

# **A Corpus-informed Study of Move Structures and Linguistic Features of Press Release and Corresponding News Reports of Products and Services in the Thai Business Context**

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## **Abstract**

This study adopted the corpus-based, move analysis approach to explore differences in move structure and linguistic feature between press release and corresponding news reports. The corpus comprised of 60 press releases (approximately 50,000 words) of products and services written by Thailand-based companies and 60 corresponding news articles (approximately 40,000 words)

collected from local English-language newspapers-namely, The Nation and Bangkok Post. A framework adopted from Catenaccio's (2008) move analysis of business press release was used to identify and compare move structures between the two sets of data. The findings suggested that, although the news reports follow almost all the same rhetorical structures as those found in the releases, the corpus analysis of linguistic features revealed some significant differences between lexical choices and grammatical patterns that showed some subtly manipulation on the part of the news writers. Research and pedagogical implications of the study were also discussed.

**Keywords:** press release, genre, corpus linguistic,  
communicative purpose

## **Introduction**

Today, the traditional media have struggled for more air time and column inches while the rivals like social media and blogs (digital media) are becoming vital sources of information for millennials. In Thailand, since 2015, print editions of more than twenty well known media outlets have been shut down e.g. Cosmopolitan, Seventeen, Student Weekly. These declining numbers indicate that the traditional media must adapt to digital age to retain their loyalty. Fortunately, most well-known Thai newspapers are still enduring and are adopting mobile applications and Internet as alternative outlets.

According to Search Engine Optimization (SEO), the more variable content and constant updates can increase visitors to the website, hence, more eyes on advertisements. This also implies that the media have to produce more interesting stories to keep up with the online trend. However, the media is not only expected to produce more stories quickly, they also need to think of the cost of producing a story (Autzen, 2014; Sumner et al., 2016). In this economic context, it is hardly surprising that journalists around the

world rely on ready-to-use packages like press releases as their source of news (e.g. Hong, 2008; Morton & Warren, 1992a, 1992b; Turk, 1985; Walters & Walters, 1992).

The press release is a 100 year-old invention and still serves as a mutual benefit between journalists and public relations practitioners (henceforth, PR). According to Cision's 2018 Global State of the Media survey, journalists still cooperate with PR practitioners in the same way they have done for hundreds of years. The survey also suggested that journalists put their trust in PR practitioners and rank press releases as the most valuable type of content they receive. During the data collection phase of this study, many of the press releases are found on these media websites verbatim or with very little change. According to Jacobs (1999a) "the only *raison d'être* of the Press Release is to be retold" preferably word by word. This means that some press release might not have to go through a journalist's rewriting but is published straight to website just for the sake of number of viewers.

Previous studies show that journalists around the world wholly or partially use press releases daily (Lewis,

Williams, & Franklin, 2008; Reich, 2010). That makes the dependency on press releases a concern but also an interesting topic for many researchers (Semir, Ribas, & Revuelta, 1998; Davies, 2011). However, getting the release published is another story. Studies have concluded that the chances of getting published increase if the press releases follow the pre-formulated structure and style thoroughly, thus, requiring less editing by the journalist (Bell, 1991; Jacobs, 1999a). On top of that, press releases typically come in the form of ready-to-use packages (e.g. retouched photos, documents) which save the publications even more time and money from the actual field work. Gandy (1982) refers to the press release as an “information subsidy,” as it represents the nature of the power relations between sources and journalists

The role of press releases is simple; companies issue a press release to announce important information to the public through the media e.g. events, accomplishments, changes in management or new products and services and hope that the media turn it into a news story. Then they pray on the goodwill of journalists to turn it into a news article. PR practitioners in Thailand still visit the media on special

occasions with gifts to ensure good relationships with the journalists. Some organize trips specifically for the journalists and bloggers to ensure their support.

Scholars in linguistics and related fields have shown interest in studies focusing on genre, characterizing the features, purposes and discourse community of press releases (Bremner, 2014; Catenaccio, 2008; Davis Angela, Piger Jeremy, & Sedor Lisa, 2012; Lassen, 2006; Maat & Jong, 2012; McLaren & Gurău, 2005; Sissons, 2012). Other aspects of the studies include the construction of pseudo-quotes (Sleurs, Jacobs, & Van Waes, 2003), intertextual nature of the process by which they are constructed (Maat, 2008; Sleurs et al., 2003), impact of the Internet on press releases (Strobbe & Jacobs, 2005), and how promotional language is dealt by journalists (Maat, 2007, 2008).

Most studies on press releases look at the features mentioned above, however, this study opts to focus on the alterations in the conversion from press release to news articles by analyzing and comparing move structure and the organization of the text from linguistic points of view. To be precise, the study compared move structure and

lexico-grammatical features between press release and corresponding news article.

The overall organization of press releases and news articles may look the same to untrained eyes, but each has its own target audiences and communicative purposes, hence, two different genres. To make it even more difficult for ordinary readers, press releases are also easily found on the Internet from search engines like Google or Bing. That means any reader could be reading a press release with hidden advertising without knowing or believing that what they are reading is a real news piece. There are many philosophies, principles and definitions that describe journalism but most share common codes-truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability. Unfortunately, press releases do not need to follow such principles.

The analysis of move structure is based on Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993, 2004) while building upon principles from previous studies on the genre of press releases (Catenaccio, 2008; McLaren & Gurău, 2005).

This study also makes full use of the corpus method by adopting AntConc, a corpus analysis toolkit for keyword and keyness analysis.

Although, corpus toolkit alone can run and compare keywords and keyness between two texts as a whole, by analyzing and comparing move by move, corpus analysis can reveal how writers use language to achieve the communicative purposes that form the genre. In addition, as *Headline*, *Lead* and *Body* contain different grammar use, by analyzing the whole text, grammar use in certain areas (move) may not turn up.

The integration of move analysis and corpus analysis can be seen in many works on genre approach of ESP school (Cho & Yoon, 2013; Flowerdew, 2005; Maat & Jong, 2012; Marco, 2000; Rutherford, 2005; Upton & Connor, 2001). Corpus analysis is used to help identify lexico-grammatical patterns much quicker and easier (Pearce, 2012). In addition, keyness analysis is employed to statistically analyze lexico-grammatical features of the two genres and bring out their unique features. However, the corpus toolkit cannot automatically identify the communicative purposes as

move boundaries still need to be interpreted by humans. Therefore, for move tagging and examining move sequence and frequency, another piece research software called QDA Miner Lite was adopted. QDA Miner Lite was used to manually assign moves to the text for further analysis. This computer-assisted data analysis software helps compare the structure and lexico-grammatical features of each move more accurately than traditional method found in the previous studies.

Therefore, the questions are:

1. What are the differences in terms of move structure, move order, frequency and word count between press release and corresponding news reports?
2. What are the differences between lexical and grammatical features found in a press release move and its corresponding news report move? And how do these differences suggest the use of promotional language in both genres?

Since the value of press release depends on recognition by the journalist to get published it is also interesting to explore the underlining method of alterations made by the journalist in order to publish that press release and also how PR practitioner write their press releases to guarantee success.

## **Methodology**

### **a) Corpus Compilation**

A website (<http://www.thailandcurrent.com>) has been created specifically for this study. It automatically collected all press releases produced or issued in Thailand since 2010. The press releases were then matched with a corresponding news articles published in The Nation and Bangkok Post websites using identifier such as specific, name, numbers, distinct phrases and quotes that directly attributed the information. This matching technique can be seen in many studies which also match individual words and phrases from the two texts side-by-side (Maat, 2007, 2008; Maat & Jong, 2012).

Because press releases are used to inform newsworthy information to the journalists while subtly selling a good

image or products to the readers, thus, the communicative purposes can be both informative and persuasive at the same time (Catenaccio, 2008; Maat, 2007; McLaren & Gurău, 2005; Wickman, 2014). Therefore, in addition, to clearly explore how both informative and persuasive elements are balanced in the conversion, news presenting product or service are selected for the study-according to Catenaccio (2008), these are the types of news that contain highest persuasive language.

For ease of access and input into any qualitative data analysis software, all text was copied and stored in a separate text file (.txt) with unique label (e.g. PTT\_oil\_news.txt, PTT\_oil\_pr.txt). Once all moves were identified in QDA Miner Lite, moves were automatically saved in a separate text file dedicated to that specific move to organize sub-corpora of moves, for example, “move2\_news.txt,” “move1\_news.txt,” “move1\_pr.txt” and “move2\_pr.txt.” If two or more moves were located in the same sentence, that sentence was also included in each of the relevant text files. The benefit of storing each move separately or creating sub-corpora is because individually saved files are easier to

input in any corpus toolkits to compare side-by-side for unique lexico-grammatical patterns in that particular move.

Both press releases and corresponding news articles used in this study are issued/published during the period of 2010 to 2017. The overall data comprises of 60 English-language press releases and 60 corresponding English-language news articles. The corpus size of reproduced news articles is around 40,000 words and reproduced press releases around 50,000 words.

### **b) Framework for move analysis**

The move structure used in the analysis of press releases is based a study on genre of press releases by Catenaccio (2008) with a few modifications to fit the current corpora. The modification was done during the pilot study of the dissertation paper and prior to this study. Since press release style of writing is based on the inverted pyramid, most of the moves are labeled and identified based on the structure of newspapers with only a few being borrowed from the structure of advertisement made by Bhatia (2005). Both genres will follow the same move structure for the analysis for the purpose of comparison.

Move analysis is regularly criticized as a subjective method, especially regarding the identification of moves. Therefore, to ensure that the move analysis is reliable, three university lecturers with backgrounds in genre analysis were asked to be the co-raters. Each one was asked to code 40 texts (20 press release and 20 news articles) taken from the data of this study. The codebook with yes-no categories is provided to both coders as a guideline.

### **Move Structure of Press Release and News**

#### **Article Structure**

1. ***Headline*** represents the most significant part of the news article. It is used to attract readers.
2. ***Subheading*** contains explanation to the *Headline* or extra information.
3. ***Lead*** contains the essentials of the article.
4. ***Justification*** justifies how the product or service in the story is important and worth reading or newsworthy.
5. ***Detailing*** contains full detail of the product, service, person, company or event.

6. **Conviction** serves as a conclusion to the story by showing the accomplishment and credibility of the company in question.
7. **Boilerplate** briefly describes the company or organization related and is typically labelled as “About the company.”
8. **Company Info** is used to provide additional information for journalists. This may include phone number, websites and email address.

#### **a) Data analysis**

To answer the first question, all moves must be identified in QDA Miner Lite first. In this step, QDA Miner Lite is used to highlight, and analyze the sequence and frequency of moves. Frequency of moves is typical to studies of move structure. It determines whether certain moves are conventional to a genre or only optional. Unfortunately, there is no actual consensus as to the precise frequencies needed to differentiate between conventional and optional moves. The criteria in this study is based on Kanoksilapatham (2005), which is, if a particular move occurs in more than 60 percent of the entire corpus, it is

classified as “conventional,” otherwise it is defined as “optional.” In this study, both conventional and optional moves were counted as part of the style. But, zero percent was not considered as part of the style and was not included in the analysis. As for sequence or order of moves, QDA Miner Lite can display both genres simultaneously for examination. The sequence of moves plays a minor role in the move analysis. In “inverted pyramid” structure, the top part represents the most substantial, interesting, and important information that the writer wants to convey, while the tapering lower portion follows in order of diminishing importance. Thus, sequence does explain how a writer controls the flow and order of importance of the information that the audience receives.

During move analysis, *Headline*, *Subheading* and *Lead* are easy to recognize and identify not only because they are parts of newspaper style but they are also distinctive in terms of visual presentation-big and bold font or italics. However, *Justification* and *Detailing* moves, are not as easy. These two moves are based on moves found in Bhatia’s (2005) generic structure of advertisements. According to

Bhatia (2004), *Justification* in an advertisement can be realized “by indicating the importance or need of the product or service” or “by establishing a niche.” In other words, the move must contain evidence or reasoning that supports the claim found in the *Headline* and *Lead*. For example: “During an event in San Francisco Thursday night, AMD showed that the "Zen" core achieved a 40-per cent generational improvement in instructions per clock, delivering a landmark increase in processor performance....” As for the *Detailing* move, according to Bhatia (2004), it is typically realized by “offering a product description that is good, positive and favorable.” That means, the move must contain detailed information such as date, time, numbers, specification, etc.

The *Conviction* move could be seen as a conclusion to the story, it intends to convince the reader to take action by highlighting the achievements of the company or its long and professional experience, hence, worth trusting. It is somewhat similar to *Establishing credentials* in Bhatia’s (2005) generic structure of advertisements. For example:

“Tesco Lotus currently operates approximately 1,500 Tesco Lotus Express stores in Thailand.”

The last two moves, *Boilerplate* and *Company Info* are easily identified as they appear separately from the rest of the text.

Once each move is identified, the next step is to analyze lexico-grammatical features which answers the second research question. The analysis can be achieved through the corpus toolkit called AntConc. The toolkit can compare frequencies of words between two corpora and then carry out statistical assessment in order to determine whether words have occurred more or less often than expected by chance ( $p < 0.000001$ ) (Baker, 2006). This is called keyness analysis. “The keyness of a keyword represents the value of log-likelihood or Chi-square statistics; in other words, it provides an indicator of a keyword’s importance as a content descriptor for the appeal” (Biber, 2007). Keyness can help discover salient language differences in the corpora. With keyness, words and/or connotation that would otherwise be missed in traditional method can be analyzed and interpreted.

The keyness could indicate how similar or different in terms of lexical and grammatical use in each move from one genre to another-high keyness means that they are almost identical, low keyness means inapplicable. For example: the word “experience” appears to be significant in press releases, and could be interpreted by journalists as persuasive language and neutralized either by replacing with another word or removing it completely. Keyness is measured to discover words of interest or the frequency of words with correlation statistics of critical log-likelihood value. For this present study, the cut-off point is set to 6.63 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which means keywords must not exceed this cut-off threshold to be deemed statistically significant. All these calculations are done automatically within AntConc, without including more software. In addition, the concordance tool include in AntConc is also used in conjunction with keyness analysis in order see the context in which that words are used and explain how these words are used. The result from keyness analysis can also explain how journalists balance informative and persuasive intentions in each move.

Since there are already a number of studies on lexico-grammatical features in press releases (e.g Jacobs, 1999a; Keeble & Reeves, 2005), this study only looked at interesting grammar usage by comparison rather than full grammatical analysis. The results were further explored in terms of transition from press release into news article such as missing or remaining, order and lexico-grammatical features of the moves that remain.

## **Results and Discussion**

The move sequence, frequency and structure for both genres are similar in a sense but the size or word counts for each move are visually different-less in news articles. This has verifies the hypothesis of the study that journalists indeed manipulate the information.

The results revealed that journalists do intend to neutralize promotional language by removing what journalists see as not important, thus, resulted in smaller word count. Overall, the result demonstrated a successful integration of the two methods-move analysis and corpus analysis.

**Table 1** Move structure of press release and Thai-English news articles

Moves	% PR Cases	% News Cases
Headline	100.0%	100.0%
Subheading	48.3%	21.7%
Lead	96.7%	96.7%
Justification	95.0%	88.3%
Detailing	100.0%	98.3%
Conviction	75.0%	68.3%
Boilerplate	53.3%	0%
Contact info	46.7%	0%

**Move sequence, frequency and structure**

Eight moves were found in both genres, with only five moves, *Headline*, *Lead*, *Justification*, *Detailing* and *Conviction* that are considered conventional while *Subheading*, *Boilerplate* and *Contact Info* fall into the criteria of “optional” for both corpora. Since “journalists favor texts which have already been prefabricated in an appropriate news style and therefore require the minimum of reworking” (Bell, 1991), it comes as no surprise that both genres strictly follow the structure carefully.

*Subheading* is not conventional on both sides. 48% of cases were found in press releases and 21% of cases in

news articles, thus, deem as optional move to both genres. Besides, it is not commonly found in Thai language newspapers and could be the reason for such low occurrence.

*Boilerplate* and *Contact info*, are exclusively designed for press releases. Because these two moves only provide additional information to the journalists alone and are not intended for reproduction in news articles, hence, none were found in news article. That said, with such low occurrence, they cannot be counted as conventional moves for press releases but they are exclusive to press release and worth examining nonetheless.

Regarding the structure and sequence or order, the result reveals that both genres tend follow the same structure of the “inverted pyramid,” in other words, the same move structure used in the press release is also used in the corresponding news article. There is only one case in press release (fifth case) that is written in an essay style. This could be because the organization did not produce a press release or the journalist could not wait for the press release to be produced.

*Headline, Subheading and Lead* are indeed conventional moves and follow each other in sequence just like in news style writing or the “inverted pyramid.” But, there are few cases, seven in press releases and eight in news articles to be exact, that *Detailing* moves intervene between *Headlines* and *Lead*. The moves come in the form of bullet points which list all the specifications of the product and service, for example, date and time, features. The following is an example of a “Detailing” move as bullet points:

- Okinawa-Bangkok route to open on Feb. 19, 2017
- Bangkok-Okinawa route to open on Feb. 20, 2017
- Ticket sales will start at 3 p.m. Dec. 15

They cannot be identified as any other move than a *Detailing* move as its communicative purpose is clearly to provide detail information and nothing else. It informs the key information right at the beginning without putting the reader through the rest of the article. The fact is, some stories do not have much to write about because they only need to announce a small update. It is also a good strategy for stories to contain specific time and date or upgraded detail of the current available product or service.

A significant observation concerning the move sequence was the position of *Detailing* move. Because of its role, *Detailing* tends to be more flexible in terms of sequence than other moves. Eight cases of press releases and 19 cases in news article where *Detailing* was put in front of *Justification* or at the end after *Conviction*. In a few case, it appeared more than one in an article.

In terms of structural analysis, the result was not unexpected. The result showed both genre follow the “inverted pyramid.” It was anticipated because, “inverted pyramid” is commonly taught to mass communication and journalism students (Busa, 2013) and as the model for press releases in public relations writing courses (Lee & Basnyat, 2013). As previously mentioned, using “appropriate news style,” in a press release can improve the success rate of getting published (Bell, 1991). As for news articles, both Bangkok Post and The Nation appear to be written using “inverted pyramid” structure, which concurs with Seanoi’s (2008) comparative study between these two Thai-English newspapers. Seanoi (2008) also pointed out theses Thai-English newspapers tend to include a conclusion at the end which is

unusual for the “inverted pyramid” structure because the story is typically cut paragraph by paragraph from the bottom first to reduce the size (Bond, 1961; Hough, 1984). The analysis from this present study also showed the same result with the conclusion or as labeled in this study *Conviction*, appear 75% in newspaper and 68% in press release, and are thus, considered as conventional.

### **Move Comparison**

As for the size, as stated, it is visually smaller in press releases by comparison. In some case, more than 40 percent were cut off after converting to news articles.

Overall, both genres are largely identical and follow the norm of news style writing. There are several moves identified in this study that are not recognized as typical news style structure namely *Boilerplate* and *Contact Info* which are press release exclusive and cannot be compared.

In terms of sequence, the move analysis is not based on the location of the move but based on its communicative purpose. That means if the communicative purpose is to describe the detail, no matter where the move is, it is identified as *Detailing*. As previously stated, more of the moves are

sequenced in the same way for both genres or in the inverted pyramid structure, however, some moves namely *Justification*, *Detailing* and *Conviction*, repeat themselves and appear in the atypical order.

### **Headline (Move 1)**

There are several obstacles, such as space and writing abilities (vocabulary, creativity, knowledge of the language etc.), that must be overcome while creating a headline (LaRocque, 2003). In fact, space is one of the obstacles in writing newspaper articles, since fitting essential information in a tiny space like headlines could be quite a task. When journalists select a story to use, they need to correct grammar to news style writing, remove details, and defuse promotional language, thus, word counts are reduced to around half of the original text. The longest *Headline* among the press release is 31 words long but after the conversion, it reduced to only seven words long. The average headline takes up of 2.2 percent of a press release while news articles show a two percent average. *Headlines* are shorter in news articles than in press releases by almost 50 percent. Although specific details which press release headline tend to include are

removed in the reproduction, readers can still get these specific details elsewhere (*Lead* or *Detailing* moves).

Typically, headlines perform an informative role, as they present the basic information on the content of a story which includes the most important facts, actors or authors or type of an event (Keeble & Reeves, 2005). As can be described from the keyword analysis, headlines attempt to provide only important detail. *Headlines* seem to identify the actor or author like company, representative of the events, the subject matter of the story (i.e. Dell, AIS, AMD) and fact about the event, product, service (i.e. servers, new, generation, launch). Since they are short but include all basic facts, they are the ideal source of information for busy people in digital age. This is done with certain linguistic features which make them memorable and effective (Develotte & Rechniewski, 2001).

It appears that press release copywriters intend to use a variety of verbs for their headlines, possibly to make the headline feels unique and not repetitive. Yet, journalists replace them with more neutral verb.

**Table 2** Headline (press release against news article)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	17	8.912	the*
2	26	4.006	and
3	4	3.417	experience

When looking at the result from the keyness analysis, articles “the” and conjunction “and” show statistical significance in press releases but not in news articles. “The” should not appear in headlines because article drop is a ubiquitous feature of headlines (Weir, 2009). The reason is simple, it is the convention for news articles to drop “the” and “and.” The result shows that journalists tend to fix them during the conversion. Dropping of articles appears to only occur in *Headlines* from news articles corpus and not in press release.

The conjunction “and” is replaced with a comma in the news articles. This is done to save space while separating two news points in the headline (Saxena, 2006).

Regarding grammatical features, while language used in newspapers can be distinguished from other type of text even with the untrained eyes-especially headlines.

Headlines typically do not contain auxiliaries, pronouns, articles, or conjunctions thus, only lexical, not grammatical words are used (Prášková, 2009). “Its” and “is” are found four times in press releases but not at all in news articles. “Its” is found to refer to the company in question which is not common in news style headlines, name of the company is the norm as found in the news article corpus. Another ubiquitous feature is the form of verb “to be” such as “is” is omitted in news article headlines but is found in press releases. Again, press release *Headlines* tend to overlook the phenomenon.

These unique grammatical features were not detected in some of the press release headlines, but are found in news articles. The reasons for not complying with the style could be interpreted as either intentional or lack of understanding of newspaper writing style. With that said, the result still concurs that the majority of press releases’ headlines do follow the news style.

Another interesting finding that needs pointing out is the use of present simple, even though the event in the story already took place, unlike the rest of the articles which are

written in the past. It is known as the “historical present.” Present tense gives readers a sense of urgency and excitement. And when referring to the events that happen in the future, it is found to use “to + verb” instead of “be going to + verb” or “will + verb. Again, many of the press releases in the corpus fail to follow such headline writing style.

Through the use of corpus tools, further results are revealed. Press release’s headlines tend to be more persuasive than news articles. For example, the word “experience” in the keyness typically accompanies words that describe the actions readers could take when they use the product or service. This, indeed, is promotional language as it incites the readers to think about the value of the experience they could have if they use the product or service. It comes as no surprise that it is removed during the conversion.

The other keywords, “more” and “most,” can also be considered as promotional language (comparative and superlative degrees), they can be replaced by weaker adjectives or removed as in the reproductions without losing the original connotation. However, the purpose of headlines is to attract the audience to read the rest of the story, repetitive

or uninteresting words may turn away the readers therefore it is persuasive in nature resulting in the reproduction as well.

### **Subheading (Move 2)**

Regarding typography, *Subheading* and *Headline* are typically styled in a way that is noticeable and distinguishable from the rest of the text. It is designed to catch the readers' eyes.

The move typically consists of one sentence long, longer than the *Headline* but shorter than the *Lead*. It conveys the topic or subject area of the story to the reader while framing the subject matter in the mind of the reader. Thus, they help readers decide whether to continue reading or move on.

The majority of *Subheadings* are completely removed in the reproduction either by removing the move or moving it downward to join the following move. The significance of the move is questionable here due to its low occurrence in both corpora -30 cases found in press releases and only five cases in news articles. Although, subheading is considered as a component of the headline (Van Dijk, 2013), the study

considered it is as a another move and is classified as “optional” in both corpora by percentage. With that said, the data is not sufficient for interpretation using corpus tools alone, manual read through is also required. The reason for such low occurrence could be because they are not typical styles found in Thai language news articles. Another reason is that this additional information can also be found further in the articles.

*Subheading* is longer than headline in word count and consists of dependent clauses and only one verb. The sentence may consist of only 30-50 words but it is compressed with necessary information to keep the reader’s interest. And for today’s standard, a subheading has to be short as search engines such as Google only show less than a 20-word summary on result pages, under the headline. If an article does not include a subheading, then search engine will use the next paragraph or in this case, the lead. Unlike *Headline*, *Subheading* is a complete sentence and easier to understand.

Looking at the keyword frequency, the conjunction “and” and the preposition “with” seem to hold some interesting notions. In concordance view, “and” and “with”

are generally used as ways to describe the product by connect two or more facts concerning the product or service which could not be fitted in the space of *Headlines*. Fundamentally, they connected two ideas or facts together. In a few cases, these words showed the cooperation between two companies.

**Table 3** Subheading (press release against news article)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	5	1.280	Thailand
2	5	1.280	VR
3	4	1.024	Asia

Here, the keyness started at 1.280 which was much lower than the cut-off point set for this study (3.84), in other words, not significant enough to analyze in either corpora. This could suggest that the interpretation may not be generalized.

The keywords such as “Thailand” and “Asia” (from Asia Pacific and Southeast Asia) are found to set the scene of the story, location of the story or where the product or service concerns. Other keywords are words that directly concern the product or service in the news story. This could suggest the communicative purpose of subheading which is to clarify the semantic cryptic reference of *Headline*.

When looking at the semantic content and lexical choices, it could be concluded that *Headlines* and *Subheadings* together only communicate a sense of the context but not enough to make the reader fully understand.

*Subheadings* in both corpora did not follow the non-standard grammatical feature of *Headline* instead they had the same English grammar as the rest of the article. Since these *Subheadings* are intended to emphasize or explain the cryptic *Headline*, most cases used present perfect to report recent events in the story that were new to the readers. According to McCawley (1971), the present perfect construction in English has four uses and one of them is to report “hot news.” In addition, for both corpora, *Subheadings* consist of incomplete clauses which frequently miss the finite verb element. Therefore, it could be concluded that *Subheadings* were the similar lexically and grammatically for both corpora.

### **Lead (Move 3)**

*The Lead* paragraph highlighted the key facts of the story by summarizing the complete events. It was indeed an important component of news articles. *Leads* occurred

in 59 cases in press releases but 60 in news articles. With one unusual case from EXIM bank, which was written in an essay style, however, some moves were identifiable. When looking closer at the size, this move appeared to be a bit longer in press releases with an average of 9.6 percent while news articles' average was 8.2 percent of the whole text. The average is not drastically different. *Leads* in press releases consisted of two or three sentences but when converted into news articles, they only contain one sentence.

*Headline* and *Lead* together are informative and persuasive in nature. With these informative and persuasive functions, a well-written headline and lead can frame the idea inside readers' minds while directing reader to read on.

Journalists broke down *Lead* moves into a few smaller ones during the conversion. This breaking or relocating the less important information downward, suggested a method or strategy that journalists used to render the story more objective. That said, the relocation of moves can be considered as a way to make the information less important or less passive.

When it comes to the size or word count, the same move was found to be shorter in news articles. Although, it was small in word count the main ideas were clearly intact. Many of the promotional keywords such as “game-changing,” “extraordinary,” or “most demanding” were removed, thus, made the move smaller in size. These were adjectives that could be removed without interfering with the meaning or main idea of the move.

Press releases tend to use third-person self-reference and semi-performatives like the verbs “announce” and “launch” (Jacobs, 1999a, 1999b; Sleurs et al., 2003). These are called pre-formulating devices (Sleurs et al., 2003) and their purpose is to only reduce the time in rewriting or converting a press release to a news article i.e. imitate a news writing style.

The verb “announced” was ranked the first in corpus toolkit’s word list as it was used to express the main action of this type of press release that is, to present new products and services. In addition, since the story came out after the announcement, it only natural to write the story in the past.

The auto-generated Wordlist was mostly comprised of dates and locations of the announcement. It typically started with date/time and location where the announcement took place e.g. today, Bangkok. Date typically came before or after “announced” (e.g. today, October, November, September) and followed by location (e.g. San Francisco, Bangkok or Thailand).

**Table 4** Lead (press release against news article)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	42	32.368	today*
2	10	7.707	NASDAQ
3	7	5.395	also
4	7	5.395	only

The keyword “today,” was listed as the most frequently use word while possessing statistically significate when comparing to news article. Although news articles kept the date and location even after the conversion, however, instead of using today as in press releases, the article used yesterday or specific date (e.g. Friday, Thursday) instead. This is due to the fact that a news article was written after the journalist received the press release, and it only made

sense to write yesterday or the exact day when the story took place or will take place.

In keyness analysis, the keyword “also” was often found to bundle two products or services or their additional attributes. According to Maat (2007), “also” is a “connective” and considered a promotional element. “Only” is also considered a promotional element according to Maat (2007). “Only” was used to indicate that the company is the first or the only company that offered this kind of product or service, which implied the product or service is unique.

There was one interesting keyword, “NASDAQ,” which referred to the US stock market. The stock market symbol may suggested the target audience of the story e.g. investors, stock traders or that the story could affect its stock somehow. This could also be aimed at business media. It appeared only in press releases and not in news articles as Thai readers may not be interested in the US stock market. SET or stock exchange of Thailand stock symbols did not appear anywhere in the corpora either.

*Leads* in news articles seemed to refer to the company in question in third person by using “its.” This apparently

made the story more objective, besides, the article was supposedly reported by the journalist themselves so using “its” made more sense.

Other keywords that also made the story more objective and worth taking note were “press” and “statement” (press statement), journalists used “press statement” to acknowledge that the article came from a press release. This action made rewriting the articles quicker as well as making the report felt trustworthy and objective.

Regarding grammatical features, 21 cases of keyword or one third of the news articles corpus were found to use “has” as part of present perfect. “Was” as another choice of tense which was also found during keyness analysis. Since the news articles are reporting the story that already happened or existed before the time of writing, simple past was the choice of tenses.

For the keyword “launch,” only four cases were written in past tense while the rest of the cars were in present perfect. Combed with the keyword “has,” the result suggested that news article’s *Lead* tended to write using present perfect while press release did not. *Lead* move in news

article could be found in various tenses namely present perfect, past tense or simple present tense while press release were written in either past tense or simple present tense.

The connection between *Headline*, *Subheading* and *Lead* was clear as *Headline* and *Subheading* were both drawn from the same move-*Lead*. With similarity in the frequency of keywords from both corpora, it can be concluded that *Headlines* and *Subheading* in both corpora are derivable from the *Lead* move and it is also found to reflect semantic and lexical content of the lead paragraph. The conclusion is similar to previous studies on a similar subject (Bell, 1991; White, 2005).

The overall purpose of *Headline*, *Subheading* and *Lead* can be interpreted as the abstract of information with the sole intention is to convince that it is newsworthy to read. In other words, press release copywriters try to convince the journalist that it is newsworthy, while journalists try to convince the readers to read the story to the end. With that in mind, the promotional language that was found in these moves could be used to make the audiences feeling lively

and humane rather than advertising. It can be concluded that, although the main communicative purpose of the move was clearly to summarize the information, however, the information provided by the move was purposely selected to make the story interesting.

*Headline*, *Subheading* and *Lead* were condensed with the essential of information which answered the questions “who,” “what,” “when” and “where.” These moves could simply describe as an “abstract” of the news story.

#### **Justification (Move 4)**

The *Justification* move attempted to answer “why,” why the product or service was necessary or worth pursuing. *Justification* occupied an average of 25 percent in press releases and 32 percent in news articles. And, it appeared 95 percent of press releases and 88.3 percent in news articles. Three press releases and seven news articles were missing the move.

This move was similar to Bhatia (2004)’s move with the same label which was also realized by “offering a product description’ that is good, positive and favorable.”

Both press releases and news articles aimed to justify their importance with rational and logical appeals by displaying the achievement, statistical numbers, feedback etc. This was done subtly within quotations by well-known or important figures who had the best knowledge in the product or service offered in the story

The wordlist contained keywords such as “said,” “president,” “senior,” “vice” and “Mr.” which indicated that this move was made up of quotations. Since news style was written in third person, the keywords like “we” and “our” also suggested someone important in the company who spoke on behalf of the company in direct quotes.

**Table 5** Justification (press release against news article)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	22	14.052	Mr.
2	8	8.874	program
3	31	7.106	AIS
4	78	7.089	customers
5	6	6.656	SIM
6	6	6.656	startup

The keyness analysis suggested that this move, in press releases, addressed the customer (keyword “customers”)

or readers directly with direct quotation from important figure (keyword “Mr.”) from the company. These important figures tended to show concern to the readers’ need by referring to the advantages of the product and service that would improve the readers’ lives. In keyness analysis comparing news articles against press releases, the move was also presented with quotations-words such as “said” and “he”. That means, this move in both genres were written using quotations. Direct quotation and expert knowledge, according to Jacobs (1999b), replaces the bias tones or self-promotion with objective, neutral, disinterested voice. Thus, quotation could make the text somewhat neutral, it was also “traditionally assumed to signal verbatim reporting... as a result, they lend an air of reliability to the report” (Jacobs, 1999b). According to Catenaccio (2008), quotations contain openly promotional statements because they “are always attributed, thus enabling journalists to avoid responsibility for the statements.” She also noted that quotes are generally used in advertisements to feature celebrity or typical user endorsements, however, in press releases, these quotes were included to provide the view of the company issuing the press release.

In keyness analysis, keywords that were persuasive and promotional in nature still openly existed in the news articles. These words provided positive connotations but could be biased. For instance, the keyword “percentage,” as the art of persuasive or a device in rhetoric suggested, facts and figures can support the speaker's claims and thus make more appealing. Another keyword was the word “largest,” it could be deleted during the conversion without affecting the main idea but it was kept by the journalist. One of the reasons that these words still existed was because these keywords made the text feel lively and more interesting to read.

*Justification* attempted to persuade the readers to read further with facts and proofs of reliable sources. Referring to “press statement” was one of the ways to provide source of the news. Another proof of having a reliable source was by quoting. Using quotation is one of the ways to ensure the readers of the reliability source of the news.

It can be concluded that *Justification* moves indirectly address the customer by giving them a positive image and

trust in the company and/or their product or service. It was done by referring to positive outcome of the use of the product or service while providing the source of the story. Thus, *Justification* can be viewed as promotional or persuasive and not at all informative as it can be deleted without affecting the whole story.

### **Detailing (Move 5)**

*Detailing* move were similar in both corpora. In this move, detailed information concerning the product or service as mentioned in previous moves is described in more details. Depending on the product or service, these details typically included the specification, release date/time, locations etc. The similarity of this move can also be found in the generic structure of the hard news report (White, 2005) and in the advertisement (Bhatia, 2004).

*Detailing* is where a product or service was described in accurate detail, thus, it is appropriate to add intensifying adjectives and evaluative adjectives to describe the product or service. Indeed, *Detailing* move was an easy target for promotional language as it could also state quality as well as quantity.

**Table 6** Detailing (press release against news article)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	10	10.302	servers
2	9	9.272	unlimited
3	18	9.180	game
4	8	8.242	approx.
5	16	7.565	availability
6	7	7.212	period
7	7	7.212	Rd. (road)
8	15	6.778	PowerEdge
9	18	6.778	today

The keyness analysis above clearly suggested the communicative purpose of the move, that is, to provide detailed information concerning the product or service. The keywords such as “server,” “approx.,” “period” and “availability” were used to describe the specification of the product or service. “Games” and PowerEdge” referred to the actual product or company in question. The move also contained the location of the shops or where to purchase the product or service, hence, “Rd.” as in “road.”

When putting news articles against press releases, the result revealed some other interesting facts. In news articles, names of product or service were reduced. This

was done to avoid repetition and giving more objectivity. Some cases also contained direct quotations which made the story even more objective and reliable. The keyword “press statement” could also be found here to provide readers with similar certainty. Other keywords were details concerning the product or service e.g. “bt” (price in Baht Thai), “Thursday” and “yesterday” (date of the availability or news release).

Corpus toolkit can confirm that the communicative purpose was similar to previous findings in (Catenaccio, 2008; McLaren & Gurău, 2005) or in Bhatia’s (2004) study of advertisements, that is, “offering a product description.”

In regards to grammatical features, generally, the *Detailing* move in both genres have the same grammatical features. The move was written in an objective style similar to the impersonal Reporter Voice of hard news reports where personal pronouns were generally avoided (Iedema, Feez, & White, 1994). It seemed that both copywriters and journalists intentionally avoided the subjective style as it seemed biased because it had a viewpoint. The

objective style made the story feel unbiased since it placed the writer outside of the context.

Corpus toolkits revealed that this move was written in third person self-reference and past tense which according to McLaren and Gurău (2005), is “an air of detachment and objectivity.” Another study of press releases by Jacobs (1999b), also spoke of the usage of third person self-reference to avoid revealing the writers’ own opinion by replacing it with an objective, disinterested and neutral point of view instead. Besides, third person self-reference allowed journalists to effortlessly convert the press releases into news articles without altering references and point of view (Jacobs, 1999b; McLaren & Gurău, 2005).

On both corpora, this move was found to use passive voice more often than active voice. This was because passive voice implies that the action or object is more important than the subject (Johnson-Laird, 1968). This was convenient as the purpose of story was to present the new product or service to the audiences, thus, putting the spotlight on the object and create dramatic effect. In some cases, the clauses were written in passive voice without the agent (by-phrase)

and by removing the agent all together, it highlights the importance of the object. Passive voice makes language more versatile and richer although not all agree (Garner, 2000). It can also be used to avoid redundancy, as repetition could turn away the readers. Besides, the object was almost always obvious from context in press release and news article.

### **Conviction (Move 6)**

This is the last move for news articles but not for press releases. It was not common to include conclusion at the end of a story written in “inverted pyramid” structure because stories were cut paragraph by paragraph from the bottom up or from least to most important information (Bond, 1961; Hough, 1984). However, during the move analysis, *Conviction* was found in 75 percent of press releases and 68.3 percent cases in news articles, which means, conclusions were considered a convention in both genres. Seawnoi (2008) compared the structure of Bangkok Post and The Nation and also concluded that both newspapers include conclusions. *Conviction* moves represent the last action undertake to convince the reader to take action

e.g. purchase, rent. Since it was included in more than half of the press releases, it is recognized as a conventional move for both corpora.

**Table 7** Conviction (press release against news article)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	50	10.881	customers
2	7	8.055	offices
3	59	7.742	our

The move concluded with the most important facts such as price, date, time. And with this information, the move aims to convince the reader to take action. The keyword “customers” was found quite frequently in press release (50 cases) but only in a handful in news article. The keywords suggested that the move was written in third person, hence, the keyword “our” or “our customers.”

In news articles, keyness analysis revealed that the move comprises of quotations much like previous moves-in fact, it was made up of only direct quotations in most cases-keywords “he” and “said.” The difference was the communication purpose. The quotation here also attributed to important figures of the company whose reference could

suggest improvement in customer satisfaction and product improvement.

Although, third person self-reference was found throughout the text of both genres, in press releases, this move ever addressed their customers in the third person but they are instead often referred to as “our customers.” That was because many of the moves contained quotations.

This move appeared to be more persuasive than informative. Since getting customers to take action is one of the most important goals of press releases announcing new products or services. Showing the accomplishment and credibility of the company and/or the product or service in question was the strategy used in the move. The past successful ventures were also used to build credibility for future efforts. In addition, accomplishments prove that the company has been in the business for a long time and has achieved so much. After all, why trust a new company when there are already tried-and-true companies out there? Accomplishment and credibility could also boost the brand that people can actually trust and have confidence in.

Some cases include several words that could be identified as promotional. In most instances, however, the promotional words was inserted in the quotations which as previously mentioned, quotations contained more promotional lexis (Catenaccio, 2008; Maat, 2007; McLaren & Gurău, 2005). It can be concluded that the move contains promotional language which contributes to its purpose. This move can be completely removed without affecting the main idea of the story.

### **Conclusion**

The study aimed to contribute to the understanding of press releases and news articles. The study only examined the communicative purposes of news presenting new products and services through its rhetorical move structure and lexico-grammatical devices using a corpus toolkit. To understand how this type of press release gets published on a newspaper, the study compared the structure and lexico-grammatical of corresponding news articles as another perspective in order to explore the underlining method of alterations made by the journalist. The overall results have

explained how PR practitioners approach the journalists and how journalists approach the readers in this age.

The findings showed that most press releases strictly followed the “inverted pyramid” structure: *Headline*, *Subheading*, *Lead* and *Body*, which proves that PR practitioners intend to attract journalists with the writing style. Although move structure and sequence are mostly the same, deeper analysis of rhetorical structure between the two corpora are interesting to examine. Some information or moves are moved upward, which means the information is considered important to the journalists, otherwise, they are removed or moved downward to join another move. This often happens to *Detailing* which sometimes move gets moved up and combined with *Lead*. This helps reduce reading time as important information is already summarized in the *Lead*. However, information is rarely moved downward, it is typically removed completely from the text.

For example, the use of “and” in *Headline* and present perfect in *Lead*. In some cases, press releases seem to miss the convention of news style writing. It could be from the lack of understanding of newspaper writing style.

No matter what the intentions are, in the final product, journalists always corrected the structure.

Since both press releases and news articles can be accessed by anyone with the Internet, *Headlines* and *Leads* are vital elements to online marketing since search engines like Google typically display only *Headline* and *Lead* (or any paragraph that comes after *Headline*) in the search result. In the process called Search Engine Optimization (SEO), the keywords must appear in these moves for the search engine to display the result. In the study, the names of the company and products or service always appear in these two moves for search engine to find. The results from corpus analysis confirmed that *Headline* and *Lead* (or *Subheading*) are more persuasive than informative for both genres since PR practitioners and journalists want readers to click on the link.

The strategy is simple, include enough information: enough for the reader to feel that they want to read. A well-planned SEO can increase visitors to the website.

Strategies found in many of the moves can be referred to as rhetorical appeals that classify the speaker's

appeal to the audience. They are the Aristotelian concepts of Pathos, Logos and Ethos. Pathos reaches the emotions in the audience. Pathos can be found in many moves especially and in *Justification*. Logos or logic refers to reasoning, evidence, and facts that support the story, and it can be found in *Justification*. Ethos is the credibility of the speaker, writer, or of the company in question can implant trust in the readers' mind. This can be observed in *Convention*.

The communicative purpose of each move always seems to contain some sort of promotional elements. The result is quite the opposite of what the researchers expected in the beginning-less promotional elements in news articles. Promotional language or persuasive strategy makes the story lively and interesting to read. It attracts readers to read the story to the end or at least visit the website where the story is located. Promotional elements still exist in both genres for the same purpose-attract readers.

This study also suggested that a corpus linguistics approach can be helpful for selecting and analyzing texts for move analysis. A part of the corpus of this study is constructed from news articles which are the product of

press releases, thus, verifying the effectiveness of the press releases that formed the corpus. It is also proven that using corpus toolkits like AntConc to analyze keyness served the tasks well especially the analysis of lexico-grammatical features and their communicative purposes. This means the tools could be expanded to other types of news or even to a different type of genres in genre analysis.

As for the pedagogical application, the results from this study can be used to design teaching materials or guidelines to help PR practitioners or novice press release writers (e.g. small business owners) to follow the discourse convention both in terms of rhetorical structures and the linguistic features. However, as both informative and promotional intentions are implemented in different ways for different target audience, further analysis based on a corpus of different text types may be needed if the findings are to be applied to other types of news e.g. sports news.

No matter how a press release is used or how often it is used, ordinary readers would never know the truth. Some media even clip news articles and bill public relations firms who bill their clients per clip (Bollinger, 2001).

The news articles are obviously smaller in size, thus, it was rewritten by the journalists, but that does not mean it is neutral and objective.

The results from this study revealed the extent in which journalists manipulate and control information by offering their audiences selective information. In other words, what they want readers to know. This study could see as a cautionary tale or a statement to warn readers that what they read may not be as objective as they might have thought. This manipulation is a 100 year old problem that still exists in the digital age. The study does not intend to lay blame on PR practitioners or journalists as both professions have clear responsibilities and loyalties.

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