

Raising business communication students' awareness of preferred ways of writing things in press releases with DDL activities

Press releases represent a business genre that is widely used by organisations to communicate externally with a range of stakeholders including journalists, investors and the general public. The multipurpose nature of press releases (Bremner 2014) has led to their characterisation as a complex hybrid genre (Catenaccio 2008) with informational, persuasive and promotional communicative purposes. Press releases are also marked by what Jacobs (2006: 201) calls “preformulation”, i.e. “a news style that requires little or no reworking on the part of the journalists who receive” them (e.g. third person self-reference, self-quotation).

An examination of the treatment of press releases in a series of business communication textbooks and guidebooks (e.g. Thill & Bovée 2022, Chan 2020, Kennedy 2014) reveals that, while information and guidance about the move structure, format and layout of press releases are generally provided, the actual language typically used in these texts tends to be largely neglected. This paper explores the extent to which findings from corpus-driven research into the language of press releases could be used to inform learning/teaching business communication materials to raise the students' awareness of some of the key linguistic features associated with press releases written in English. This exploration is based both on an analysis of recurrent sequences of words extracted from a one-million-word corpus of corporate press releases in English issued in by Fortune 500 companies (De Cock and Granger 2021) and on more recent phraseological research conducted within the framework of this paper. Recurrent sequences of words provide a useful starting point to access and identify the preferred ways of saying or of writing things in specific genres and the paper presents and discusses concrete examples of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) activities that could help business communication students develop their press release writing knowledge.

References

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