurs frequently. See this other example:

- (2) Are you a Civil Project Manager with a strong tier one or top end tier two background?  
Do you have a strong experience in Earthworks and Pavements?  
Does the opportunity to work with a growing Tier two civil engineering contractor sound exciting to you?  
Then this may be the opportunity for you! (Civil PM, Confidential, Melbourne)

The rhetorical procedure is basically the same, but the questions are three, as a specific query about experience is added (the second question).

In both examples the questions are followed by a statement starting with the sequencer "then" to draw a conclusion from the possible positive replies to the queries posed, again with a slight difference in that in Ex. 1 there is a self-mention ("we") in the final sentence increasing the interactional import of the statement.

Another very popular way to open an advert on LinkedIn is to focus on the position being offered. In discursive terms this is realized in two different ways, which somehow reflect the first two moves identified by Łacka-Badura (2015). The first is simply outlining the role being offered, corresponding to her "0. Job identification (job overview/summary)", as in the following examples:

- (3) Our Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that every project follows the agency process and meets all necessary deliverables. (PM, Guidemark Health, New York)
- (4) The Project Manager (PM) sets the tone with the client of the Vanguard Team and represents the culture of the organization while building complex, fast-paced high-quality projects in the New York Metropolitan area. (PM, Vanguard Construction and Development Co. Inc., Greater New York City Area).

In other cases, it is the availability of a position that is announced (Łacka-Badura 2015, "1. Announcing availability of the position") in terms of opportunity offered (Ex. 5) or of recruiter's search (Ex. 6):

- (5) Exciting opportunity for an experienced Project Manager to join a national AV Integrator! Great Career opportunity! (PM, Corporate Initiatives, Melbourne)
- (6) Corgan seeks a Project Manager to join the firm in the Critical Facilities Studio of our New York City office. (PM, Corgan, New York)

The announcement of the availability of a position is often combined with an anticipation of the requisites for the job (the profile):



(7) We have an *exciting new* role at BT within the Competition Finance Department for a *commercially minded, intelligent* and *driven* project manager with 4+ years project management experience and a *dynamic, adaptable* attitude. (PM, BT, London).<sup>4</sup>

Noteworthy in these few lines (33 words in all) is the extraordinary density of adjectives (highlighted in italics), all expressing positive qualities, regarding both the position (an *exciting new* role) and the skills, experience and personality of the ideal candidate.

In other cases, instead, aspects of the responsibilities involved in the position are anticipated:

(8) We have an excellent opportunity for a Project Manager to lead other members of the Professional Services team in the implementation of software solutions for our clients. (PM, Provenir – Prispenny, New Jersey, New York)

In all the examples discussed so far, the job itself and the opportunities it offers, and occasionally also some of the required qualifications, are frequently set out in the very first move opening the advert.

In some other cases, the opening move is “Introducing the Company”, but less frequently than one would expect in light of what was the case in traditional ads and considering the strong employer-branding orientation of LinkedIn. As noted in section §3.1 above, this trend is found also in many online ads posted on job boards, where Company presentation is often minimal or non-existent, possibly because reliance is made on the navigating mode, by providing a hyperlink leading to the Company’s careers page on the SNS itself or to the Company’s website. However, in LinkedIn job ads even when it does not appear at the beginning, Company presentation is hardly ever missing, as all ads include an “About us” section which is displaced to a separate tab, usually the last one in the vertical sequence. And in many cases the employer is introduced *also* in the job description. In the following example, the presentation of the recruiting employer at the beginning of the Job Description also includes a hyperlink to its website:

(9) NYU Langone is one of the nation’s premier academic medical centers that includes five hospitals (...) and more than 200 ambulatory locations across the New York metropolitan area. [...] [Learn more about NYU Langone](#).<sup>5</sup> We have an exciting opportunity [...] (PM, NYU Medical Centre, New York)

Incidentally, in this same advert there is also an “About us” text at the foot of the page with similar information, but entirely rephrased. Therefore, within the same ad the recruiting institution is introduced twice; furthermore, there is a hyperlink leading to the relevant careers page. This provides evidence of the recruiter’s efforts in terms of employer branding, obviously aimed at attracting the best possible candidates.

In other cases, the company introduction that opens the job description is less institutional in tone, and rather than simply outlining the profile of the potential employer, it highlights its strength and innovative character by means of heavily evaluative language:<sup>6</sup>

(10) It’s *exciting times* here at Red Energy – 100% Australia owned, over 600 employees and integration with Lumo Energy – this is *a success story we’re proud of*. We first entered the energy market in 2004 – we wanted to provide something different, to shake things up and

<sup>4</sup> In all examples, emphasis is added.

<sup>5</sup> Here hyperlinks are conventionally represented by means of underlined text.

<sup>6</sup> For an in-depth analysis of recourse to evaluative language in job advertisements, cf. Garzone (forthcoming).

*we've been doing a good job* of it ever since. We are currently recruiting a Project Manager [...] (PM, Red Energy, Melbourne)

Here the resources deployed are not only adjectives (“exciting”, “proud”) as in Ex. 7 above, but more complex structures defining the company’s story and accomplishments. Also, in this case the “About us” sets forth the same notions but is rephrased maintaining the same corporate branding tone.

In online ads, a degree of variation is also found in the “Detailing the offer” move. As already observed, this move, which has virtually always been there in printed ads, in online job adverts is often absent, or worded very vaguely, with no specification of the actual salary offered. This trend is even more marked in the case of LinkedIn ads, where the salary offered is specified with precision only in 40 ads out of 172, while in most others rather generic expressions are used, e.g. “compensation ... commensurate with experience”, “very attractive remuneration package”, “an excellent work environment, great benefits and pay!”, or “competitive pay and a wide range of benefits”. In some cases, there is only a specification of the perks offered, which are listed in detail, often in a bullet-point list: e.g. “Benefits (eligible from day one): Private Health Insurance, Life Insurance, Cycle to Work scheme, Subsidized Gym Membership, Eyecare, Pension, 23 days holiday per annum”, etc.

This avoidance of reference to the economic conditions offered can be seen as part of a trend that has grown with the habit of posting jobs online where they can be accessed by anyone, so specifying salaries and benefits could cause competition between current and new employees, and also competition with other companies in the industry (see Vyvial-Larson 2013). In the case of LinkedIn this has also to do with the fact that giving access to pay and conditions is one of the services offered to Premium subscribers. Furthermore, although salary and benefits are certainly important incentives in a job advertisement, reliance is often made on other inherent elements that may help attract good candidates, having to do with the quality of working conditions offered by the recruiting company:

(11) This is a *fantastic* opportunity to join a leading business and have ownership of the development of your brands & major retail clients. With over 250 staff, many achieving 10+ years service, we have a *fantastic* team environment, which offers the ability and opportunity to grow your career. (Account/ Project Manager, TPF Toys, Melbourne)

Here the offer is framed with a focus on opportunities associated with the job and in terms of employer branding, using the adjective “fantastic” as a sort of catchword. In other cases what is presented as part of the offer is the opportunity for working experience and professional growth to be gained in the position advertised:

(12) Each area offers a unique career experience and a compelling mix of work and training opportunities, work environment and structure for career progression. (Bid Manager – Resources, Accenture, Melbourne)

This more immaterial component of the offer sometimes comes together with a reference to working conditions and benefits, as in the following example where once more we find the collocation “fantastic opportunity”, which actually occurs 6 times in the corpus (out of 12 occurrences of the word “fantastic”):

(13) The role offers a *fantastic opportunity* to progress within the business to a Senior National Account Manager position within the next two years. The company offers a generous benefits package, including the chance to earn up to 33% bonus, car allowance, pension scheme and more. (London Sales Manager, Wine Spirit Resourcing Group, London)

As anticipated above, a move that has often changed with the migration of the genre to the Internet is “Inviting applications”, which is mostly realized by means of a hypertext link, i.e. a button leading to a form to be filled in: “Apply”, “Apply Now”, “Apply On Website”. But in several cases the jobseeker is also given the option to get more information by talking to someone on the phone. This is especially frequent when the advert has been posted by a recruitment firm, as in the following examples:

(14) Click APPLY or contact Paul Forster for a confidential discussion. [phone number, email] (PM, Stellar Recruitment, Melbourne)

As regards the two core moves, “Specifying the function” and “Outlining the profile”, they tend to be the most stable, and are realized in virtually all cases, even in the shortest adverts, being as they are the focal point of the genre.

See the following example:

(15) *About the role*

VicTrack are seeking Project Managers to deliver end to end projects in transport, infrastructure and telecommunications. Capable of design, planning, execution, monitoring and controlling, and reporting to ensure the project meets deadlines. Ensuring that issues are resolved. Strong relationship skills with key stakeholders and communication.

*Position status:* Full-time

*Closing date:* 22 March 2017

(PM, VicTrack, Melbourne)

Although the sub-title (“About the role”) would suggest that the paragraph merely outlines the function and role, this is done only in the first sentence, while the following three sentences specify the skills necessary to qualify for the job. In this way the two main moves in the job description are realized in only 56 words. In this case, in spite of the obvious desire for concision, preference is given to a complex textual form, but oftentimes recourse is made to bullet point lists, as was customary in traditional printed ads in which brevity was of the utmost importance (Bruthiaux 1996), e.g.:

(16) *What You Will Be Doing*

- Collaborate with the team and clients to understand and resolve issues quickly
- Work directly with development team to create detailed documents of progress [...]
- Lead meetings, drive projects and meet deadlines!

*What You Need for this Position*

- At least 3 years of experience and knowledge of Project Management (PMP Certification is a huge plus!)
- Underwriting within a financial institution
- Strong Computer Skills++
- Ability to lead meetings and drive projects
- Okay with occasional travel (25%)

*What's in it for You*

- Competitive base salary
  - Vacation/PTO [...]
- (PM, CyberCoders Staffing and Recruiting, New York)

Here each point is formulated either as a nominal element or a bare infinitive. In other cases, in bullet point lists preference is given to *-ing* forms:

(17) **Responsibilities**

*Specific Responsibilities (client-facing):*

Defining the scope and objectives of a project with the client

Employing project management tools as needed e.g. Gantt chart, critical path, risk analysis, forecast assistance  
 Planning the optimum approach to meet client objectives within agreed cost and timescale  
 Acting as a Trusted business partner, giving “best advice” on implementation  
 In partnership with the client, developing criteria to measure the project’s effectiveness and ensuring the project meets these criteria [*sic*] [...]  
 (PM, Miller Heiman Group, London)

A similar variability is recorded in the use of personal pronouns and in the representation of the main actors involved, which is worth analyzing as it can help shed light on the way discourse is “staged” (Brown, Yule 1983, pp. 131-138) in job adverts, i.e. the relative prominence given to various elements in discourse. In this respect the notion of “staging” is especially useful on account of its general character, which in this case includes the effects of devices such as thematization, lexical selection, markers of emphasis, etc. (cf. Brown, Yule 1983, pp. 134).

In discursive terms, the main actor in the corpus is the recruiting company. The subject personal pronoun *we* is the most frequent word after “Project”,<sup>7</sup> with 749 hits (quite meaningfully followed by its possessive adjective *our* with 743 hits); its consistent use to refer to the recruiting company or its proxy (the recruitment consultant), most of the time in thematic position, testifies to the substantial frequency of self-mentions, as in the following example:

(18) *We* understand that outstanding candidates can come from a variety of backgrounds. While specific experience is important, *we* are ultimately looking for candidates who have the personal characteristics to thrive in a growing client-focused business. (PM, AnswerLab, New York)

To this high frequency of the pronoun, there are to be added the cases where the recruiting company is represented by means of third person reference, for instance:

(19) *Walsh is currently seeking* a Project Manager for commercial building projects (interior and aviation) in Newark, NJ. (PM, The Walsh Group, New York)

And in ads posted by recruitment agencies the prospective employer is also referred to as “our client” (21 occurrences), as in Ex. 20:

(20) *Our client* is hiring for an experienced, well-organized, and sharp Project Manager. (PM, Atrium Staffing, New York)

In most of the cases where it refers to the recruiting company, *we* functions as a counterpart to second person reference employed to address potential candidates, and this emphasizes the interpersonal component in the text of the advert:

(21) *We* only recruit the best, and *we* are committed to helping *you* achieve *your* career goals and become even better than *you* are today. (PM, Affinity Water Utilities, London)

It is noteworthy that in Ex. 21, the ad is addressed directly to the jobseeker who is referred to as “you”, a marker of engagement (Hyland 2005, pp. 52-54) obviously aimed at making the potential candidate feel involved and “talked to” personally. In Ex. 22 this is in sharp contrast with a switch to the third personal singular pronoun in the following sentence where the ideal candidate is described:

<sup>7</sup> The high frequency of “Project” (1,788 hits) is physiological given that all ads advertise a Project Manager position.

- (22) *Your* role would be pivotal to this developing relationship, and *you* would be expected to manage all aspects of project delivery as the work scope evolves. *The right candidate* for this role must have minimum three years' experience within a project management role and have an interest in landscape and design. (PM, Nikki Tibbles, Founder Wild at Heart, Battersea, London).

While the explanation in the first sentence is obviously aimed at making the jobseeker identify with the role, the switch to “the ideal candidate” as the subject in the second sentence implies by presupposition that the person addressed as “you” may not necessarily qualify for the position.

However, the job seeker is prevalently addressed by means of the second person pronoun, which occurs 597 times in the corpus, of which 490 in subject position. And it is noteworthy that in the job description, the pronoun *you* most often collocates with the modal *will* (199 times out of a total of 515 entries of *will*) as in the following examples:

- (23) As Project Manager *you will* be responsible for end-to-end management of one or more projects concurrently within Arvato's CRM business. (PM, Arvato, Slough, London)  
 (24) What *will you do*? *You will be required* to use the experience gained in previous roles to drive projects from the ground up. [...] (PM, Design & Construct, Melbourne)  
 (25) In this role, *you will be helping* lead the charge toward a more Agile and collaborative working environment at Nitro. [...] (PM, Nitro Digital Internet, London)

This way of specifying the responsibilities involved in the position offered has the effect of engaging the jobseeker even more, predictively depicting him/her as already holding the position advertised. All the more so in Ex. 25, where recourse to the progressive aspect denotes “future as a matter of course” (Quirk et al. 210, pp. 216), thus adding an element of certainty to the likelihood that the action will take place.

In addition, in 25 of the 199 occurrences of *you will* this structure is used to realize the move “Specifying desired qualifications, skills and experience”, as in the following examples:

- (26) *You will have* a solid technical background with understanding and/or hands-on experience in software development and web technologies. (PM, Travelport Locomote, Melbourne)  
 (27) *You will have worked* in a similar software design and delivery environment previously and *have had* some exposure to life working for an agency (PM, British Transport Police, London)

In these cases, it is evident that the meaning of the modal verb includes an epistemic component, a fact which does not offset the interactional import of the use of the second person to address the potential candidate and induce him/her to consider applying for the position offered.

Obviously less manipulative is the use of *will* with third-person subjects like “the candidate” or “the Project Manager” meaning the professional desired for the position, which occurs respectively 30 and 29 times in the corpus, for the specification both of responsibilities and qualifications required e.g.:

- (27) The Project Manager *will define and manage* the entire process of executing software projects for our customers [...] (PM, Intelrad Medical Systems, Melbourne)  
 (28) The ideal candidate *will be* a strong communicator, a clear thinker and be equipped with proven project management skills. (PM, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Melbourne).

Of course, there would be many other interesting linguistic aspects to be explored, but their discussion would go beyond the scope of this study. The brief investigation presented here



focusing on the realization of the core moves shows that, in spite of a degree of conventionalization in the verbiage of job adverts, in terms of linguistic realization the genre is subject to a degree of variation, deserving specific attention. The analysis of how the core moves in job ads are realized and how discourse is staged points to a prominence of interactional metadiscursive features, with the two main actors, recruiting companies and jobseekers, holding centre stage. That in employment ads recruiting companies should have a high discursive profile is to be expected, as initiators of the recruiting process also interested in employer branding, but it is to some extent unexpected that potential candidates should discursively be assigned such an important role and be addressed directly, with a strong effort at getting them engaged and turn them into actual applicants for the positions offered.

## 6. Conclusions

This study has used a genre analytical framework to examine the cognitive and rhetorical features of job advertisements posted on LinkedIn and propose a model of their structure. A comparison with previous studies on the same genre has provided evidence of an impressive degree of continuity with the traditional printed job advertisements published in the Classifieds sections of newspapers. The repertoire of core moves remains basically the same, although online publication allows greater scope for variation in terms both of length and structure, also because of the availability of hypertextual affordances.

LinkedIn job adverts share some of these characteristics with other online adverts but exploit the web-mediated virtual environment more fully. Their fixed basic template includes – in addition to the Job Description proper and the relevant Job Summary – various other tabs giving access to additional features and supplementary information contributing to situating the advert within the context of the Social Networking Site, i.e. of a virtual community of practice (Garzone 2016, pp. 353-354; see Wenger 1998).

Therefore, in spite of their apparent similarity to announcements posted on other recruitment platforms, LinkedIn job ads are communicatively more complex and take full advantage of the options made available by the SNS where they are set.

In terms of genre analysis, if the generic integrity of the Job Description proper (function and profile) is preserved in spite of its migration to the web, in the realization of all the other moves there are changes due to the affordances of the Internet medium, and other changes yet deriving from their situatedness in a social networking environment, which opens up various possibilities in terms of job search strategies and options. Thus, it can be stated that, vis-à-vis a high level of generic integrity, recent developments in job ads, and in particular in those posted on LinkedIn, have determined interesting changes in their discursive articulation that may be conducive to further and more pervasive evolutions in a not too distant future.

The analysis presented in this study is merely preliminary. Further research is needed for a more detailed discussion of the linguistic and discursive features of the sub-genre investigated, also in order to ascertain whether, in addition to the structural peculiarities identified in this work, at the microstructural level job advertisements posted on LinkedIn do exhibit identifiable linguistic differences from job ads posted on other online platforms and/or printed job ads.

It is hoped that this study may not only contribute to the description of a so far unexplored sub-genre, but also be of interest for HR managers considering the use of LinkedIn for posting their employment ads.

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