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**Bernard:** Well, hello everyone and welcome to a new episode of Words and Actions. Today's episode is actually the first of a miniseries of three podcasts in which we will focus on recruitment, CVs and applications, and job interviews. So, we thought it would be nice to have these episodes before and during summer as they coincide with the graduation of many students and school leavers.

And actually, COVID-19 has made these episodes perhaps even more relevant, unfortunately, as job insecurity has risen spectacularly and many people may actually be forced to look for another job. Veronika and Erika!

**Veronika:** Hello.

**Erika:** Hi, good morning.

**Bernard:** Welcome.

**Bernard:** So, what I was saying, and I am sure that you will agree with me, Erika and Veronika, we hope that the focus that we have on the importance of language in our podcasts, that it will actually help people to filter out the right job that best meets their qualifications and aspirations. And we also hope that it will help them to engage in proper self-branding to increase the odds of actually getting the job. So, that is the mission we have for these sessions, right?

**Veronika:** Yeah, that's why we start with school leavers and uni graduates, we wanted to do this miniseries anyway, so skills around recruitment. But obviously it's now also people looking for other jobs, and it's also thrown into a much sharper relief, really, isn't it?

**Erika:** Yes, and it's very clear that people who transfer or transition from education to work these days are up for a much harder job. I've just

recently read a study that looked at how the skills of people who enter the job market during hard economic times, how their skillset develops and what they found was not a very nice picture, actually.

Their finding was that people who face higher unemployment rates when they enter the job market actually end up with less skills and long-term earnings loss, actually earnings loss that may stretch over their entire life.

Veronika: So, the bad news really is if you enter the job market or try to enter the job market at a time of crisis, you never catch up in terms of income and skills.

Erika: Yes, but I think for that, the explanation is important and the explanation the study offers is that this is because people who enter the job market during hard economic times have a much harder time with on-the-job learning, and especially gathering social skills and human capital. Skills that are necessary for all sorts of jobs, among them very importantly communication skills and social skills.

Veronika: That's of course what we're trying to do here, right? So, our overall mission really is to increase communicative competence and language awareness. And we hope that our listeners can take something away from the podcast along these lines. So, I guess in a nutshell the outlook isn't great, but we're here to help.

Bernard: And (laughs) at the same time I think we could also raise awareness about the skills that people are developing now during lockdown. I'm thinking of students, for instance, who think they might not have a steep learning curve anymore, because things have changed and it's a completely different situation.

But at the same time, when you think about it, and when you also think about ourselves basically in the situation that we're in, I have the impression that I have actually learnt a lot and that my learning curve is steep.

- Veronika: Very steep (laughter).
- Bernard: Online meetings, Zoom and Bongo.
- Veronika: I don't even know that one.
- Bernard: But other things like the soft skills, stress management, Erika, I don't have to tell you. You're multitasking all day long with your three children at home.
- Erika: Exactly.
- Bernard: And there are other things. And maybe this podcast can also help people to start thinking about the skills they're developing now in a different way. So, not this negative framing, and we'll talk about framing more. But perhaps also a positive framing towards this whole situation, because in a way it also leads to new opportunities in terms of acquiring skills.
- Veronika: Yeah, so what we want to do with this miniseries on first job ads and recruitment, then CVs and applications, and then job interviews, we basically would like to talk about three crucial skills. So today we'll be talking a lot about reading job ads and understanding what the words and phrasing in job ads, what that really means.
- Then, next month, we'll talk about how you can translate this understanding into applications. Then, finally, we'll be looking at performing in job interviews. Perhaps, with job ads, let's start off, let's think about where and how are jobs actually advertised.
- Erika: Online.
- Veronika: Yes, but where online? Like company websites?
- Erika: Yeah, there are these aggregate websites which exist purely for advertising jobs online.
- Bernard: Yes, the recruitment agency websites, yes.

- Veronika: And the companies themselves as well, I suppose.
- Bernard: Yeah.
- Erika: Or now increasingly on LinkedIn or [other] social media, Twitter.
- Veronika: Yeah, I've seen them.
- Bernard: We also have the old-school job ads in shop windows for instance, and when I go to the local baker's I actually see them as a kind of road sign now. So, pickers wanted for fruit on the fields, because that's a necessity now, or a need as well. So, that too in fact is a recruitment text, let's say, or ad.
- Veronika: Yeah, and sometimes we have it doubled, don't you? You have road signs on the roadside, like fruit pickers wanted or what have you. But at the same time, that may be mirrored in a Facebook campaign. And of course, where and how you advertise a job, whether you have a sign in a shop window or you have an executive brochure designed by an agency, there's a wide range.
- And of course, where and how you advertise the job then also determines who you reach, who reads the ad and who applies. And that can of course vary very widely.
- Bernard: That's true. So, when you think about that, so who do you reach and how wide is that? That's one aspect. But another aspect when we think about these job ads, is actually what makes them appealing when you look at them? So, what do you think?
- Veronika: Well, I guess the first thing that you see is the job title itself, right? So, say on that road sign, or in that shop window, so 'bar staff wanted'. So, you know, okay, bar staff. If the audience or our listeners remember, quite early on in the second episode of this podcast, we talked about language constructing reality. And then, we talked about job titles and how job titles can often be embellished or inflated to make what can be a very mundane job actually more interesting.

- Erika: Yeah, the customer service ninja.
- Veronika: Yes, the customer service ninja for young people, and what else did we have there?
- Bernard: I saw another one, an interesting one the other day. So, an LED light salesperson was turned into a green energy consultant.
- Veronika: Wow, yeah. Or you're no longer a receptionist, you're front desk executive or something like that. So, the job title matters, perhaps the first thing.
- Bernard: Now, picking up on that, Veronika, what we see in Belgium and I think you have that in many EFL countries, where English is not the native language is we borrow English job titles from English to embellish them as well, to make them sound more interesting. So, in Dutch for instance, you could easily say "*verkoper*" but what we use is a sales representative or a sales rep with the abbreviation, which is even cooler.
- Veronika: Yeah, you have that a bit in Germany, too. So, I've noticed now that so many people work from home. The German, well not German, but the use in German for a term for that is home office, they actually use the English home office. And there is a German word for this, *Heimarbeit*, but that sounds really like something that people did I don't know in the 1930s or 1920s or something like that, very, very old fashioned. So, these days you work in the home office.
- Bernard: Yes, so the language itself could then increase the appeal of the job ad. And we actually see that in all-English ads as well, in Belgium, which- in a way they are effective. Studies have shown that people think that the job is more challenging, so you had a study that compared the Dutch version with the English version. So, it was the same job ad, different language.
- But people thought it was more challenging, more appealing even. Their inclination to apply for the job was actually higher and of course,

they also have the feeling that the job is more and the company itself is more international.

Veronika: But does that mean then that okay, you have an ad that is all in English, and people may feel it asks for higher qualifications, so does that then mean that if you run an ad in English you get better applicants?

Bernard: Well, that would solve the job for the fruit pickers, you could turn everything into English. But unfortunately (laughs), it does not, not only because of the language problem, but studies have also shown that this impact, the symbolic impact of English is actually wearing out. In 2016, there was an eye tracking study by Hilberink-Schulpen et al., and they also compared the all-English job ads with the ads in Dutch itself, so the native language. And they thought that people would be looking more at the English job ad, and that turned out not to be the case.

The research was also replicated in Germany, and you had the same effect there. So, the all-English job ad has kind of lost its strength, let's say, to draw attention.

Veronika: Because people get used to it.

Bernard: Yeah, that's it.

Veronika: And I guess people have also realised that even if it does sound more appealing, you could be misled because you won't be paid more.

Bernard: (Laughs) Yeah, that's true. Your salary is exactly the same, that's right, yeah.

Erika: Okay, so I have something to add to our list of things that can make a job ad sound more appealing or in fact deter potential applicants. And that's the actual wording in the job ad itself. I read a study or a working paper from Lisa Abraham, from Harvard, who teamed up with Uber. And they looked at job postings for corporate positions, like

management or website developers and what they did in the experiment was they manipulated the job advert.

They had the original version, and then they had a toned-down version. They deleted optional qualifications, deleted things like 'PhD preferred', or they removed very intensive adjectives, they removed adjectives like 'excellent', or they changed the language to soften it a bit. Like going from 'SQL fluency' to 'experience with SQL'. And what happened was that the modified version, the toned-down version attracted more applications.

And not only that, but the language variation helped to close the gender gap in applications. And it wasn't so much because women started to apply more, but because what the researchers found was that women seemed to respond more sensitively to strong descriptors. And so, if there were strong words in the job ad, only women with much higher qualifications would apply.

Veronika: It makes intuitive sense, right, to see that in many industries. So, I guess, very broadly speaking, that many women tend to underestimate themselves and reversely many men tend to overestimate themselves. So, yeah, that makes a lot of sense, that once you take out this sort of inflated language like 'fluency' and 'excellent' and 'world-leading' that it seems women feel more confident that they can actually meet the job description, yeah.

Bernard: Okay, so what would be the takeaway lesson, Erika, for people writing job ads and people reading them?

Erika: Well, as Veronika said, firstly the takeaway lesson for men is not to overestimate themselves, and for women not to underestimate themselves. But also, perhaps for job ad writers, is to go easy on highly intense adjectives and very strong language. Also, being mindful of the way they frame the vacancy, so for example, they can talk about a vacancy as a need from a company's perspective.

So, they can say for example 'an HR manager is required', so that position is then framed in the perspective of a need of the company. But they can also talk about that vacancy from the applicant's perspective, like here is 'an exciting opportunity for you'.

Veronika: Right, yeah, so it's clear that this kind of framing is really powerful. But what we've looked at so far is mostly ads for professional jobs. So, I wonder if this framing also would work in very manual or unskilled or repetitive jobs, really. These road signs, like apply within or something like that.

Bernard: You would think it's harder, wouldn't you? Because with these white-collar jobs you've got all kinds of specifications that you get and with fruit picking for instance, well that's all you basically have to do. But still, you do find that, and I actually came across this very interesting job ad on mushroom picking.

Erika: Okay.

Veronika: Go on.

Bernard: Let's see if I can talk you into doing it. So, it says, and I have translated it from Dutch to English. It's for a family business, 'we are looking for motivated mushroom pickers'. So, there you have that word already. So, positive atmosphere, motivated mushroom pickers. And then, 'do you have a feeling for picking mushrooms and the required finesse to package them?' Look at that.

Veronika: Wow, okay. So, they make it sound as if you need special skills, that's interesting.

Bernard: It's not this kind of mundane job, you actually need very specific skills. And then, they go on by saying then if you have, 'make a lightning fast call to the agency'.

Veronika: So, they intensify it. They exaggerate a bit to get people to actually do something.

Bernard: And this kind of opportunity, don't miss out on this chance that you're getting. And then they round off with you will end up in 'a cool team' picking these mushrooms. So, even there you have that framing of these positive aspects. So, you do get it all over the place, I would say.

Veronika: Yeah, it doesn't always work, though, I have to say. With fruit pickers, who are obviously- because of the lockdown we have a problem with that. So, the National Farmers' Union, I think it was in Britain, ran this campaign called Pick for Britain and we'll have an example of that on the blog post. And they used war metaphors and they made it all in national colours and it was framed as a patriotic effort.

And they used the war metaphor saying, "You'll be part of a land army." But it just didn't draw enough people. So, it just fell flat, really. So, just to say it doesn't always work.

Bernard: Okay. People don't always buy it, let's put it that way.

Erika: Yes, and that might be due to the reasons of what a job advert is actually doing. So, it's partly working as a tool to announce the vacancy, which is framed in whichever way. But it also has other functions, too. And we promised our listeners at the beginning that they will train them to read between the lines in job adverts. So, here goes our first lesson.

Apart from announcing a vacancy, what can an advert do? And I'm going to read an advert from our upcoming guest's book, Ruth Breeze's book. And I would like the listeners to have a think and then I'll ask you, Bernard and Veronika, to tell me what you think this advert is doing. So, here goes.

'It's not every day that you get to explore new worlds, unless of course you secure a place on our graduate programme, in which case that's exactly what you will be doing over the course of 18 months. You will join us at the frontiers of technology, the outer reaches of innovation.

It's not easy, which is why we need graduates with a pioneering spirit to help us explore.'

Veronika: Wow. Sounds like you're going on a space mission, doesn't it, really?

Bernard: Yes, I think this is the kind of job that Buzz Lightyear would apply for (laughter).

Veronika: But they may be very disappointed because it might mean that you write code for nine hours a day.

Erika: Exactly.

Veronika: But what does it do? I mean, it's clearly trying to sell a job as something pioneering and wonderful, so that's one function.

Erika: Yeah, it's not just the job they are selling.

Bernard: No, I can see that they're also selling themselves as a company. So, you will join us, the company, and the company is at the frontiers of technology, the outer reaches of innovation. So, there's a lot of self-branding going on there from a company perspective, too, I would say.

Veronika: Also employee branding, so they don't just want any old applicant, they want graduates with a pioneering spirit. So, if you don't have that pioneering spirit stirring in you, you don't bother, basically.

Bernard: Go back to mushroom picking or something. (Laughter) I don't know. With all due respect, of course, for mushroom pickers, but still. You see this kind of framing.

Veronika: It does do a lot more than just inform that there is a vacancy, it sells the job, it brands the employer and the employee to specify and attract the ideal applicant. So, there is a lot going on there. And yeah, a different function of job ads, and I think that is something that our interview guest will be able to tell us more about.

Bernard: Yes. And it will also allow us to raise listeners' awareness to the kind of framing that is going on in these job ads and how you can filter that information out and end up with the right kind of information that you have to use for your own purposes.

Veronika: Okay, so let's see what our interview guest has to say about that.

Bernard: Yes. Right, so the central guest that we have today is Ruth Breeze, and she's a professor at the University of Navarra in Spain. She has explored language, or the way language is used in educational, professional and media contexts. And as she writes herself, she's on a double mission, to learn more about the way language works in society, and to gain insights that can help us to teach language and literacy skills at many different levels.

Her research interests include discourse analysis, language pedagogy, professional communication, and she has worked on the language of recruitment, engagement and persuasion. So, she is the perfect guest for this episode, welcome Professor Breeze, it's really nice to have you with us.

Ruth: It's lovely to be here.

Bernard: So, you are in the north of Spain, Navarra, that's one of the heavily affected areas in Spain, isn't it? How are you coping with the whole situation?

Ruth: Well, we had a bad time at the very beginning, because one of the first hotspots of coronavirus in Spain was very close to us, here. And you started to hear rumours of people being infected here and there. And then, our hospital had to expand, create new wards, everybody's shifts were changed. The university closed down, obviously, and we've been teaching online, which is a learning curve, I can tell you.

Bernard: Yeah, for all of us.

Ruth: And for our students, I think we need to be especially aware of the students because they're having a hard time, I think.

Bernard: And how long have you been teaching online now?

Ruth: Since the 16<sup>th</sup> of March.

Bernard: Right, and that will go on until the very end of this semester?

Ruth: Yes, I found that they're not going to get the university functioning again in normal mode. So, all the exams, all the masters' theses, all the degree projects are going to be done online. And I'm going to be having a couple of online PhD defences, although we think the candidate has to be present. But we're still working on that, because I have a candidate who is in Pakistan at the moment, and we don't know if he's going to be able to come. So, it's quite a challenge to re-think the way we do all those things.

Bernard: I can imagine, for all of us, and for the students as well. And actually, I would like to refer to one of the studies that you did a while ago on the attitudes of Spanish students towards learner autonomy, because that's what students have to do nowadays as well, don't they? So, to be a bit more autonomous but what you saw in that study is that Spanish students like the teacher classroom situation more. So, they still have a high degree of teacher dependence. Is that something that you notice nowadays as well, that heightened sense of insecurity?

Ruth: Well, I think I did that study some years ago now, when we were talking about autonomy in language learning. And the question was could we move some of the language learning online? And that really still hasn't happened, I would say here. But in other respects, students have become more independent.

I've noticed that Spanish students today are more international in their outlook, they're more capable of using the internet productively to do research and to write papers and projects that could be using resources from a range of different places. And I think that gradually a

new generation of people is coming up with a more independent and more international outlook.

But certainly, it's hard at the moment, particularly for my final year students, who were looking forward to going out in a blaze of glory with their graduation. And it's just all fizzling out as a kind of an online, I don't know, a video conference. I mean, it's not the same, is it? It's not the same.

Bernard: And still, they have to enter the job market right after that. And they might not have the perception that they have all the skills that they need.

Ruth: I think one of the things that's coming up at the moment is that people with good IT skills have really got an advantage over the people who haven't. Even among my colleagues who teach in the university, the ones with IT skills are really streets ahead of the ones who don't have that. And it's in every job, right?

We're assuming and so much of the time we're talking about what you need is soft skills, you need to be able to persuade people, you need to have intercultural competencies. Yes, of course, you need to have language competencies. But you also need to be able to cope with the digital world, and that's more than just sending WhatsApp messages. I think that people have got a bit comfortable with this idea I can do everything via WhatsApp. And in fact, a lot of jobs require you to be doing much more sophisticated things with IT.

Erika: Yes, I guess one of the things we were saying in the podcast is that as we've moved online now, as a result of the situation, more and more people acquire skills like online conferencing, online presenting. Which are the skills that people are going to be using or needing for future employment. They just have to become aware of those skills, right?

Ruth: And we have to help them, we have to train them with that. I think it is actually very useful to provide courses where you talk the students

through how to make an online video and to do it in the language that's your target language. And to combine it multimodally with other aspects.

Erika: Well, your students might be interested and happy to hear that one of the things we are doing in Words and Actions is talking people through or walking people through to become more aware in reading job adverts and responding to advertising campaigns online. And we know from your book on corporate discourse that you did look at job advertisements before and you identified the double function. I'm very curious to hear what function did you see in these job advertisements? How do they work?

Ruth: Well, one thing I have to say is that job advertisements have been freed up somehow by digital culture. So, what happened in the past was that companies used to have to pay for small corners of newspapers which were very expensive, so that they could put in the basic information for what they needed for a particular job.

But now, they can do this online, it's become almost part of their general promotions as a way of showing the world that they want these really good people and that they are therefore a really good company.

So, this double function, this promotional function of the job ad is actually quite interesting to observe. A lot of the time the company's talking to the candidate, yes. You need to be this, to be that. But at the same time, it's saying, "We get the most dynamic people, we have the best training." And now, they have no space constraints, because online you can hang as much material as you want.

Erika: So, what does it mean for applicants? How do they prepare for reading or engaging with such texts?

Ruth: Well, I think for the applicants, it could be good news because in a way, they've got more material to go on to read between the lines. And

think this is what the company wants me to be, right? When we present ourselves to the company, there's always that moment where they ask you the question: what kind of person are you?

And this is where you have to think they're not asking for the deepest secrets of my heart. They're not asking: what am I really like underneath or (laughs) in the worst moments of my life? What they're saying is: what are you going to be like as an employee, a first-year graduate trainee in our company?

And so, when you read the job advertisements, you see this transmission of values. So, a lot of keywords, a lot of buzzwords there about dynamism, you've got to be proactive, self-starter, and so on. About originality, you've got to think outside the box, be flexible, be creative. You've got to think of also the buzzwords to do with the knowledge economy, about knowhow and about quality management. This is high quality, you've got to offer exceptional customer service, all these things.

You have to somehow decode all of that, and think what would be reasonable for me as a first-year graduate? What can I say? I always tell my students that the best thing is to think of examples. If they worked in a job that meant that they needed to give customer service, can they think of an example where they did, in the corporate cliché "go the extra mile", where they really did something that showed they understood the client or that they solved a problem?

Think of examples and think of aspects of your training that make you somehow match with those values that the companies are actually trying to transmit with all of these buzzwords.

Veronika:

Right, yeah. You mentioned there that these days obviously a lot of recruitment happens online and it's free of the constraints of physical space. You have a recent study where you look at how language and

visuals are used on recruitment and careers websites of various companies in the UK, very high-profile companies.

And you make the point in that study that these texts that you find on the 'work with us' or jobs pages of these companies are what you call monoglossic, which means they most tend to represent only the company's voice. And they really seem to close down dialogue. So, you may have an endorsement, but that only reinforces the company's point of view.

But nevertheless, of course, these texts need to engage with the would-be applicants. So, how do they do that? How do these companies use text and visuals to engage with the applicants?

Ruth:

One of the things I think they do is that they offer this terribly glamorous view of what it's like to be working in this place. It's almost the way that you watch a film or something like that. My students are wowed, they're bowled over by the law firms' adverts. We looked at the ones from I think it was Allen & Overy or I don't know if it was in its foreign office or whatever it was.

And what they have is a wonderful multimodal presentation of all these ideal colleagues, these people you really want to be like. They're young, they're slim, they're good-looking, they're well-dressed. And they're walking in a rather floaty way, slightly blurred edges through these corridors with plate-glass windows, overlooking riverscapes. A river that could be Hong Kong, it could be Paris, it could be London, it could be New York.

And somehow, this is the way you might dream of your first job, okay? So, it's all about trying to sell the company, but at the same time, it's very attractive in a strange sort of way. But as you say, they are monoglossic, they do say, "You must be this. You must be that. You are this. You are that." Yeah. And you have the job of then responding

to it, you have to respond somehow in a positive way, because if you wouldn't, if you didn't, you wouldn't be able to have that job.

Veronika: Yes.

Bernard: But don't you get the situation then, sometimes where people kind of mix up who they are and who they want to be? So, if you have this kind of semantic inflation and all the buzzwords and the embellishments in that description, isn't the danger then that you attract the wrong people? Because they apply for the job not because they have the skills, but because they want to develop the skills via the job itself.

Ruth: Of course. And I also think they're projecting an incredibly glamorous image and the reality of the job that you do there is very different. And I know a case of a student who went to work for a very high-grade law firm and was totally seduced by the glamour of it. But he found that he had to prepare the defence of one of the most sleaziest, corrupt (laughs) individuals in political life in a certain country. And once he'd finished preparing the defence, he actually jacked in the job and went off to become a schoolteacher.

Veronika: Well, good on him. (Laughs)

Ruth: This is the anti-story, right? But at the same time, I do think that they're trying to sell all the way through, the whole of the company's message today is about selling itself. And it sells itself also to its employees, so whereas in the past we maybe conceptualised employees as a particular collective, you had to keep them happy, but they had their own interests. And the company had other interests, usually to exploit the employees, right, a more old-fashioned concept of all of this. Now, the idea is the employees are to be socialised into the company and its values and its message. And so, it's almost like a process of socialisation whereby you have to buy in, I'm sure that people don't all buy in to the corporate dream.

But they have to pretend to do that, they have to somehow speak the company language and think the company way. Rather like in the old days they always sold us that in Japan you had to become the Toyota man or the Sony girl. I think companies now in the Western world are also doing this, and it's very much a conformist view that you have to buy in, there's no room for critical voices.

Veronika: Yeah. Well, it will be interesting, this and looking at it critically in a future episode, where we look at constructing employees. But it's interesting that you make the point that this kind of constructing and socialising ideal employees starts right at the beginning of the process. Right with the job ad or the online text or the recruitment video.

So, after this interview, we'll be looking at one example of such a recruitment text and do a little bit of analysis on it. So, thank you, Ruth, this has been really, really insightful. And we appreciate your particular perspective, really, on this and your expertise. Thank you for joining us.

Ruth: Thank you.

Bernard: Thank you, bye bye.

Veronika: Bye bye.

Okay, so for our analysis today, we have chosen a job ad that is very similar to the kinds of ads that our interview guest has looked at in her work. So, this is taken from the website of IBM, the software consulting company. And this is targeted at school leavers, so people who are about to leave school and think okay, what do I do? Maybe they don't want to go straight to university. And this is very much targeted at them.

I will ask you, Bernard, could you perhaps read just a paragraph from this job ad, or this information they have for school leavers on their website?

**Bernard:** Sure, no problem. So, here goes. 'You might be uncertain about whether to start work, complete an apprenticeship or go to university. If that's you and you're unsure of what to do next, take a look at our IBM Futures Scheme. The scheme is being offered in IBM UK and offers the invaluable opportunity to work with a world leading company for 12 months, broadening your horizons and giving you a head start in your career. You'll be deployed onto a challenging work placement where you'll support and learn from experienced professionals across IBM. That could be in any area across the company. At the end of the placement, you define your future path.'

**Veronika:** Okay. Right, so what do we have there? So, it starts with a direct address, immediately, right? So, it's all about you, and then, it opens up possibilities, it doesn't say that you are uncertain. It uses this kind of modality here, this modal verb 'might'. Yeah, so not to pre-empt what mental state the reader here is in, but it could be if that's you. Okay?

**Bernard:** Yeah. So, you have this kind of alignment with the reader already, without pushing the reader in a certain corner or without labelling the reader, yes.

**Veronika:** That's right, yes. And then, they go on and they do some of these things we've discussed earlier in this episode as well, so they talk about 'invaluable opportunity', 'world leading company'.

**Erika:** Yes, and listeners may remember that we talked about that study which looked at these strong expressions and strong adjectives and how they may deter women from applying. So, we can clearly see these expressions popping up, there's quite a few: challenging, world leading, invaluable.

Veronika: Yeah, absolutely. But also, something very broad, quite literally, so because they talk about 'broadening your horizons'. And this is something where Ruth Breeze, our interview guest, has said this opens up the field in a very general way. So, that may be designed to invite as many readers as possible to align themselves with the job or the opportunity on offer. Right?

Bernard: Right. The same applies to 'giving you a head start', that is always positive, regardless of context. So, that too is very broad and generic but at the same time appealing. Yeah, I get it.

Veronika: Yeah, and also, incidentally, it's a metaphor, so it constructs career in terms of a race. So, the term 'rat race' perhaps comes to mind, on a more negative note? But saying 'your career', so this pronoun here, this 'your career' also implies that you will have a career, that's not under discussion, right? You have a career, or you will have.

And then, they do something very interesting, I think with focusing on the reader. So, they say, 'You will be deployed' and you think oh that's just like being shifted around, so that's quite disempowering. It's a passive thing. But then, they also say, 'You will support and learn from experienced professionals'. So, what does that do? You're not just learning from them you're also supporting your seniors.

Bernard: Yeah, so you're making the reader feel important and it's constructed as being part of the team already. So, you won't only learn from them, but you actually get to support them.

Veronika: That's right. Yeah, so it's empowering and the end of this bit is also empowering. They say, 'You define your future path'. So, the agency is with you and it's now no longer a career race but a career path. But the individual has the power to define that.

Bernard: Yeah.

Erika: Yes, and then the website goes on and has a testimonial from a past applicant. They asked her, 'Why did you decide to apply for IBM

Future Schemes?'. And then, you can read the answer on our blog post, but I'm going to just quote this one sentence or two sentences which I quite like.

'It was also important to me that there was a large number of other people straight out of school like me within the company. And IBM didn't disappoint. Nearly a year on, I have no regrets.'

Veronika: So, this is interesting, isn't it? Because see, it allows for the possibility that something negative might happen, that's implied. So, she allows for the possibility that IBM might disappoint or she might have regrets. But then, immediately she also denies that, right? And perhaps that is done to allay any doubts that the reader may have?

So, you can imagine a 17-, 18-year old sitting there reading this saying, 'Yeah, but who knows if I won't live to regret it? Or maybe it's just all going to be a big disappointment?'. And then, they have one of their peers, a young person who did that scheme both acknowledging those doubts but also assuring them that they don't need to doubt. It will all be great.

Bernard: Yeah.

Erika: Yes, earlier in one of the podcasts we talked about the concept of double voicing, now this is a very good example, where in your communication you kind of preempt, respond to unspoken criticism.

Veronika: Yeah, that's true, yes. We did talk about double voicing, it's an instance. Yeah, and then, finally on the website this is accompanied by an image and you'll see that on our website as well. So, what you have there is you see all this group of a cohort of people who were on this scheme, young people. And the interviewee is front and centre, she's right at the salient part of the image.

And what's interesting is that they're shot from a higher angle, which makes the viewer seem a bit more powerful maybe. But they're also all looking at you, which is almost like they're making a demand of

you, like come join us, come apply for this scheme. I don't know if this is coincidence in the image or not, or if they've been told to, but all the young people they're wearing rather neutral colours, lots of white and black and grey.

Bernard: Yeah, it's fairly informal, isn't it?

Veronika: It's informal but it's also very colourless what they're wearing. And the colour that you really have standing out is in the furniture in the scene. And that just happens to be IBM's corporate colour, blue.

Bernard: Yeah, it's true, now that you mention it, yeah.

Veronika: So, there's a lot going on both in the language and in the image, really, I think.

It may be time now to close it for today. I hope that has been useful to our listeners looking at job applications. What's on the menu for our next episode?

Bernard: Well, in the next episode I think we will have a look at the written applications and the CVs. So, what we talked about today were recruitment, the language of recruitment and what you can see there in terms of framing and embellishment. But we will see how we can actually do that for yourself, so in terms of self-branding in written applications and CVs. That's in the next episode.

Erika: Okay, until then, bye.

Veronika: Bye bye.

Bernard: Bye bye.

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