LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH IN DIFFERENT MODALITIES OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Marunić, Nikola

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Nikola Marunić

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Department of English Language and Literature

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Student: Supervisor:

Nikola Marunić   Mirjana Semren, PhD, Assistant Professor

Split, 2023

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Preface

Being a part of "the Internet generation", my interests, unsurprisingly, revolve around the Internet and the technology connected to it. More precisely, I am fond of various gadgets that spawned from the Internet revolution which started in the early noughties and is still unfolding. As the information technologies began to evolve and encompass greater parts of our everyday lives, my passion for connected devices came into contact with my other passion, that of the automotive industry. While keeping track of the news from those two industries I began noticing that certain linguistic features appear in greater frequency than others. Moreover, I noted that reporters from different outlets tend to fall back onto similar "rehearsed" phrases.

After examining their sources, I realised that most reporters drew their inspiration from press releases that businesses publish on their websites. This inspired me to examine the particularities of business communication and compare its linguistic features across different modalities.

1. Introduction

Business communication is an everyday occurrence. It is used in professional environments such as workplaces or job interviews. It is used when interacting with vendors in shops or when shopping online. Sometimes, business communication unfolds without the participants even realising it, for example when reading news articles or browsing product landing pages. Business communication is ultimately used by businesses to influence customers to act in accordance with their desires. Just like any other form of communication, business communication is a tool for trading ideas using a standardised set of symbols (Vik and Wortman Gilsdorf, 1994). What makes communication a business communication is the message that is being conveyed, as well as all the particularities surrounding that message. First and foremost, the participants – the sender behind the message and the intended receiver. Secondly, the modality used to communicate the message. And finally, the linguistic features used in the creation of the message. The messages sampled for this thesis are the 30 product announcements from two businesses. The participants of business communication examined in this thesis are a business that appears mostly as a sender, journalists that appear as both senders and receivers, and the general public that appear solely as receivers of a message. The modalities in which the sampled message appears are a press release, a news article, a speech and a product landing page. In this thesis a total of 12 linguistic features are examined. All these components are closely examined in the theoretical part of this thesis.

The theoretical part of this thesis consists of the Introduction and the Theoretical framework which is divided into four subchapters. In the subchapter 2.1. a brief historical background of different communication models is given along with the working definition of business communication. In the subchapter 2.2., the four modalities are presented and their relation to business communication is explained. The subchapter 2.3. outlines the linguistic features used in business communication whereas the subchapter 2.4. brings closer the previous studies.

The second part of the thesis consists of the methodology, results, discussion and finally conclusion. Research questions are introduced in the subchapter 3.1., the sample is presented in the subchapter 3.2. followed by the data collection in the subchapter 3.3. The research results and the discussion are illustrated in the chapter 4 and chapter 5 respectively. This part of the thesis ends with the concluding remarks (chapter 6), the list of references and a short summary.

2. Theoretical framework

In the first of the four subchapters, the author dissects communication in general and explains how different elements facilitate business communication. In the following subchapter, the four modalities will be listed and explained. In the third subchapter, the 12 linguistic features will be briefly explained and examples from analysed samples will be provided. Finally, in the fourth subchapter, the author will give an overview of the previous studies.

2.1. Business communication

To better understand how business communication works, it is important first to understand what communication is and how it has developed throughout the ages. In the introduction, a short explanation of business communication by Vik and Wortman Gilsdorf (1994) was given. According to the authors, communication is a way of sharing ideas using a set of standardised symbols The definition provided by the authors echoes the definition of language given by Sapir (1921: 7) who states that:

> "Language is a purely human and noninstinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols."

Therefore, it is safe to assume that the most popular tool for communication is language. Furthermore, by examining speech acts, it is clear that language performs more actions than just informing. Language can also be used for requesting, questioning, or commanding - sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly (Yule, 1996). Among the first to realise the full potential of language were ancient Greeks when philosophers like Aristotle delved into the matter.

Although the use of symbols and words as a tool for persuasion predates even the ancient Greeks, it was in the fifth century BC Athens that rhetoric as a concept came to life. Athenians usually practised rhetoric or "the art of using language effectively and persuasively" (Keith and Lundberg, 2008: 3) when they needed to be convincing while presenting their case. Soon enough, a group of people called sophists came to prominence as the teachers of rhetoric. They would educate Athenians on persuasive speech for when they needed to appear in court (Keith and Lundberg, 2008). Sophists were, therefore, forerunners of contemporary public relations

consultants, i.e. publicists who work for businesses and oversee the publishing of press releases and write speeches, both of which are modalities that will be explained later in this thesis.

The first theorist of rhetoric is considered to be philosopher Aristotle (Keith and Lundberg, 2008). In his work *The Art of Rhetoric,* Aristotle (1975: 33) postulated that:

> "every speech is composed of three parts: the speaker, the subject of which he treats, and the person to whom it is addressed, I mean the hearer, to whom the end or object of the speech refers."

Based on Aristotle's postulation a rudimentary communication model can be created, consisting of a *sender*, their *message*, and the intended *receiver*. This is communication in its barest form as it comprises solely three elements and is mainly concerned with public speaking. Centuries after Aristotle and his theory, a forerunner of the contemporary communication model came from an unlikely source – a mathematician. While trying to discover a method of transmitting the maximum number of calls over existing telephone lines, Bell Laboratories engineer Claude Shannon devised the information theory. Although this communication model originated in mathematics, hence the name information theory, it has its roots in Aristotle's tripartite model. The sender, the message and the receiver are joined by the *transmitter*, the *noise,* and most importantly, the *channel* (Markowsky, 2017). According to Shannon (1948: 2) the channel is:

> "merely the medium used to transmit the signal from the transmitter[1] to the receiver[2]. It may be a pair of wires, a coaxial cable, a band of radio frequencies, a beam of light, etc…"

Shannon's model is important because it introduces the use of technology in message transmission, in this case a telephone, which expands the reach of a sender by enabling them to explore new modalities of communication. Shannon's model also laid groundwork for the contemporary communication model used in business communication today as described by Vik and Gilsdorf (1994). This model builds on top of Aristotle's and Shannon's model. Alongside the previously mentioned elements such as message, sender, receiver, and channel

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[1] Transmitter handles the messages in a way that makes them suitable for transmission over the channel (Markowsky, 2017)

[2] Receiver reverses the operation of a transmitter by decoding the signal into a message that can be understood by the destination. In this case the receiver is a physical object that comes before the recipient (referred to as receiver in the rest of the thesis) (ibid.)

there are additional elements like *feedback*, *filter* and *outside elements* (*context*). The most relevant elements for business communication introduced in this thesis are feedback and filter.

Feedback is an important part of the communication model because it indicates to the sender whether their message was understood and how it was received. Feedback does not need to be verbal and does not need to carry additional information. A simple nod, laughter or increased sales can also be considered as feedback. Lack of feedback can also be considered feedback, be it a negative one. Feedback can also be delayed depending on the receiver or the channel. According to Vik and Gilsdorf (1994), communication in a business environment relies on a response from the receiver which, together with a carefully constructed message, forms a communication loop.
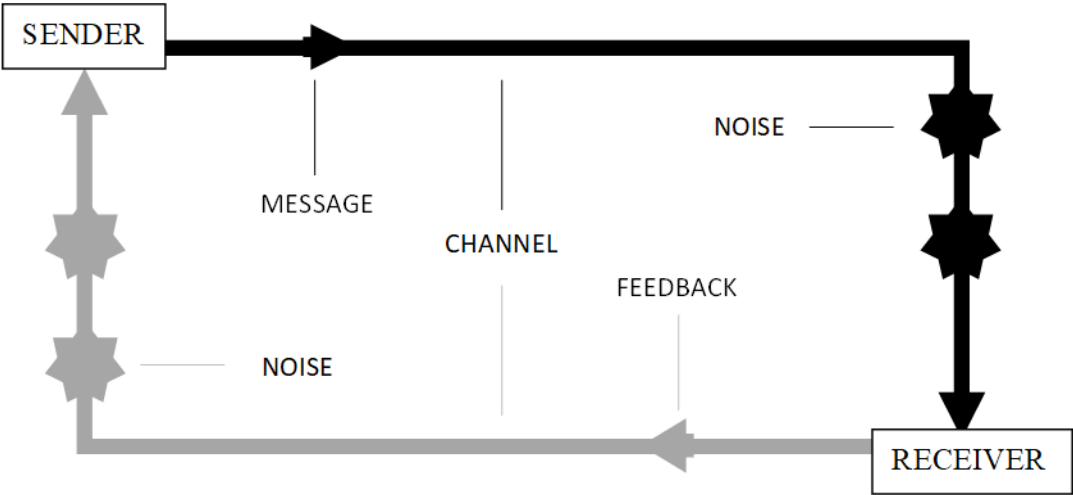
Figure 1 *A Communication loop[3]*

The communication loop, as seen in Figure 1, is the visual representation of the contemporary communication model. Like the communication models of old, the loop starts with a sender who forms a message which then passes through a communication channel until it reaches a receiver. This sort of communication model is also explored by Jakobson (1960) who uses the term *addresser* for sender and the term *addressee* for receiver in his communication model. Since the meaning is virtually the same, the terms sender and receiver are used in this thesis as these terms are more appropriate for referencing communication over different channels and modalities. A sender can be a person as a writer, a speaker, or an online user. Likewise, a sender can be a legal entity like a company that wants to reach its customers. A receiver is the recipient of a sender's message and can be a listener, a reader, or a product

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[3] Figure by the author, based on a communication model by Vik and Wortman Gilsdorf (1994)

5

user. The channel is an environment in which message transmission occurs and can take many forms, including the open air, a conference, a web page or telephone lines like in Shannon's model. Depending on the size of the audience, the sender will choose the appropriate channel and modality (Vik and Gilsdorf, 1994). A modality of business communication is the form a message takes before it is transmitted over a channel. Examples of modalities of business communication are an electronic mail which may suffice for internal communications, a written memo for business-to-business communications, and an advertisement used for communication between a business and a consumer. However, before a message can even start its journey toward the receiver, the sender must consider additional variables.

When creating messages, the sender should consider how other influences might affect the receiver's reception and understanding of the message. Jakobson (1960) relates parts of a communication model to a language function they fulfil. *Adresser* (sender) fulfils the *emotive* and the *addressee* (receiver) fulfils the *conative* function. The *emotive* function serves to convey the speaker's emotion or attitude while the *conative* function is focused on the receiver and relates to what is expected from them. In business communication this manifests in the form of the *filter,* which Vik and Gilsdorf (1994: 11) define as the "total of communicator's experiences leading up to the communication." Among other things, the filter includes attitudes, opinions, emotions, values, cultural background, and status. Every individual has a unique filter which impacts how a message is perceived. For a transmission to be successful, the message must pass through both the sender's and the receiver's filters successfully. Consequently, no message can be interpreted by the receiver as the sender intended, but if both parties are careful, the misrepresentations can be reduced to a minimum and the message may achieve its purpose (Vik and Gilsdorf, 1994).

The filter can be respected by paying close attention to connotation or what is implied with a word, and denotation or the specific meaning associated with the word. Misinterpretation of connotation and denotation can lead to a conflicting message decoding. While a sender may be mostly concerned with the conceptual meaning of the word, the receiver might have certain connotations attached to the same word. This can then evoke different feelings depending on the speaker's previous experiences. Connotative meanings are exceptionally important in business communication - advertising in particular - where a great deal of attention is paid to using terms that evoke desired associative meanings (Yule, 1996). One of the ways businesses try to influence receivers and play on their filter is by employing specific linguistic features.

Linguistic features in business communication can appear under different names depending on the author. Maat (2007) calls linguistic features *promotional elements*, Bhatia (1993) calls them *lexical boosts*, while Catenaccio (2008) calls linguistic features *expressive language*. Although the names are different, the function stays the same regardless. Linguistic features used in business communication are precisely chosen to present the product in a more favourable way (Maat, 2007). If the sender is successful in doing that, the message will have a better chance of passing through the receiver's filter. Linguistic features are featured in business communication regardless of modality, although in varying frequency and intensity. More attention will be given to the linguistic features in different modalities in the upcoming chapters.

After dissecting communication and exploring its historical progress, a working definition of business communication can now be provided by the thesis author. Business communication is a formalised method of sharing information, skills, and ideas. It relies on the other party's feedback for progression of its goals, which might be promotion, dealmaking or networking. Business communication is recognizable by three factors, starting with the first factor or the participants involved, the second factor or the heavy use of intensified linguistic features, and the third factor which includes the modalities in which business communication appears. It is important to note, though, that not all modalities are exclusive to business communication.

It took centuries for the communication model to evolve into a form that is used in business communication today. Aristotle laid the groundwork by offering a theoretical explanation on how human communication works while Shannon explored how that communication can happen over new channels and modalities. While the general layout remained the same, new elements like filter and feedback forced senders to carefully consider which linguistic features are used and how they are used. The following chapter introduces the different modalities of business communication.

2.2. Modalities of business communication

Modalities of business communication observed in this thesis are *press releases* (PRs) published on businesses' corporate websites, *news articles* (NAs) published on various Internet portals, *speeches* (SPs) held at conferences or product launch events, and finally *product landing pages* (PLPs) published on businesses' consumer-oriented webpages. These four modalities were chosen because they are interlinked regarding the sender, message, receiver, and channel. Speeches, press releases and product landing pages share a sender, i.e. a business and a message (e.g. a product announcement). Speeches are unique as they are usually held in front of a live audience, while press releases and PLPs are published on corporate websites and are more similar to news articles. Regarding the target audience (receivers), news articles and PLPs are aimed at the general public, while speeches and press releases, as their name suggests, are aimed at the press. In the next four subchapters, all four modalities will be explained.

2.2.1. Press release

The first modality of business communication introduced in this thesis is the press release. A press release is a written statement sent to news services or published on a business's website (McLaren and Gurău, 2005). Press releases are published by a formal entity such as a business, government institutions, nongovernmental organisations, etc. The press release aims to provide information about new products or share announcements made by the management. Press releases took off in the early twentieth century following a devastating railroad crash in 1906. The Pennsylvania Railroad Company wanted to provide a statement regarding the accident that would quickly reach the public. Journalist Ivy Lee was tasked with writing the statement and sending it to the New York Times where it was published in its entirety without revisions (Lee, 1906). The event in question marked the advent of press releases and made Ivy Lee the first publicist (Catenaccio, 2008). As can be seen in Figure 2, contemporary press releases retain the structure of a news article (see Figure 3) since that makes it easier for the journalists to implement the press release into their articles.

When it comes to the use of linguistic features, press releases have a couple of particularities. In an attempt to appear more newsworthy, authors of press releases use what Jacobs (1999) calls an *institutional voice*. When writing press releases, press release writers avoid using first-person pronouns, but instead always refer to the business by using its name or

third-person pronouns (see chapter 2.3.). On the one hand, Jacobs (1999) believes that companies use the third-person self-reference as a way of associating with journalists and presenting the story from their perspective. Maat (2007), on the other hand, argues that this kind of writing, along with the use of the past tense, is a way to present the press release as more objective and authoritative. The first-person pronouns will appear in a press release within the comments when a representative of the company is quoted. The comments also contain the most brash linguistic features because, as Maat (2007: 73) argues:

> "PR writers also know that quotes may enliven the release text in a way that is attractive to journalists. They also know that journalists have less freedom in editing quotes than in editing other sentences. In other words, quotes may be a device to smuggle some promotion into the news report."

After press releases moved to the Internet, the use of various linguistic features became more prominent. When businesses relied on news services alone to get their news across, PR writers had to keep in mind that their audience was dual (Jacobs, 1999). Before the PR writer could convince the public that the business or its product is trustworthy, a reporter must find the press release noteworthy. Consequently, for the communication to be successful, the text had to be written persuasively in two ways. It had to be factual for the reporters to utilise it in their article, and it had to contain enough enticing linguistic features that would influence consumers to buy their product (Catenaccio, 2008). To achieve the desired response, the writer ought to be persuasive while keeping in mind who the audience is, striking a balance between brevity and details, and encouraging feedback (Bhatia, 1993). Press releases are a popular modality in business communication. Mostly because it allows businesses to easily reach a wide audience while sharing a plethora of information. Besides being informative, press releases can also be promotional if certain linguistic features are used.

North American Mazda CX-50 Crossover SUV World Premiere
-Mazda's new core model, made in the USA for the North American market-

Mazda North American Operations today premiered the Mazda CX-50 crossover SUV soon to be released for the North American market.

The CX-50 is a crossover SUV that will be added to our North American lineup to meet the needs of local customers, especially those in the U.S., who look for an SUV-like presence and off-road performance in their vehicle. It is also a core model that will support Mazda's operations in the U.S., a major market for the company, and will be the first model to be produced at Mazda Toyota Manufacturing U.S.A., Inc., a joint venture factory between Mazda and Toyota, in Huntsville, AL, when production starts in January 2022.

Mazda CX-50

Blending Kodo design's elegance and quality with the power and sturdy functionality expected of an SUV, the CX-50 is a crossover SUV with an outdoor-capable presence that respectfully interacts with the surroundings. With a ground clearance that provides a sense of security when driving off- road, the model also offers ideal vehicle height and length for easily loading and securing common outdoor equipment, a user-friendly trunk space and a Panorama Sunroof, all for customers to enjoy the great outdoors even more. The model offers a choice between a turbo-charged 2.5-liter gasoline engine, Skyactiv-G 2.5T, or a 2.5-liter gasoline engine, Skyactiv-G 2.5, for the powertrain, in combination with i-Activ AWD as a standard feature for all model grades.

Furthermore, thanks to the high level of control provided by Mazda Intelligent Drive Select on a variety of road surfaces, the CX-50 will provide a safe and secure driving experience that maintains on-road Jinba-ittai. In addition, a hybrid version of the model will also be introduced in the coming years.
"The CX-50 is the first vehicle to be manufactured at our new Mazda Toyota Manufacturing plant in the U.S. and meets the needs of customers mainly from the U.S., showing our strong commitment to the North American market," said Jeffrey H. Guyton, Mazda's Senior Managing Executive Officer, Oversight of Operations in North America; President and CEO, Mazda Motor of America, Inc. (Mazda North American Operations). "It would be our pleasure if we can further deepen our special connection with customers via this model."

Figure 2 *A Mazda CX-50 press release*[4]

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[4] *North American Mazda CX-50 crossover SUV World premiere*. Mazda newsroom. (2021, November 6). Retrieved October 14, 2022, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/publicity/release/2021/202111/211116a.html

2.2.2. News article

News articles are a hybrid business communication and mass media modality. Before there can be talk of news articles as a business communication modality, it is necessary to explain their primary role as a mass media modality. According to McQuail (1969), news articles deliver factual, relevant, and objective information to their audience. This way, news services build relationships with their readers (message receivers). Through news articles, mass media grants businesses access to a wide audience. Such an audience is heterogeneous in composition, consisting of people from different backgrounds, cultures, and social statuses. Finally, the composition of the audience is constantly shifting, meaning new people are constantly exposed to the message presented in the news article.

As a modality of business communication, news articles are another way for businesses to promote their messages. For their messages to reach a wider audience, businesses send press releases to news services which then publish press releases as news articles. News articles, first published in newspapers, moved to web pages with the advent of the Internet. Besides already established news services, several smaller news sites and blogs were also launched. These smaller services lack resources and professionalism of their highbrow counterparts and according to Fisher, Park and Young Lee (2021) have eroded journalistic integrity. Even so, these smaller web services tend to focus on specific industries or even singular businesses, making them a perfect catalyst for business communication. Especially if they do not make any revisions to press releases and publish them in their entirety. The same can sometimes be said about traditional news services which handle a bigger influx of press releases and related stories, leaving reporters little time to provide their input. Bell (1991) explains the news writing process that starts with a business sending a press release to a news service. After a reporter is assigned a press release, they ought to analyse it, contact the issuer for additional information, and relate the news to previous stories. However, in most cases, reporters are not authors but rather compilers of language as Bell (1991) calls them. Bell (1991: 41) continues that many times journalists add little to none of their observations and that:

> "many stories contain material selected and reworked from documents generated by newsmakers or other media - reports, agendas, proceedings, transcripts, speech notes, news agency copy, newspaper clippings, press releases. Some stories are entirely cut-and-paste jobs from such sources."

Therefore it is safe to assume that a number of linguistic features are carried over from press releases into news articles with reporters adding only some input, mostly in the introductory part or the headline. As previously mentioned in subchapter 2.2.1., businesses go to great lengths to emulate a news article and make their press release attractive to reporters. Bell (1991) suggests that a well-written press release will be considered newsworthy and consequently have a higher chance of being published with only minor revisions. Therefore, press release writers need to strike a balance when it comes to linguistic features. Hoeken and Westbeek (1997 according to Maat 2007) say that journalists are more likely to use a press release if neutral linguistic features are used (e.g. *advanced* instead of *breakthrough*). That does not mean that occasional stronger linguistic features are not welcome. If a business succeeds in getting its press release picked up by a news service, they benefit greatly from access to mass media. Businesses also profit from news service editors editing the news article so that the linguistic features have a better chance of passing through the receiver's filter. News articles this way grant credibility to businesses that appear trustworthy simply because the receivers trust the news service that published the article based on the press release. Receivers are often oblivious to who writes the press releases as they are so closely incorporated into news articles that it is sometimes impossible for a casual reader to differentiate them. In their study, Fisher, Park, and Young Lee (2021) discovered that across 33 countries where research was conducted, most respondents (44% of them) believed that journalists are those who write press releases, while only 26% knew that spokesperson for the company was the one responsible for writing and issuing press releases.

News articles and press releases are inseparable. Sort of like the famous dilemma, "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" news articles influenced the form and content of a press release, and press releases became the main source of information and inspiration for reporters writing news articles. This was true throughout the entire development of press releases. This thesis will try to exemplify the similarities between the linguistic features of news articles and press releases while comparing them to those used in other business communication modalities.

The New York Times

On Newest iPhone, Another Camera

🎁 Give this article   ↪   🔖

By **Miguel Helft** and **Jenna Wortham**
June 7, 2010

SAN FRANCISCO   Seeking to fend off intensifying competition from Google and others in the smartphone business, Apple introduced a new version of the iPhone on Monday that includes a front-facing camera for video chats.

The iPhone 4 is faster and thinner than previous models, with a crisper display and a more angular look. It has a 5-megapixel camera and can shoot and edit high-definition video.

"This is our new baby," said Steven P. Jobs, Apple's chief executive, as he presented the phone during the company's annual Worldwide Developers Conference here. "I hope you love it as much as we do."

Analysts said the new phone came at an opportune moment for Apple. While previous versions of the device continue to sell briskly, buyers have been faced with an increasingly large array of attractive smartphones.

Some phones powered by Google's Android software match and in some cases exceed the capabilities and speed of the iPhone 3GS, the most recent model.

The iPhone 4 should help Apple re-establish its leadership, some analysts said.

"When it ships, it will be the best smartphone on the market," said Tim Bajarin, an analyst with Creative Strategies, who has been following Apple for nearly three decades. "It gives Apple a year's lead on competitors, if not more."

Figure 3 *A New York Times article*[5]

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[5] Wortham, J. (2010, June 7). *On newest iphone, another camera*. The New York Times. Retrieved October 10, 2022, from https://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/08/technology/08apple.html

2.2.3. Speech

A speech held in front of an audience is a very common modality of business communication. Face-to-face communication is generally preferred at a special event or a conference when a new product or a major change is announced. Speeches are held in order to quickly and directly communicate information while obviously displaying the sender (Fairclough, 1989). The major advantage of using speech for delivering the information is that the feedback is received in real time signalling the sender whether the announced product can be considered a success or not. High-ranking officers normally hold these speeches with lower-ranking employees appearing if they need to detail the product or a specific function.

When preparing a speech, a speaker has several types of speeches to choose from. When the speaker is not well prepared, familiar with the subject or fluent in the language in which they are giving the presentation, they can choose to deliver the speech while reading from a manuscript (Vik and Wortman Gilsdorf, 1994). For example, Mazda Motor Company is a Japanese company frequently appearing at international auto shows where English is the language of choice. Given that most of Mazda's corporate structure is from Japan, it is not unusual for Mazda's executives to deliver a speech from a manuscript. Another choice is to try and memorise the speech, which is generally not recommended or common practice. Extemporaneous speech is the most popular type of speech with both the speakers and the audience. It is a speech that most resembles natural speech without sounding artificial (Vik and Wortman Gilsdorf, 1994). Unlike reading or memorising the speech, which can seem like a recital, extemporaneous speech is natural since it does not exist in written form. Although these kinds of speeches appear to be spontaneous, a speaker will still have notes ready in the form of bullet points or visual cues. These are used to remind the speaker of their talking points and aid with the timing. Another form of spontaneous speech is an impromptu speech. Impromptu speeches usually follow a question from the audience or an interviewer and the speaker cannot prepare for them in advance (Vik and Wortman Gilsdorf, 1994). Extemporaneous and impromptu speeches also leave room for mistakes as it is easy for a speaker to lose track of their thought and stumble, making retrace-and-repair sequences a staple of speeches.

Choosing the appropriate speech type is not the only condition for a successful speech. Audio-visual aids, nonverbal signals such as posture, hand movements, or even clothes the speaker is wearing all have an impact on how the speech is received. However, these signals are unrelated to linguistic features and will not be investigated in this thesis. It is still important

to note them, especially since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when many businesses were forced to pre-record their speeches or hold them virtually over different channels. Consequently, visual cues became more prominent since the screen is now the centre of the receiver's attention, not the person in front of them. These speeches show characteristics of different speech types blended together. While the speaker appears to be talking spontaneously to the audience, these speeches still follow a script. Although not the subject of this thesis, the above-mentioned visual cues could be an interesting subject for future studies as holding presentations over online channels does not seem to be losing popularity, even as COVID-19 restrictions are being lifted.

Speeches are important in business communication because the sender is unquestionably a business so there is no need to hold back with linguistic features. Speakers also tend to use more informal language, as well as first-person pronouns when referring to themselves or the company. How similar speeches are to other modalities will be determined later in the thesis after examining the linguistic features used in this modality.

Apple CEO Tim Cook:

One of the things that customers love about the iPhone experience is Find My, and we have some exciting news to share. Here's Carolyn to tell you more.

[…]

Apple Engineering Program Manager Carolyn Wolfman-Estrada:

One of the most helpful features we pioneered is finding your iPhone through Find My. Over time, we made Find My even more powerful. Find My includes a vast end-to-end encrypted and anonymous network approaching a billion Apple devices, that can help locate a missing iPhone, Apple Watch, iPad, and Mac even when it's offline. We also opened the Find My network so you can use Find My to find third-party products. And this is just the beginning!

Today we're adding to this growing ecosystem with a new iPhone accessory that makes finding things even easier. Keys.

[…]

This is AirTag! The next time the couch eats your keys, AirTag will help find them. AirTag uses the Find My network so iPhone can help you keep track of and find your things. You can personalize your AirTag to make it your own, even with emoji. AirTag is easy to use by itself, or with beautiful accessories we've designed. So you can attach it to just about anything, like your backpack, luggage, or whatever else you have. You can keep track of your AirTag right in the Find My app.

Any iPhone with our U1 chip, like iPhone 12, uses helpful overlays to guide you directly to a lost item when it's nearby. We call this Precision Finding. As you move, Precision Finding uses our U1 chip to get the precise distance to your AirTag. iPhone fuses that data with input from the camera, accelerometer, and gyroscope to give you visual, haptic, and audible feedback, guiding you right to your AirTag.

At Apple, we believe privacy is a human right, and that's why we designed it into AirTag and the Find My network. With the Find My network everyone can participate without sharing their location to anyone, including Apple. AirTag is designed to track items, not people. So we included safety features to discourage unwanted tracking, like unwanted tag detection, rotating identifiers, and audible alerts from unknown tags. These capabilities are an industry first and are driven by our commitment to privacy.

So that's AirTag. AirTag is just $29, and because you likely have more than one important item in your life, a 4-pack is just $99. Orders start this Friday, and AirTag will be available April 30th. We also worked with Hermès on a special handcrafted leather collection, a bag charm, luggage tag, and key ring, each including an AirTag etched with an Hermès signature. With AirTag and the Find My network, iPhone can now help you find even more things.

And now, back to Tim.

Figure 4 *A Transcribed speech from an Apple event[6]*

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[6] Apple. (2021, April 20). *Apple event - April 20*. YouTube. Retrieved October 15, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdBYVNuky1M&ab_channel=Apple

2.2.4. Product landing page

A product landing page is a web page on which an Internet visitor first lands after clicking a link or a search result for a specific product. The purpose of a PLP is to inform its visitors about a product or a service while engaging them to spend more time exploring the web page's content (Ash, Page and Ginty, 2012). The creators of a PLP try to achieve engagement by layering the webpage with flashy content usually consisting of a product picture, the product's name, followed by a tagline meant to summarise the product.

The early PLPs, as seen in Figure 5, included a picture of a product and a short description below or to the side. Featured texts were concise and were meant to peak the visitor's interest so they would continue to explore the webpage using various links also featured on the PLP. Those links would branch out the PLP into separate web pages such as the product's photo gallery, product's specification page or a web store where one can buy the aforementioned product. Today's PLPs, presented here in Figure 8, are more graphically intense and house most of the previously linked content right on the landing page. The links are removed to achieve the cleaner look and all the page visitor needs to do to access more information is scroll down. This way the interaction between the message sender and the message receiver is streamlined and the sender can control the narrative around their product by choosing when the visitor can access different parts of the webpage. This way, product landing pages do not have to overload visitors with much information in the form of a text but can instead choose what message the receiver will get at a certain point in time, allowing the receiver to focus on a singular message. Consequently, for the first contact businesses prioritise visual representation over being informative and opt for one standout sentence or a short paragraph briefly outlining the product. In this respect, PLPs are similar to advertisements which, as Bhatia (2014: 72) claims, are:

> "…intended to inform and promote in order to sell ideas, goods or services to a selected group of people; on the other hand, [advertising] is also one of the most dynamic generic forms exhibiting some of the most innovative uses of lexico-grammatical and discoursal forms and rhetorical strategies"

Since the real-estate on PLPs is limited, figures of speech have proven to be the greatest compromise between the user engagement and the number of required words. To make the most of the little text positions available, just like with advertising, businesses do not shy away from using stronger linguistic features on PLPs as they aim to present and sell their product.

Consequently, businesses make the most of the little text appearing at PLPs by employing linguistic features (e.g. figures of speech) that receivers might find appealing. Product landing pages are a modality with a clear receiver and message. For that reason, linguistic features are purposefully chosen to appeal to the receivers.

Figure 5 *A Mazda CX-7 PLP[7]*

[7] Mazda USA. (2007, January 11). *2007 CX-7*. Internet archive. Retrieved February 17, 2023, from https://web.archive.org/web/20070119223845/http://www.mazdausa.com/MusaWeb/displayPage.action?pageParameter=modelsMain&vehicleCode=CX7

2.3. Linguistic features of business communication

According to Biber and Conrad (2009), a linguistic feature is a cover term encompassing various lexical and grammatical features of a language. These can vary from word classes and their respective features to special conversation features and lexical relations features. Linguistic features analysed in this thesis coincide with those that Martin and White (2005: 1) observe through the appraisal network and which show "how writers/speakers approve and disapprove, enthuse and abhor, applaud and criticise, and […] how they position their readers/listeners to do likewise." The observed features reveal the sender's attitude and how they would like their message to be received by the receivers. Some linguistic features, however, are chosen to demonstrate the particularities of certain modalities (e.g. retrace-and-repair sequences). The twelve linguistic features analysed in this thesis are *modifiers (describing, classifying, and emphasising adjectives, comparatives, superlatives), premodifiers (noun modifiers)*, *submodifying adverbs*, *pronouns (personal), discourse markers, retrace-and-repair sequences, figures of speech* and finally *word formation*.

As was explained in the subchapter 2.1., the main criterion for choosing the linguistic features was that they show the message in a more favourable way. Other criteria for choosing these linguistic features were a high rate of occurrences noticed during the preliminary analysis using AntConc toolkit version 4.2.0.[8], a standout presence noticed during the sample collection, specificity to a modality, and finally examples of language creativity. Together with brief explanations of the linguistic features, examples taken from the collected sample will also be provided to better illustrate said features and their role in business communication.

In business communication a major focus is put on modifiers as these features are the ones used to make an object or a person stand out. Modifiers are most commonly adjectives that attributively modify a head noun and are gradable with the use of comparative and superlative forms or submodifying adverbs. Adjectives functioning as modifiers can be *describing*, *classifying*, or *emphasising* (Yule, 2010).

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[8] AntConc is "a freeware, multiplatform tool for carrying out corpus linguistics research, introducing corpus methods, and doing data-driven language learning" (Anthony, 2022.). It is licensed by: Anthony, L. (2022). AntConc (4.2.0) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html

Describing adjectives are used to describe properties of something or someone (e.g. *bold, new, fun*). Other than describing the product, the goal of this linguistic feature is to create an attitude toward the product. This attitude can be achieved by grading, i.e. by using the comparative or superlative form of a describing adjective (e.g. *greater, smartest, most secure*). Another way to achieve attitude or intensification is by choosing a synonym of a word that has a stronger connotation. In the example of a PR from Mazda stating that "Axela's styling has a *powerful* and *distinctive* presence…"[9] the describing adjectives *powerful* and *distinctive* are precisely chosen to connote the uniqueness and excitement of the design although the vehicle in question is an economy car which was designed to be efficient and inexpensive. Nonetheless, these adjectives although intensified are still neutral enough for a journalist to incorporate them into their article. It is thanks to this clever use of connotative meaning that press releases can promote their products while staying informative. It is also the reason why the describing adjectives are most commonly found in press releases.

Classifying adjectives, when placed in front of a noun, categorise that noun or put it in a class. Classifying adjectives can denote, among other things, origin, purpose, type, or a material (e.g. *Japanese, manual, titanium*) (Yule, 2010). Just like describing adjectives, classifying adjectives are crucial for presenting the product as they are used to denote important aspects of the product. They are also used by the businesses to flaunt the materials of their lineup as that is often what differentiates their product from competition. One example of this is when glass became a popular material among technology manufacturers in the 2010s, best seen in Apple's press release indicating that "The *all-glass* front and back feature the most durable *glass* ever in a smartphone…"[10] The word *glass* is used twice in this example; once as *all-glass*, a classifying adjective paired with a determiner to intensify the meaning, and once as a noun which itself is modified by a superlative *the most durable*.

Sender's attitude can also be determined by analysing which emphasising adjectives are employed. Emphasising adjectives are used to talk about something special and unique (Yule, 2010). They are also used to intensify or reinforce the meaning of a noun (e.g. *first, key, fine*). Emphasising adjectives can also be restrictive rather than intensifying, meaning they focus attention on a certain characteristic of the meaning (e.g. *genuine*). In the example of Mazda's

[9] *Mazda Unveils the Next Sports Compact 'Mazda Axela'*. Mazda newsroom. (2003, October 15). Retrieved February 17, 2023, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/publicity/release/2003/200310/1015ae.html

[10] *The future is here: Iphone X*. Apple Newsroom. (2017, September 12). Retrieved October 15, 2022, from https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2017/09/the-future-is-here-iphone-x/

PR, "*Key* exterior design elements include…"[11] the emphasising adjective *key* is used to draw the reader to the exterior design elements and characterise them as the most important ones.

Premodifiers are less common than modifiers but still have a crucial role in business communication. When nouns are used to premodify another noun they are called noun modifiers (e.g. *design* language, *design* philosophy) (Biber et al., 2007). Nouns used as noun modifiers are singular forms of countable nouns. Proper nouns can also be noun modifiers (e.g. *Snapdragon* processor, *Hermes* signature). Consequently, the names of the businesses appear so often in business communication in large part due to the widespread usage of proper nouns as noun modifiers such as *Mazda* in the example of a press release "…redefine the segment must deliver the signature *Mazda* driving dynamics of responsiveness…"[12] If noun modifiers need to be expanded with additional information they can be modified with adjectives or other noun modifiers. Judging by their usage, noun modifiers are more closely related to classifying adjectives than they are to nouns.

Some modifiers like classifying adjectives are not gradable in a traditional sense - by using comparatives and superlatives – instead, they need to be combined with a submodifying adverb. Submodifying adverbs intensify an adjective's quality or express the sender's opinion regarding it (e.g. *really, very, uniquely*). Submodifying adverbs can also be used to reduce the effect of an adjective (Hands, 2011). This is usually done when the meaning of an adjective is negative, and the sender wants to downplay the negativity. If adverbs such as *rather*, *quite*, or *somewhat* are used, the effect of an adjective will be reduced (Martin and White, 2005). In the example sentence "The taper of the small side window leads us to believe that it'll have a *somewhat* swoopy roof design…"[13] the writer used somewhat to soften the adjective as they do not believe that the design lives up to the adjective fully. This is often used by journalists when they are expressing their own opinion about the subject they are covering. In speeches it is not uncommon for intensification of adjectives to be achieved by repetition of submodifying adverbs. As Martin and White (2005: 144) point out "Intensification can […] be realised […] either by the repeating of the same lexical item, or by the assembling of lists of terms which are

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[11] *2009 Los Angeles Auto Show*. Mazda newsroom. (2009, December 2). Retrieved October 12, 2022, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/motorshow/1212/index.html?tab=tab3&pagenum=1

[12] *2004 2nd gen. Mazda5 Press Kit An Insightful New Dimension of Zoom-Zoom Pleasure*. Mazda newsroom. (2004, September 23). Retrieved August 24, 2022, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/motorshow/1291/index.html?tab=tab3&pagenum=1

[13] Krok, A. (2017, April 28). *Mazda readies three-row CX-8 crossover for Japan*. CNET. Retrieved October 14, 2022, from https://www.cnet.com/roadshow/news/mazda-readies-three-row-cx-8-crossover-for-japan/

closely related semantically." In the example of a speech from Apple, repetition of the word *really* in "we get *really*, *really* sharp text"[14] is used by the speaker to show their attitude towards the product, the attitude they can show freely in speeches as the sender is unambiguously a business which wants to promote their product in the most favourable light possible.

The use of personal pronouns in business communication varies between modalities. On the one hand, press releases are written using third-person pronouns, while speeches, on the other hand, are filled with first-person pronouns. News articles and PLPs show an equal usage of both first-person and third-person pronouns. When reporters want to give their personal opinion or relate to the matter, they will use first-person pronouns freely, like in the following example "*I* have seen Apple transition itself…"[15] Another instance of first-person pronouns in news articles is within a quote from a company representative, either taken from an interview or a speech. A perfect example is an extract from a New York Times article "Mr. Jobs would not say how open the phone would be to other developers, but added: '*I* don't want people to think of this as a computer. *I* think of it as reinventing the phone.'"[16] Quotes are a popular way for PR writers to sneak in some subjectivity disguised as a comment from a company representative. This results in the only cases of first-person pronouns in PRs like the pronoun *we* in the example from Mazda "With the All-New BT-50, *we* aimed to express this emotion through the design, and *we* drew a lot of inspiration from various "movements" in the world around us.'"[17] Regarding speeches, the message sender is unambiguously a business, and the business's representatives on stage do not shy away from using first-person pronouns. The most often occurring pronoun is *we*, sometimes appearing multiple times in the same sentence as in "*We* can get far more precision the more pixels *we* have, and *we* play all sorts of tricks by putting different levels of grey pixels on that line…"[18] Jacobs (1999) calls this use of first person *we* an advertising device, implying it has an opposite aim to institutional voice. While institutional voice distances the sender from the message, using *we* as an advertising device,

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[14] Apple. (2010, June 7). *WWDC 2010*. Internet Archive. Retrieved September 19, 2022, from https://archive.org/details/apple_wwdc_2010_keynote_address_202109

[15] Bajarin, T. (2021, April 20). *AirTags are Apple's next billion dollar business*. Forbes. Retrieved October 15, 2022, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/timbajarin/2021/04/20/airtags-are-apples-next-billion-dollar-business/

[16] Markoff, J. (2007, January 10). *Apple introduces innovative cellphone*. The New York Times. Retrieved October 6, 2022, from https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/10/technology/10apple.html

[17] *2010 Australian International Motor Show*. Mazda newsroom. (2010, October 15). Retrieved October 12, 2022, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/motorshow/1302/index.html?tab=tab3&pagenum=1

[18] *WWDC 2010*. Internet Archive. (2010, June 7). Retrieved September 19, 2022, from https://archive.org/details/apple_wwdc_2010_keynote_address_202109

the sender closely ties themselves to the message. Interestingly, the second most occurring pronoun in speeches is *you*, suggesting that the speakers are not afraid to address the audience directly such as in "And look what *you* can do on a notebook now. *You* can have your Photoshop images with all of your palettes up, *you* can be using InDesign not just on one page but on a spread. Look what *you* can do with Final Cut Pro or Final Cut Express. Look what *you* can do with Digidesign..."[19] In PLPs, it is a common practice to address the receiver directly, as seen in Figure 8, where the pronoun *you* is used repeatedly "The all-new Mazda3 hatchback strikes *you* with its powerful, seductive presence and strong sporty appeal." In both examples, the pronoun *you* is used to place the receiver in a situation where they are affected by the product or enabled to do a certain activity thanks to that product.

Discourse markers are predominantly a feature of spoken communication and occur at the beginning of an utterance (e.g. *well, now, okay*). The function is to mark a transition in the presentation and create a bond with the receivers (Biber et al., 2007). In sampled speeches the most frequent examples of discourse markers are *well* and *now*. However, they appear under different conditions. *Now* is generally used to mark the beginning of a new talking point as in "*Now* I'd like to take time to talk about our sales strategy and marketing."[20] W*ell* is, however, more versatile than that. Although it can also be used to mark a transition to a new point, in the sample examined in this thesis, for the majority of its appearances, the discourse marker *well* follows a question. Biber et al. (2007) say that the discourse marker *well* indicates the speaker's intent to share their opinion on the issue. Unsurprisingly, in business communication examined in this thesis the discourse marker *well* follows rhetorical questions that speakers pose before presenting their product as a solution to the said problem, best seen in the example "So how are we going to do that now? *Well*, of course, you can just speak to your phone as before…"[21]

As it was previously discussed in the subchapter 2.3.3. the speakers opting for an extemporaneous speech are subjecting themselves to a higher risk of making a mistake which can result in retrace-and-repair sequences. These sequences happen when a speaker makes a mistake, retraces what they have just said and starts again, this time with the correct word or sequence of words (Biber et al., 2007). Retrace-and-repair sequences are a feature unique to

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[19] Apple. (2003, January 7). *Macworld 2003*. Internet Archive. Retrieved September 28, 2022, from https://archive.org/details/macworld-2003-full-keynote

[20] *Mazda Axela/Mazda3' Domestic Launch Press Conference*. Mazda newsroom. (2003, October 15). Retrieved February 17, 2023, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/about/speech/1657/index.html

[21] Apple. (2017, September 12). *Apple Special Event September 2017*. Internet Archive. Retrieved October 11, 2022, from https://archive.org/details/Apple-September-2017-02

speeches. When the speaker is speaking extemporaneously, it is not uncommon for them to make a mistake followed by a retrace-and-repair sequence as in "The iPod Nano is 80% smaller *in ball-*, *in volume* than the original iPod."[22] Retrace-and-repair sequences are usually omitted in transcripts, while the failed take is redone in pre-recorded speeches. Nevertheless, in live speeches, these mistakes are almost unavoidable.

Business communication abounds with figures of speech. A figure of speech, referred to as a literary device when used in literature, is a result of a complex and thought-out creative process employed with the goal of attaching alternate meanings to a message (Dupriez, 1991). Since figures of speech are dependent on the receiver's interpretation, more challenging figures can sometimes go unnoticed by uninformed receivers or, depending on their filter, different receivers might attach different meanings to the message. Figures of speech used in business communication are usually based on exploits of lexical relations. Writers use the relationship between words (e.g. homophony, polysemy, etc.) to achieve a comical effect that receivers might find appealing (Yule, 1996). The product landing pages are a modality that features figures of speech the most. As the business's direct channel to the customers, PLPs do not shy away from using puns, witty language or other figures of speech to make the PLPs, and eventually the product more appealing. PLPs are also the modality that features the least text, so the writers have to make up for that fact by using figures of speech to intensify descriptive adjectives so they can paint their products in a positive light. This way they also avoid overwhelming the Internet visitors with too much information.

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[22] Apple. (2005, September 7). *Apple Special Event September 2005*. Internet Archive. Retrieved October 4, 2022, from https://archive.org/details/i-pod-nano-introduction-7-sep-2005
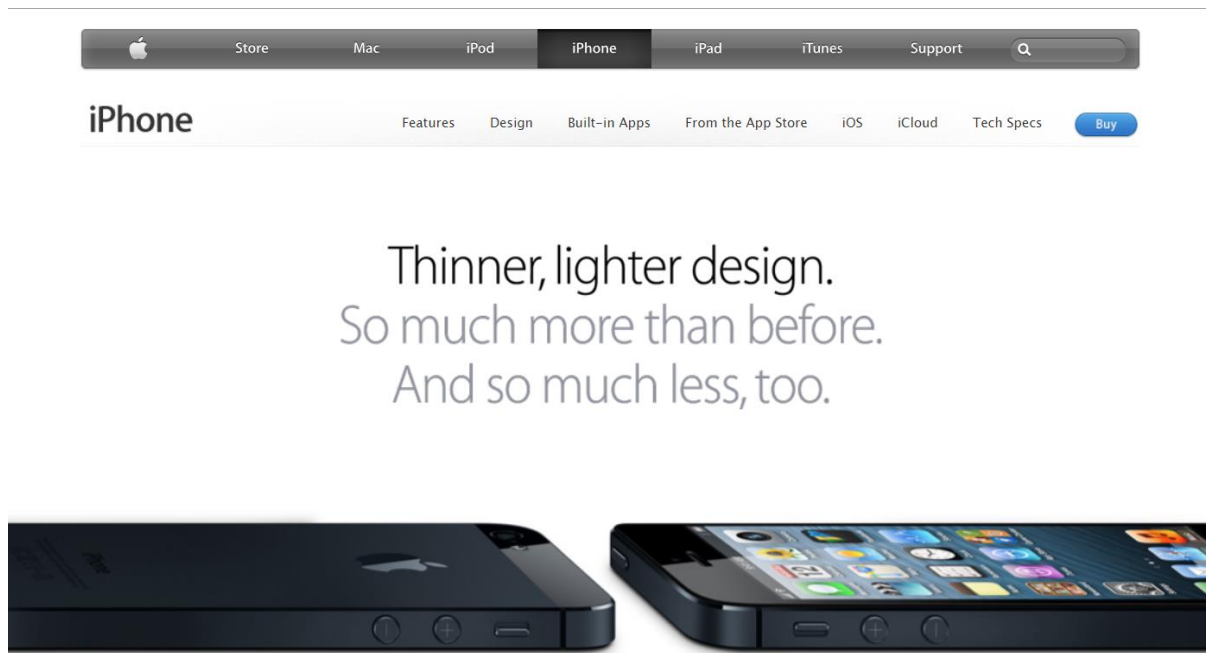
Figure 6 *An iPhone 5 PLP*[23]

As can be seen in Figure 6, the text on a modern PLP is reduced to just three short sentences. The writers make the most of that real estate by employing figures of speech. The wordplay in the sentences "So much *more* than before. And so much *less*, too"[24] is achieved through antonymy. Juxtaposing *less* with *more* while describing the same device may seem like an oxymoron at first, but that is not accidental. The writer used this linguistic figure to point out how the business achieved seemingly impossible when creating this new device. This contrast draws in the reader and piques their interest in how such a feat was achieved.

Another example of writers using figures of speech in PLPs is rhyming. This linguistic feature can be best seen on the Apple TV landing page as shown in Figure 7 below.

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[23] Apple. (2012, September 12). *iPhone 5. the biggest thing to happen to iphone since iphone.* Internet archive. Retrieved February 19, 2023, from https://web.archive.org/web/20120913005137/http://www.apple.com/iphone/
[24] Ibid.

Figure 7 *An Apple TV PLP*[25]

In this example, the writer rhymed *vision* with *television* using exact rhyme, meaning that the last stressed syllables of the two words are identical. Other than using rhyme so that the words roll off the tongue more poetically, the writer also used wordplay based on polysemy. The word *vision* in the PLP stands for both the literal ability to see and the business's plan for the future of the product. This way one PLP showcases both the product itself or its interface, and the vision that the business has for that product category.

Figures of speech can also be used to intensify the modifiers. One such example is the Mazda 3 PLP shown in Figure 8 which states "ALL-NEW MAZDA3" with "SPORTY AND SEDUCTIVE" written below it. While the emphasis is on adjectives, the writers still chose the adjectives starting with the letter "*s*" to achieve alliteration i.e. repetition of the same letter in adjacent words. Alliteration is both visually and phonetically pleasing to the message receiver, especially when coupled with adjectives that connote a pleasurable experience.

[25] Apple. (2019, June 5). *Apple TV*. Internet archive. Retrieved February 20, 2023, from https://web.archive.org/web/20190605004134/https://www.apple.com/tv

STIRS EVERY ONE OF YOUR SENSES EVEN BEFORE YOU DRIVE

The All-New Mazda3 hatchback strikes you with its powerful, seductive presence and strong sporty appeal. It is designed to make you feel you're looking at a work of art - not just a car. The way light plays on its flowing lines gives the impression that it is moving, even when standing still.

Figure 8 *A Mazda 3 PLP*[26]

While PLPs feature figures of speech the most, other modalities also have their fair share of examples. In the analysed sample, a number of Mazda's press releases featured personification or the prescription of human characteristics to cars. In one press release, Mazda's publicists described their new car through comparison of different parts of the vehicle to human body parts:

> "These start at Mazda's new family *face* – the signature wing grille and glinting '*eyes'* with their halo ring light and LEDs extending the wing outwards – and flow through the powerful *shoulders* and *haunches* supporting the…"[27]

The front of the car is described as a *face* with light fixtures called *eyes* while the vehicle's side lines are compared to *shoulders* and *haunches*. Using human features, the writer breathes life into the car and makes it easier for the reader to connect with the vehicle. This also makes the vehicle seem more dynamic and approachable.

[26] Mazda UK. (2019, June 12). *Sporty and seductive*. Internet archive. Retrieved February 20, 2023, from https://web.archive.org/web/20190612070641mp_/https://www.mazda.co.uk/cars/all-new-mazda3-hatchback/

[27] *2012 Paris Motor Show press kit All-new Mazda6 2012 Paris Motor Show Press Material*. Mazda newsroom. (2012, September 27). Retrieved October 13, 2022, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/motorshow/1217/index.html?tab=tab3&pagenum=1

In news articles figures of speech can be used not to promote the product, but to make the article more appealing and easier to read. In the following example, the author used repetition of the words *parts* and *wonder* to achieve a play on words "It is a *parts-bin wonder*, but a *wonderful* sum of all *parts*."[28] The use of idiom "*run for its money*" tries to achieve the same effect in the example "Otherwise, the Mazda3 will give the industry leaders, like the VW Golf, a real *run for its money*,"[29] and make the article livelier and more appealing to the reader.

Newly formed words, i.e. neologisms, are a staple of business communication. Every technological innovation is followed by a language innovation since new products or features require new names. Then, if the product is popular enough, the public will adopt the neologism and use it for that product category regardless of the brand. Word formation is the cover term for a number of processes that lead to the creation of a new word (Plag, 2003). These can include but are not limited to: compounding (combining a base with affixes, or combining two or more bases to form a new word), neologisms (newly coined words), clipping (abbreviating a word without changing the meaning) and analogy (formation of a word based on a model set by another word) (Plag, 2003). Apple Inc. tends to use proprietary names for their products and features. Apple's flagship product - the iPhone - is one so popular that today many people call every smartphone an iPhone. The name itself is a result of compounding and analogy. By the time the iPhone came out, Apple had already systemised the nomenclature for their products, beginning with the iMac in 1998, nine years before the iPhone was announced. Word iMac was a result of compounding the character "*i*" - which according to Jobs (1998) stands for *internet*, *individual*, *instruct*, *inform*, and *inspire* - together with *Mac*. The word *Mac* itself results from a clipping process, deriving from the word Macintosh. Following that naming scheme – or through analogy – Apple named their new phone by compounding the "*i"* with the *phone* to create a new name for a new product in a new product category.

2.4. Previous studies

When it comes to studies that deal with the language aspect of business communication, the majority of the available research deals with the genre study of business communication.

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[28] Vaughn, M. (2006, May 14). *2007 Mazda CX-7: Crossing over: Mazda's CX-7 fills niches we didn't even know we had*. Autoweek. Retrieved September 9, 2022, from https://www.autoweek.com/news/a2066251/2007-mazda-cx-7-crossing-over-mazdas-cx-7-fills-niches-we-didnt-even-know-we-had

[29] Lyon, P. (2018, December 1). *All-new mazda3 signals breathtaking future design direction*. Forbes. Retrieved October 14, 2022, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/peterlyon/2018/11/30/new-mazda3-gets-gorgeous-makeover-and-awd-for-the-first-time/

Genre is a standardised and precisely structured communicative event defined by a communicative goal it aims to fulfil within an academic or professional environment (Swales, 1990). The most prominent works on the subject are those by Biber and Conrad (2009), Bhatia (1993, 2004) and McLaren and Gurău (2005). However, in their works they do not deal with specific linguistic features, but rather focus on the structure of business communication while only noting the appearance of linguistic features.

The research on the use of the linguistic features of English language was primarily conducted by Jacobs (1999) and Maat (2007). Jacobs (1999) analyses the use of verbs, adverbs and pronouns as tools for self-quotation, performative sentences and self-reference, but only in one modality of business communication - the press release. Maat (2007) analysed two sample sets of press releases and news articles. The first sample set consisted of press releases issued by businesses in the airline industry and news articles by magazines covering the airline industry. The second sample set consisted of press releases from a variety of large companies, while the news articles were taken ftom the daily papers. In both sets the news articles were based on the aforementioned press releases. His aim was to see how linguistic features are used to set a promotional tone. After comparing the news articles to the press releases they were based on, he concluded that news services will reuse press releases even if they feature an abundance of intensified linguistic features.

To corroborate that, Maat (2007: 82) provides an example of an extract from a Lufthansa's press release stating that "Five top-ranking chefs from various European regions have created sophisticated regional dinners especially for Lufthansa in order to give the Business-passengers just a little bit more" and an extract from a magazine article based on the previously mentioned press release, i.e. "(Last month a new concept was introduced) by 5 top-ranking chefs from various European regions, who created sophisticated regional dinners especially for Lufthansa in order to give the Business-passengers just a little bit more." Both examples include intensified adjectives like *top-ranking* and *sophisticated* confirming Maat's argument that journalists will reuse even the intensified linguistic features found in press releases when writing their articles.

Besides Maat (2007), other studies investigating linguistic features in multiple modalities of business communication could not be found. Henceforth, this study will contribute by analysing the linguistic features of business communication across four different modalities and comparing their similarities and differences. The uniqueness of this thesis is the variance of modalities, the focus on specific product announcements across those modalities

and the observation over three different time periods. These three factors differentiate this study from other studies focusing on business communication.

3. Methodology

This study aims to analyse the use of linguistic features of English in different modalities of business communication. As previously mentioned, several studies and genre analysis were done on press releases and news articles; however, this study introduces two additional modalities – speeches and product landing pages - which could provide new insights into business communication in relation to the use of linguistic features.

3.1. Research questions

The thesis addresses the following questions:

RQ1: What are the most common linguistic features of English across different modalities of business communication and how are they distributed in the three observation periods?

RQ2: Are there any differences or similarities in the use of linguistic features of English across different modalities of business communication?

RQ3: Are there any changes in the usage of linguistic features of English in different modalities of business communication over time?

3.2. The sample

For this thesis, just two businesses were chosen as the message senders – Apple Incorporated and Mazda Motor Company. These two businesses were chosen because of their organised press release archives and because of their presence in their respective industries which meant extensive news coverage. As a result, materials were abundant and generally easily accessible online, facilitating the collection of the sample regardless of the modality.

The first criterion for a sample to be representative, according to Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998), is *variety*. Unique to this thesis is the sample that includes 30 product announcements made over three distinct periods of time, all bar one featured in the four modalities – press releases, news articles, speeches, and product landing pages (see Table 1). The 30 product announcements in questions are also evenly divided between two businesses, with 15 products being announced by Mazda and 15 by Apple.

The second criterion that needs to be taken into consideration (Biber, Conrad, and Reppen 1998) is *diversity*. Samples need to be diverse in order to be representative, since language as a whole consists of various registers. As this thesis focuses on a specific register, that of business communication, variety is achieved by choosing samples from two companies coming from different industries. Additionally, samples of news articles were taken from 18 different news services[30] with the aim of minimising writer bias or repetition of linguistic features due to one's writing style. Consequently, most of the news services were accessed only once, with the rest being accessed two to three times. Only one news service - Motor trend - was accessed four times since it was the only one that had quality articles available online even after twenty years.

The final major criterion to consider is *the size*. The sample size needs to be balanced to avoid overexposure or underexposure of certain linguistic features (Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998). However, having a consistent sample size is impossible due to particularities of modalities in question. While press releases and speeches can span over several pages, news articles usually fit on a single page and the PLP's feature only a couple of sentences. Nonetheless, this should not be an issue for this thesis as its aim is to illustrate the differences between the modalities and that includes examining each modality individually and then comparing it to other modalities and the business communication as a whole.

A total of 119 samples of business communication were collected (Table 1). The samples consist of 30 press releases, 30 news articles, 30 PLPs and 29 speeches across three time periods. There are only 29 speeches since a product from Mazda was launched in 2021 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic without a formal presentation, resulting in a lack of speech modality concerning that product.

Table 1 *The distribution of modalities of business communication across three time periods*

Period	Modality				
	Press releases	News articles	Speeches	PLPs	Total
P1	10	10	10	10	40
P2	10	10	10	10	40
P3	10	10	9	10	39
Total	30	30	29	30	119

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[30] News services in question are Motor trend, Autocar, Autoweek, Phys, Macworld, Sound on Sound, MacDailyNews, The New York Times, Car and Driver, Autoevolution, The Verge, TechCrunch, Forbes, CNET, Engadget, Jalopnik, Time, and Wired.

The collected sample is divided into three five-year periods: the first period (P1) from 2003 until 2007, the second period (P2) from 2008 until 2012 and the third period (P3) from 2017 until 2021. These periods were chosen because at that time the Internet saw its biggest growth. At the start of the P1 in 2003, over 677 million people, or just over 10% of Earth's population, were using the Internet. By the end of that period, in 2007, the percentage of Internet users doubled to 20%.[31] The speed at which the Internet was gaining popularity at the time was staggering and by the end of the P2 in 2012, the number of Internet users had grown to just shy of 2.5 billion people.[32] At the beginning of the P3 in 2017, the number of Internet users finally crossed 50% of Earth's population and at the end of 2021, the number of Internet users was 5.252 billion people or more than two-thirds of the global population.[33] This period was also chosen because it includes the years 2020 and 2021, when COVID-19 pandemic had its greatest impact that was felt all over the world and which changed, among other things, how companies do business and communicate.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The data collection was done entirely online. The goal was to collect 120 samples relating to 30 product announcements, with each product being featured in all four modalities. Out of those 30 product announcements, as already stated, 15 were to come from Apple Inc. and 15 from Mazda Motor Company. As previously mentioned, in the end a total of 119 samples were collected, with one speech missing as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

Press releases were easiest to access as they are published on businesses' corporate websites and are categorised by date, press release type or product category. They were the most plentiful, so finding them for a specific product announcement was not hard. After the examples of other modalities for the same announcement were found, the PR was downloaded as a PDF file.

News articles were taken from various news services. While most news articles were published the same day the product was announced, this is not the case for all samples. This is because the products from the first period were launched twenty years ago and not a lot of news services were active on the Internet just yet. Those that were, have since taken down articles

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[31] *Internet growth statistics 1995 to 2023 - the global village online*. Internet World Stats. (n.d.). Retrieved November 7, 2022, from https://www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm
[32] Ibid
[33] Ibid.

from that time due to the cost of Internet hosting. Consequently, some articles are published in the months following the original product announcements after the products had come in for a review.

Speeches from the presentations were harder to come by as businesses do not usually publish speech transcripts. Mazda is an exception as they maintain an archive of speeches held by their high-ranking executives at prominent auto shows. They do not, however, keep videos of speeches archived making it impossible to analyse them for retrace-and-repair sequences. Apple, in contrast, does not keep an archive of their transcribed speeches but instead publishes their conferences in their entirety on their website. Presentations from the early 2000s are all available on the Internet Archive's website - a non-profit organisation that keeps records of Internet sites since the archive's foundation in 1996[34] – while more recent presentations are made available on Apple's official YouTube channel.

Availability was a challenge when finding product landing pages. Since PLPs are refreshed with each new product iteration, it would seemingly be impossible to find old PLPs Thankfully, many internet pages are archived on the Internet archive's website. Similar to how a real-world archive takes a copy of a document and archives the original for safekeeping, the Internet archive takes a snapshot of an Internet page at one point in time and archives it for anyone to access it later. The archived page is nearly identical to the original; the only difference is that some interactive media will not load. However, since this thesis is only interested in linguistic features, that is irrelevant since static pictures and text load generally without issues.

To illustrate the data collection procedure, an example related to a product announcement from Mazda will be given. In 2010 the Mazda Motor Company unveiled a refreshed model of their vehicle, the Mazda BT-50. The vehicle was launched on the 15th of October at the 2010 Australian International Motor Show where Mazda held a press conference. During that conference Doug Dickson, the Managing Director of Mazda Australia, held a speech detailing the product. The transcription of this speech was published on Mazda's Newsroom website. On the same website, a press release was also made available for the journalists and the general public. From this website, both the speech and the press release were downloaded and added to the sample. Between the announcement of a new vehicle and the start of its sale usually a certain period of time passes. Since PLPs are published only when the product is ready for sale, the Mazda BT-50 PLP is from the late 2011 although the vehicle was

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[34] *About*. Internet Archive. (n.d.). Retrieved October 25, 2022, from https://archive.org/about/

launched at the end of 2010. The PLP was taken from the snapshot available at the Internet archive website. News articles covering the product announcements are usually published on the day of the product announcement itself. This was the case with the Autoevolution article reporting the launch of the refreshed Mazda BT-50. Other times news articles can report on certain products only once they go on sale or journalists receive the review units which can happen days or even months after the original product announcement. Therefore, for the Mazda BT-50 product announcement, there are four samples from four modalities. The speech and the press release downloaded from Mazda's Newsroom website, PLP taken from the Internet archive and a news article taken from Autoevolution. This procedure was followed for the remaining 29 products – 14 more from Mazda, and 15 from Apple.

After the sample was collected, it was divided into 4 groups, one for each modality. Each group was put through a preliminary analysis using a sample analysis toolkit AntConc version 4.2.0. with the goal of discovering the most frequent linguistic features based on the number of occurrences. After the toolkit highlighted the standout linguistic features in each modality, a more thorough analysis could be conducted. The selected linguistic features were then manually counted from the collected samples and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20 for the purpose of further analysis. First the one-way ANOVA was conducted on the sample, followed by the Games-Howell post-hoc test, results of which are outlined in the following chapter.

4. Results

This chapter brings forward the results of the research. First, the results on the use of linguistic features of English across all four modalities of business communication, including their distribution over the three time periods, will be featured (RQ1). Next, the results in relation to the differences and similarities in the use of linguistic features of English across different modalities of business communication will be displayed (RQ2) along with results reflecting the possible changes in the use of these linguistic elements over the observation period (RQ3).

4.1. Results on the use of linguistic features of English across different modalities of business communication

Among the most frequent linguistic features of English across all four modalities of business communication and over all three time periods (Figure 9) are the describing adjectives (3518 or 27,6%), pronouns (3047 or 23,9%), classifying adjectives (2235 or 17,5%) and noun modifiers (2085 or 16,3%). Comparatives (470 or 3,7%), submodifying adverbs (403 or 3,2%), emphasising adjectives (337 or 2,6%), superlatives (310 or 2,4%) and discourse markers (214 or 1,7%) account for less than 5% of the total number of linguistic features each. Figures of speech (90 or 0,7%), word formation (44 or 0,3%) and retrace-and-repair sequences (7 or 0,1%) account for fewer than 100 examples each, representing less than 1% of linguistic features of business communication. For this reason, they have been excluded from Figure 9. The distribution of linguistic features of all four modalities in the overall sample can be seen in Table 2 on the following pages.
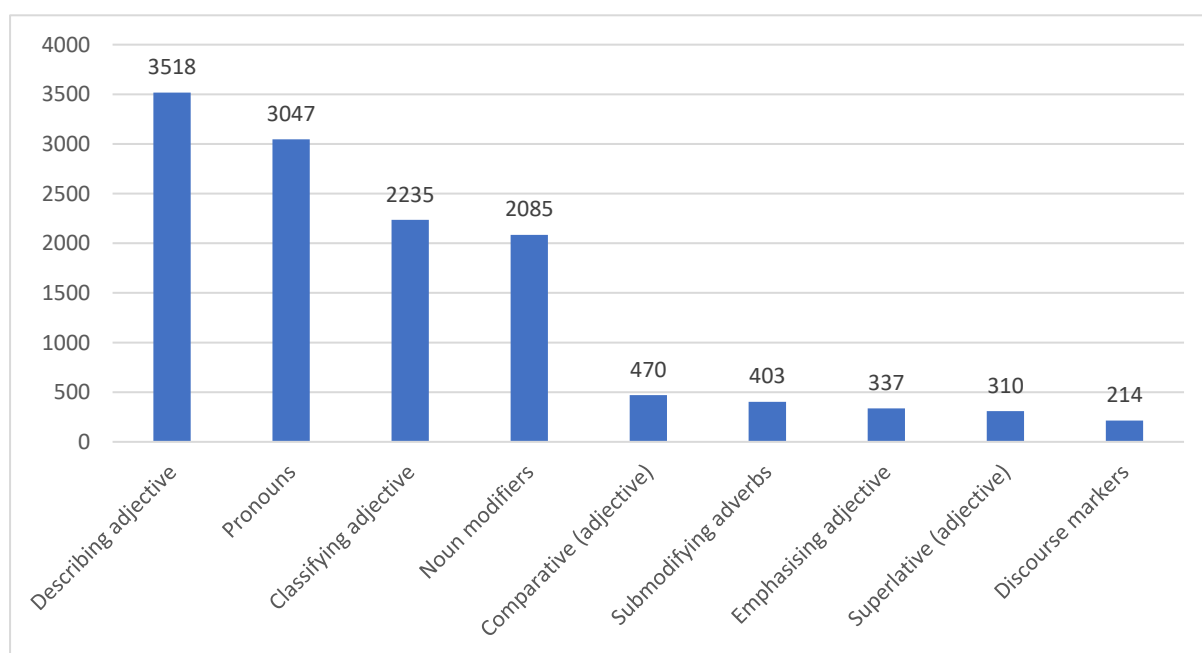

Figure 9 *The use of linguistic features across different modalities of business communication*

Table 2 *The distribution of linguistic features across four modalities – the overall sample*

		Modalities								
		Press release		News article		Speech		PLP		
			% of Total		% of Total		% of Total		% of Total	
	Time periods	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	TOTAL (%)
Describing adjective	P1	789	22,4%	309	8,8%	323	9,2%	61	1,7%	
	P2	487	13,8%	237	6,7%	275	7,8%	52	1,5%	
	P3	519	14,8%	186	5,3%	264	7,5%	16	,5%	
	TOTAL	**1795**	**51,0%**	**732**	**20,8%**	**862**	**24,5%**	**129**	**3,7%**	**3518 (27,6%)**
Classifying adjective	P1	551	24,7%	181	8,1%	175	7,8%	33	1,5%	
	P2	282	12,6%	246	11,0%	141	6,3%	11	,5%	
	P3	305	13,6%	154	6,9%	152	6,8%	4	,2%	
	TOTAL	**1138**	**50,9%**	**581**	**26,0%**	**468**	**20,9%**	**48**	**2,1%**	**2235 (17,5%)**
Emphasising adjective	P1	68	20,2%	20	5,9%	35	10,4%	10	3,0%	
	P2	32	9,5%	8	2,4%	29	8,6%	4	1,2%	
	P3	62	18,4%	40	11,9%	28	8,3%	1	,3%	
	TOTAL	**162**	**48,1%**	**68**	**20,2%**	**92**	**27,3%**	**15**	**4,5%**	**337 (2,6%)**
Comparative (adjective)	P1	43	9,1%	37	7,9%	45	9,6%	11	2,3%	
	P2	61	13,0%	54	11,5%	66	14,0%	8	1,7%	
	P3	60	12,8%	34	7,2%	50	10,6%	1	,2%	
	TOTAL	**164**	**34,9%**	**125**	**26,6%**	**161**	**34,3%**	**20**	**4,3%**	**470 (3,7%)**
Superlative (adjective)	P1	29	9,4%	12	3,9%	34	11,0%	5	1,6%	
	P2	58	18,7%	10	3,2%	44	14,2%	5	1,6%	
	P3	50	16,1%	22	7,1%	38	12,3%	3	1,0%	
	TOTAL	**137**	**44,2%**	**44**	**14,2%**	**116**	**37,4%**	**13**	**4,2%**	**310 (2,4%)**
Submodifying adverbs	P1	71	17,6%	43	10,7%	72	17,9%	8	2,0%	
	P2	41	10,2%	37	9,2%	41	10,2%	6	1,5%	
	P3	33	8,2%	19	4,7%	29	7,2%	3	,7%	
	TOTAL	**145**	**36,0%**	**99**	**24,6%**	**142**	**35,2%**	**17**	**4,2%**	**403 (3,2%)**

Table 2 continued *The distribution of linguistic features across four modalities – the overall sample*

		Modalities								
		Press release		News article		Speech		PLP		
	Time periods	Sum	% of Total Sum	Sum	% of Total Sum	Sum	% of Total Sum	Sum	% of Total Sum	TOTAL (%)
Noun modifiers	P1	527	25,3%	179	8,6%	150	7,2%	32	1,5%	
	P2	252	12,1%	180	8,6%	143	6,9%	18	,9%	
	P3	317	15,2%	122	5,9%	163	7,8%	2	,1%	
	TOTAL	**1096**	**52,6%**	**481**	**23,1%**	**456**	**21,9%**	**52**	**2,5%**	**2085 (16,3%)**
Word formation	P1	8	18,2%	4	9,1%	5	11,4%	1	2,3%	
	P2	7	15,9%	5	11,4%	4	9,1%	2	4,5%	
	P3	3	6,8%	2	4,5%	2	4,5%	1	2,3%	
	TOTAL	**18**	**40,9%**	**11**	**25,0%**	**11**	**25,0%**	**4**	**9,1%**	**44 (,3%)**
Figures of speech	P1	2	2,2%	17	18,9%	15	16,7%	15	16,7%	
	P2	4	4,4%	6	6,7%	3	3,3%	9	10,0%	
	P3	2	2,2%	4	4,4%	2	2,2%	11	12,2%	
	TOTAL	**8**	**8,9%**	**27**	**30,0%**	**20**	**22,2%**	**35**	**38,9%**	**90 (,7%)**
Pronouns	P1	87	2,9%	175	5,7%	851	27,9%	53	1,7%	
	P2	126	4,1%	158	5,2%	765	25,1%	34	1,1%	
	P3	106	3,5%	167	5,5%	511	16,8%	14	,5%	
	TOTAL	**319**	**10,5%**	**500**	**16,4%**	**2127**	**69,8%**	**101**	**3,3%**	**3047 (23,9%)**
Discourse markers	P1	4	1,9%	6	2,8%	98	45,8%	1	,5%	
	P2	1	,5%	1	,5%	56	26,2%			
	P3	2	,9%	1	,5%	44	20,6%			
	TOTAL	**7**	**3,3%**	**8**	**3,7%**	**198**	**92,5%**	**1**	**,5%**	**214 (1,7%)**
Retrace-and-repair sequences	P1					6	85,7%			
	P2					1	14,3%			
	TOTAL					**7**	**100%**			**7 (,1%)**

While Table 2 presents the distribution of linguistic features of English across all four modalities (the overall sample), Tables 3 through 6 show the distribution of linguistic features in individual modalities and examples of linguistic features observed. More detailed examples of the linguistic features can be found in the theoretical part of the thesis (subchapter 2.3.).

Table 3 *The distribution of linguistic features of PRs*

Linguistic feature	Frequency (N)	Frequency (%)	Example
Describing adjective	1795	36,0	*Sleek*
Classifying adjective	1138	22,8	*Crossover*
Noun modifiers	1096	22,0	*Display* brightness
Pronouns	319	6,4	*It*
Comparative (adjective)	164	3,3	*Easier*
Emphasising adjective	162	3,2	*Optimal*
Submodifying adverbs	145	2,9	*Fantastically* immersive
Superlative (adjective)	137	2,7	*Most advanced*
Word formation	18	0,4	*Airpods*
Figures of speech	8	0,2	*Antonymy*
Discourse markers	7	0,1	*Furthermore*
Total	4989	100	

As shown in Table 3, there is a total of 4989 linguistic features in PRs over the three periods. The most frequent linguistic features of PRs are describing adjectives (1795 cases or 36,0%) followed by classifying adjectives (1138 cases or 22,8%) and noun modifiers (1096 cases or 22,0%). The remainder of the linguistic features of PRs each account for less than 10% of the sum of linguistic features in PRs. Retrace-and-repair sequences make no appearance in press releases.

Table 4 *The distribution of linguistic features of NAs*

Linguistic feature	Frequency (N)	Frequency (%)	Example
Describing adjective	732	27,4	*Silly*
Classifying adjective	581	21,7	*Off-road*
Pronouns	500	18,7	*I*
Noun modifiers	481	18,0	*Engine* options
Comparative (adjective)	125	4,7	*Thinner*
Submodifying adverbs	99	3,7	*More* focused
Emphasising adjective	68	2,5	*Existing*
Superlative (adjective)	44	1,6	*Newest*
Figures of speech	27	1,0	*Idiom*
Word formation	11	0,4	*FaceID*
Discourse markers	8	0,3	*Now*
Total	2676	100	

Table 4 shows a total of 2676 linguistic features found in NAs over the three periods. The most frequent linguistic features of NAs are describing adjectives (732 cases or 27,4%) followed by classifying adjectives (581 cases or 21,7%), pronouns (500 cases or 18,7%) and noun modifiers (481 cases or 18,0%). The remaining linguistic features of NAs each account for less than 5% of the sum of linguistic features of NAs. Retrace-and-repair sequences make no appearances in news articles.

Table 5 *The distribution of linguistic features of SPs*

Linguistic feature	Frequency (N)	Frequency (%)	Example
Pronouns	2127	45,6	*We*
Describing adjective	862	18,5	*Great*
Classifying adjective	468	10,0	*Global*
Noun modifiers	456	9,8	*Fuel* economy
Discourse markers	198	4,2	*Well*
Comparative (adjective)	161	3,5	*Faster*
Submodifying adverbs	142	3,0	*Incredibly* smooth
Superlative (adjective)	116	2,5	*Highest*
Emphasising adjective	92	2,0	*Same*
Figures of speech	20	0,4	*Personification*
Word formation	11	0,2	*Animoji*
Retrace-and-repair sequences	7	0,2	*(see subchapter 2.3.)*
Total	4660	100	

Table 5 presents the total of 4660 linguistic features found in SPs across the three periods. The most frequent linguistic features of SPs are pronouns (2127 cases or 45,6%) followed by describing adjectives (862 cases or 18,5%) and classifying adjectives (468 cases or 10,0%). The rest of the linguistic features of SPs each account for less than 10% of the sum of linguistic features of SPs. Speech is the only modality where retrace-an-repair sequences appear.

Table 6 *The distribution of linguistic features of PLPs*

Linguistic feature	Frequency (N)	Frequency (%)	Example
Describing adjective	129	29,7	*New*
Pronouns	101	23,2	*You*
Noun modifiers	52	12,0	*Music* library
Classifying adjective	48	11,0	*Sports* car
Figures of speech	35	8,0	*Repetition*
Comparative (adjective)	20	4,6	*Better*
Submodifying adverbs	17	3,9	*Unbelievably* crisp
Emphasising adjective	15	3,4	*First*
Superlative (adjective)	13	3,0	*Most powerful*
Word formation	4	0,9	*iPhone*
Discourse markers	1	0,2	*So*
Total	435	100	

Shown in Table 6 is the total of 435 linguistic features found in PLPs over the three periods. The most frequent linguistic features of PLPs are describing adjectives (129 cases or 29,7%) followed by pronouns (101 cases or 23,2%), noun modifiers (52 cases or 12,0%) and classifying adjectives (48 cases or 11,0%). The remainder of the linguistic features of PLPs each account for less than 10% of the sum of linguistic features of PLPs. Retrace-and-repair sequences make no appearances in PLPs.

4.2. Results in relation to the differences and similarities in the use of linguistic features of English across different modalities of business communication

To determine whether there are any differences or similarities in the use of linguistic features of English across different modalities of business communication, the one-way ANOVA test was carried out on the collected sample. Considering that the aim of this statistical analysis was to determine the differences between the modalities, no differentiation was made between the time periods. Instead, the overall sample was used. If the one-way ANOVA test showed a statistically significant difference, the Games-Howell post-hoc test was used to precisely determine the differences in use of linguistic features between the modalities. Out of 12 linguistic features featured in this thesis, 8 showed statistically significant difference, 3 showed no statistically significant difference and one linguistic feature was ineligible for statistical analysis because it appears in only one modality. The eight linguistic features that showed a statistically significant difference are describing adjectives, classifying adjectives, emphasising adjectives, superlatives, noun modifiers, pronouns, discourse markers and word formation.

When it comes to describing adjectives, the results of the one-way ANOVA test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of describing adjectives between different modalities $F(3, 107) = 16,667$, $p < 0,01$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of describing adjectives between the following modalities: speech (M=29,72) and **press release (M=59,83)**, **speech (M=29,72)** and PLP (M=5,86), **press release (M=59,83)** and PLP (M=5,86), **press release (M=59,89)** and news article (M=24,40) and PLP (M=5,86) and **news article (M=24,40)** with describing adjectives appearing more frequently in the bolded modalities.

When it comes to classifying adjectives, the results of the one-way ANOVA tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of classifying adjectives between different modalities $F(3, 97) = 13,708$, $p < 0,01$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of classifying adjectives between the following modalities: speech (M=16,14) and **press release (M=37,93)**, **speech (M=16,14)** and PLP (M=3,69), **press release (M=37,93)** and news article (M=20,03), **press release (M=37,93)** and PLP (M=3,69) and PLP (M=3,69) and **news article (M=20,03)**. Classifying adjectives appear more frequently in the bolded modalities.

When it comes to emphasising adjectives, the results of the one-way ANOVA test show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of emphasising adjectives between different modalities $F(3, 83) = 5,976$, $p < 0,01$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of emphasising adjective in the following modalities: **speech (M=4,00)** and PLP (M=1,67), **press release (M=5,40)** and PLP (M=1,67), **press release (M=4,00)** and news article (M=2,72). Emphasising adjectives appear more frequently in the bolded modalities.

When it comes to superlatives, the result of the one-way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference in the use of superlatives between different modalities $F(3, 76) = 5,596$, $p < 0,05$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of superlatives in the following modalities: **speech (M=4,46)** and PLP (M=1,44), **speech (M=4,46)** and news article (M=2,10), **press release (M=5,71)** and PLP (M=1,44) and **press release (M=5,71)** and news article (M=2,10). Superlatives appear more frequently in the bolded modalities.

When it comes to noun modifiers, the result of the one-way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference in the use of noun modifiers between different modalities

$F(3, 99) = 18,655$, $p < 0,01$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of noun modifiers in the following modalities: speech (M=16,29) and **press release (M=37,79)**, **speech (M=16,29)** and PLP (M=3,25), **press release (M=37,79)** and PLP (M=3,25), **press release (M=37,79)** and news article (M=16,03), and **news article (M=16,03)** and PLP (M=3,25). Noun modifiers appear more frequently in the bolded modalities.

When it comes to pronouns, the result of the one-way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference in the use of pronouns between different modalities $F(3, 105) = 30,223$, $p < 0,05$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of pronouns in the following modalities: **speech (M=73,34)** and press release (M=10,63), **speech (M=73,34)** and PLP (M=5,05), **speech (73,34)** and news article (16,67), **press release (M=10,63)** and PLP (M=5,05) and PLP (M=5,05) and **news article (M=16,67)**. Pronouns appear more frequently in the bolded modalities.

When it comes to discourse markers, the result of the one-way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference in the use of discourse markers between different modalities $F(3, 31) = 3,069$, $p < 0,05$. The Games-Howell test could not be conducted due to PLP modality having fewer than two cases of discourse markers.

When it comes to word formation, the result of the one-way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference in the use of word formation between different modalities $F(3, 29) = 2,960$, $p < 0,05$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of word formation between **press release (M=1,50)** and PLP (M=1,00) modality. Word formation appears more frequently in press releases.

The three linguistic features that showed no statistically significant differences are comparatives, submodifying adverbs and figures of speech. When it comes to comparatives, the results of the one-way ANOVA tests showed no statistically significant difference when it comes to use of comparatives between different modalities $F(3, 85) = 1,879$, $p > 0,05$. The one-way ANOVA test also showed no statistically significant difference when it comes to use of submodifying adverbs between the modalities $F(3, 83) = 2,715$, $p > 0,05$; as well as the use of figures of speech between modalities $F(3, 45) = 1,291$, $p > 0,05$. When it comes to retrace-and-repair sequences no test could be conducted because this linguistic feature appears in only one modality - speeches.

4.3. Results in relation to changes in the usage of linguistic features of English in different modalities of business communication over time

The one-way ANOVA test was carried out on the collected sample to determine whether there were any changes in the usage of linguistic features of English over the three five-year observation periods. The aim of this statistical analysis was to determine the differences between the three periods, consequently no differentiation was made between the four modalities. If the one-way ANOVA test showed a statistically significant difference, the Games-Howell post-hoc test was used to precisely determine the differences in the use of linguistic features between the modalities. Out of 12 linguistic features featured in this thesis, 3 showed statistically significant difference, 8 showed no statistically significant difference and one linguistic feature was ineligible for statistical analysis because it appears in only one modality. The linguistic features that showed statistically significant differences are emphasising adjectives, submodifying adverbs and figures of speech.

When it comes to emphasising adjectives, the one-way ANOVA test results show a statistically significant difference in the changes in the usage of emphasising adjectives over the three periods $F(2, 46) = 3,776, p < 0,05$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show a statistically significant difference in the usage of emphasising adjectives in the following periods: P2 (M=2,61) and **P3 (M=4,68).** Emphasising adjectives appear more frequently in the P3.

Regarding submodifying adverbs, the result of the one-way ANOVA test shows a statistically significant difference in the changes in the usage of submodifying adverbs over the three periods $F(2, 84) = 6,172, p < 0,05$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the usage of submodifying adverbs in the following periods: **P1 (M=6,47)** and P2 (M=4,17), **P1(M=6,47)** and P3 (M=3,11). Submodifying adverbs appear more frequently in the bolded periods.

Pertaining to figures of speech, the one-way ANOVA test results show a statistically significant difference in the changes in the usage of linguistic features over the three periods $F(2, 46) = 8,011, p < 0,05$. The Games-Howell post-hoc tests show that there is a statistically significant difference in the usage of figures of speech in the following periods: **P1 (M=2,72**) and P2 (M=1,47), **P1(M=2,72)** and P3 (M=1,19). Figures of speech appear more frequently in the bolded periods.

The eight linguistic features that showed no statistically significant differences when it comes to changes in the usage of these linguistic features over the three periods are describing adjectives $F(2, 108) = 0,782, p > 0,05$; classifying adjectives $F(2, 98) = 0,714, p > 0,05$; comparatives $F(2, 86) = 0,612, p > 0,05$; superlatives $F(2, 86) = 0,944 \, p > 0,05$; noun modifiers $F(2, 100) = 0,953, p > 0,05$; pronouns $F(2, 106) = 0,296, p > 0,05$; discourse markers $F(2, 32) = 0,085 \, p > 0,05$; and word formation $F(2, 30) = 0,136, p > 0,05$. No test could be conducted regarding retrace-and-repair sequences because this linguistic feature appears in only one period, i.e. the P1.

5. Discussion

This part of the paper discusses the results of the conducted analyses, which will be presented according to the research questions. While doing the preliminary research and sample collecting, the author noticed a standout presence of modifiers in all modalities. When the overall sample was collected and ran through AntConc 4.2.0. pronouns proved to be a dominant linguistic feature as well. The expectations were that these two linguistic features – out of modifiers, mainly describing adjectives, and out of pronouns, personal pronouns - would rank high following the analysis. Examining Figure 9, the expectations were founded.

The most common linguistic features of English business communication (RQ1) in this study are modifiers (describing and classifying adjectives in particular), premodifiers, i.e. noun modifiers and pronouns. Out of 119 samples, all 119 contained these linguistic features. The most common linguistic feature in the overall sample is the describing adjective (Figure 9). It is the most common linguistic feature in all modalities but the speech modality where pronouns are much more frequent (Table 5).

As was mentioned in subchapter 2.4. the only similar study that was done on press releases and news articles was done by Maat (2007). However, the only linguistic features that coincide in the study by Maat (2007) and the one done by the author are modifiers and submodifying adverbs. When all the adjectives are clustered into one group, the modifiers (subchapter 2.3.), they make up for 6870 cases (Figure 9) or 53,8% of linguistic features in business communication. This result corroborates the results of the study by Maat (2007) which shows that the frequency of modifiers in the first sample set was 56%, while the frequency of modifiers in second sample set was 52%. This puts the result from this study in the middle of

that range. However, in Maat's study the frequency of submodifying adverbs (intensifying adverbs as Maat calls them) is 12,7% in the first sample set and 15,1% in the second sample set – both numbers much greater than 3,2% as seen in Table 2 of this study. One of the reasons behind this might be that the sample size in Maat's (2007) research was much smaller and his research examined a much smaller number of linguistic features. Another reason for this disparity could be the different industries on which the analysis was conducted. Maat conducted the research on the airline industry while this thesis focused on the technology and the automotive industries, both with much wider audiences and competition. Finally, Maat compared the NAs to the PRs they were based on and found that a number of journalists almost completely copied the press release (subchapter 2.4.). If this was a standard practice in the industry, it could make PR writers more brash when using submodifying adverbs. During the sample analysis, the author of this thesis also came across two examples where the news article was a carbon copy of the press release. No edits were done whatsoever, leading to the same number of linguistic features in both modalities (see appendices A and B for one of the examples). Both cases occurred in the P1 when the small, specalised internet portals were still in their nascent phases.

Observing the modalities individually (Tables 3-6), the top four linguistic features (describing adjectives, pronouns, classifying adjectives, noun modifiers) are the same for all the modalities but in varying order. In press releases (Table 3), which, according to Catenaccio, (2008) are the most informative modality of the four, the two most frequent linguistic features are describing and classifying adjectives, followed by noun modifiers and pronouns. While limited to only third-person pronouns, PRs still feature a lot of pronouns as they are unavoidable in everyday language use. Describing adjectives, classifying adjectives and noun modifiers are frequent as they all carry meaning and are used to describe or classify the products announced in the press release. This is in line with the informative character of the press release.

News articles, usually based on press releases, share the same top two linguistic features with press releases (Table 4). However, since news articles are not limited to third-person pronouns and can feature subjective opinions from the journalists, they feature pronouns more frequently than press releases (18,7% in NAs vs 6,4% in PRs). Speeches (Table 5), unsurprisingly, feature the most pronouns of all modalities - more than double than the remaining three modalities combined. As mentioned in the subchapter 2.3., the reason for this could be that the speakers will freely refer to themselves by using first-person pronouns. They will also address the audience quite often, resulting in the frequent appearance of this linguistic

feature. Since speeches are held with the intention to inform the press about the new product, the next two most frequent linguistic features are describing and classifying adjectives like in PRs and NAs.

PLPs share the top four linguistic features with the remaining modalities. However, their fifth most common linguistic feature, figures of speech, is what differentiates them from the other three modalities. While in the other modalities figures of speech account for less than 1% of linguistic features (Tables 3-5), in PLPs, figures of speech account for a staggering 8% of linguistic features. Moreover, while the number of other linguistic features dropped from the P1 to P2 and then again from the P2 to P3 (Table 2), the number of figures of speech stayed more or less level – especially when the reduction of sample size is taken into consideration.

In relation to differences or similarities in the use of the linguistic features of English (RQ2), before the analysis was conducted, the expectations were that PR and NA modality will have the most similarities due to their shared history and development, as well as PRs being the basis for many NAs. However, since some journalists rely on speeches to write their articles, some similarities between the two modalities was expected as well. Another expectation was that figures of speech will predominantly be featured in PLPs. Since this study is rather specific in its sample size and the number of variables, there are no similar studies it can be compared to.

Statistical analysis (see subchapter 4.2.) showed that a statistically significant difference was found in eight linguistic features so these features will be the focus of the discussion. In three linguistic features there was no statistically significant difference, meaning that between the modalities the usage of these linguistic features was more or less similar. The features in question are comparatives, submodifying adverbs and figures of speech. For retrace-and-repair sequences no analysis could be conducted as they appear in only one period and one modality, that is in speeches in the P1 period.

When it comes to linguistic features that showed a statistically significant difference in the usage across the modalities, the greatest number of statistically significant differences were detected in describing adjectives, classifying adjectives, noun modifiers, and pronouns. Coincidentally, these are the four most common linguistic features. A statistically significant difference was also found in superlatives, emphasizing adjectives, word formation and discourse markers, which showed a statistically significant difference, however, due to too few cases a post-hoc test could not be conducted.

In describing adjectives, a statistically significant difference was found between press releases and every other modality with describing adjectives appearing more frequently in PRs each time. A statistically significant difference was also found between PLPs and every other modality with describing adjectives appearing less frequently in PLPs than in PRs, SPs, and NAs.

In classifying adjectives, the results mirror those of describing adjectives with a statistically significant difference found between PRs and the other three modalities with classifying adjectives appearing more frequently in PRs each time. A statistically significant difference was also found between PLPs and the other three modalities with classifying adjectives appearing less frequently in PLPs than in the other three modalities.

In noun modifiers, the results mirror those of the previous two linguistic features with a statistically significant difference found between PRs and the other three modalities with noun modifiers appearing more frequently in PRs each time. A statistically significant difference was also found between PLPs and the other three modalities with noun modifiers appearing less frequently in PLPs than in the other three modalities.

The situation is different when it comes to pronouns where a statistically significant difference was found between the speeches and the other three modalities with pronouns appearing more frequently in speeches than in other three modalities. A statistically significant difference was also found between the PLPs and the other three modalities with the pronouns appearing less frequently in PLPs each time.

Regarding superlatives, a statistically significant difference was found between the PRs and NAs, and PRs and PLPs with superlatives appearing more frequently in PRs both times. A statistically significant difference was also found between SPs and NAs, and SPs and PLPs with superlatives appearing more frequently in SPs both times. Concerning emphasising adjectives, a statistically significant difference was found between SPs and PLPs, PRs and PLPs and PRs and NAs with emphasising adjectives appearing more frequently in SPs and PRs on both occasions. Finally, regarding word formation, a statistically significant difference was only detected between PRs and PLPs with word formation appearing more frequently in PRs.

Contrary to the expectations, press releases and news articles showed more differences than similarities, especially when it comes to modifiers. The author expected greater similarities since those two modalities are so closely intertwined, but it is possible that due to a difference in sample size statistical difference was far greater than expected. In contrast, news articles and

speeches showed many similarities probably due to the similar size of the sampled units. Another reason behind the similarity might be the fact that many journalists use speeches as inspiration for their articles especially if they are physically present at the conference where the speech was held. PLPs stood out the most, perhaps unsurprisingly due to their small size. The surprising result was no statistically significant difference could be found in that the use of figures of speech among the four modalities. The author reasons that this is because the SPSS looks at the overall sample but cannot take into account the sample size. When looking at the raw numbers in Table 2, figures of speech had a marginally higher number of occurrences in PLPs than in, for example, NAs. However, if the sample size is taken into account the difference would be far greater as NAs feature a lot more text than an average PLP.

In relation to changes in the usage of linguistic features of English in different modalities of business communication over time (RQ3), prior to analysis the expectations were that there would be a drop in usage of linguistic features from one period to the other as the sample sizes shrunk over time. Another expectation was that intensified linguistic features such as emphasising adjectives, comparatives, superlatives and submodifying adverbs will show a rise despite the shrinking of the sample size given that with the move to internet communication the audience widened and businesses do not need to rely as much on journalists to pick up and publish their press release. Similar to the previous research question, there are no comparable studies that the results of this study can be compared to.

As results showed in the subchapter 4.3., out of twelve linguistic features presented in this thesis, three showed statistically significant difference, eight showed no statistically significant difference and one linguistic feature, retrace-and-repair sequences, was ineligible for statistical analysis because it appears in solely one modality - speeches. The linguistic features that showed statistically significant differences are figures of speech, submodifying adverbs and emphasising adjectives. The linguistic features that showed no statistically significant difference are describing adjectives, classifying adjectives, comparatives, superlatives, noun modifiers, word formation, pronouns, and discourse markers. This would mean that over the three periods of sample collection the usage of these linguistic features was more or less similar.

When it comes to figures of speech, a statistically significant difference was found between P1 and the remaining two periods, with the figures of speech appearing more frequently in P1 in both cases. When it comes to submodifying adverbs, a statistically significant difference was found between P1 and the remaining two periods, with submodifying

adverbs appearing more frequently in P1 in both cases. When it comes to emphasising adjectives, a statistically significant difference was found between P2 and P3 with emphasising adjectives appearing more frequently in P3.

Following the analysis, a greater number of linguistic features showed similarity in usage over the three periods than the author expected. After taking a closer look at Table 2, the author noticed that most linguistic features showed a drop in the number of cases from P1 to P2 followed by a slight rise from P2 to P3. When observing the sample size, the author noticed the same trend, with the sample size dropping from P1 to P2 before slightly rising from P2 to P3. This corroborates the statistical analysis results which show no significant change in usage across periods in most linguistic features.

In the cases of figures of speech and submodifying adjectives, the changes are best seen between P1 - which accounts the majority of the sample - and the other two periods. Looking at Table 2, the figures of speech do not show major fluctuations in the PLP modality. However, in the remaining three modalities the changes are noticeable, especially in NAs and SPs. This could be due to speeches becoming more widely available online for consumers to access and their production value, consequently increasing forcing the speakers to rely more on scripts. They have fewer opportunities to improvise or joke around like a Mazda representative did during one speech when he called a car "almost naughty."[35] The reduction of figures of speech in news articles can be attributed to what Fisher, Park, and Young Lee (2021) called the erosion of journalistic integrity. Today, journalists are pressured to publish more articles to meet their quota, meaning they have little time to dedicate to an article. As a result, today's articles are shorter and lack the journalistic creativity they once had. This means that journalists pay less attention to figures of speech and only focus on relevant data without making the article their own. Emphasising adjectives are the only linguistic feature that showed a jump in P3 confirming that linguistic features of business communication are becoming slightly intensified as time is passing by and businesses have opportunities to reach audiences through different modalities.

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[35] *2004 Paris Auto Show: Mazda Press Briefing*. Mazda newsroom. (2004, September 23). Retrieved February 17, 2023, from https://newsroom.mazda.com/en/about/speech/1652/index.html

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse many linguistic features of English across four modalities and over three time periods. The number of variables involved in the study is high enough to spin off into several other studies. For example, further research can be conducted using the same sample on how linguistic features fluctuate between different industries.

The analysis was conducted to determine which are the most common linguistic features and how the usage of linguistic features changes between different modalities and over different periods. Regarding that, it is safe to assume that modifiers - describing adjectives in particular - are the most common linguistic feature among the observed linguistic features of English in different modalities of business communication. Given how predominant they were in this varied sample, modifiers could very well be the most common linguistic features in other modalities of business communication, as was corroborated in a previous study by Maat (2007).

The contribution of this thesis to the studies of business communication are the results regarding the differences in the usage of linguistic features between the modalities and over three periods. Since no similar study could be found, the author cannot corroborate these results but instead only argue them. The statistical analysis showed that there are tangible differences in the usage of linguistic features between modalities. For example, although in total describing adjectives are the most common linguistic feature, they are not featured equally in every modality. Each modality has its own particularities and the analysis confirms that.

Press releases, thought to be the most informative modality, are indeed confirmed to be that with describing adjectives, classifying adjectives and noun modifiers taking the top spots of the most common linguistic features. Speeches, which are the only in-person modality analysed in this thesis, unsurprisingly feature the most pronouns as the speakers are not afraid to reference themselves by using first-person pronouns or to address the audience in front of them. Since in this modality there is no hiding who the sender is, the speakers are not afraid to be brash when using linguistic features and the analysis proved that as well since speeches contain a substantial number of superlatives. Although the author expected greater similarities between the press releases and news articles, the analysis showed that news articles are actually closer to speeches when it comes to the usage of linguistic features. This result is not all too strange since speeches are usually held with journalists in mind. It is only in the recent time that the speeches held at conferences are receiving attention from the general public. Product landing pages are a distinct modality, as they are nowhere near the other modalities when it

comes to size. However, they still manage to pack a number of linguistic features and get the message across. They are also the most creative modality, and the one that general public would probably find the most interesting as it is in this modality that the most creative language is used.

Looking at the three periods a certain evolution in the usage was expected. However, the usage of linguistic features did not change much between the year 2003 and 2021. The usage of the majority of linguistic features remained the same between P1 and P3 with the exception of figures of speech, submodifying adverbs and emphasising adjectives. The change that occurred in the former two modalities was a reduction in number from P1 to P3, while the change in the latter modality was a rise in numbers from P2 to P3. These results lead the author to conclude that business communication got less creative over the years while more promotional or perhaps even formalised.

Although seemingly all different, the four modalities of business communication have proven to be quite similar when it comes to the usage of linguistic features. Although the intended receivers and channels change, the message and the linguistic feature tie them together. For future research, the author suggests focusing on a smaller sample and carrying out a qualitative analysis of the linguistic features of English used in business communication.

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Summary

This thesis aims to analyse the linguistic features of English in different modalities of business communication. Business communication is a formalised method of sharing information, skills, and ideas. It is conducted across many modalities, out of which four are explored in this thesis. They are press release, news article, speech, and product landing page. Linguistic features analysed in this thesis are various and are used to determine how different or similar various modalities are and how the usage of these features changed over time. Following a statistical analysis, the thesis finds that modifiers are the most common linguistic features, it finds that press releases feature the most linguistic features when compared to other modalities and that generally over the three periods there was little change in the usage of linguistic features.

KEYWORDS: *business communication, modalities, linguistic features*

Sažetak

Cilj ovog rada jest analizirati lingvistička obilježja engleskog jezika u različitim modalitetima poslovne komunikacije. Poslovna komunikacija je formalizirana metoda dijeljenja informacija, vještina i ideja. Ona se odvija kroz razne modalitete, od kojih su četiri istražena u ovom radu. To su izjave za medije, novinski članci, govori, internetske stranice proizvoda. Jezična obilježja analizirana u ovom radu su različita i koriste se kako bi se utvrdilo koliko su različiti ili slični različiti modaliteti i kako se uporaba tih jezičnih obilježja mijenjala tijekom vremena. Nakon statističke analize, rad utvrđuje da su modifikatori najčešća jezična obilježja, utvrđuje da priopćenja za tisak imaju najviše jezičnih obilježja u usporedbi s drugim modalitetima te da je općenito tijekom tri razdoblja bilo male promjene u korištenju jezičnih obilježja.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *poslovna komunikacija, modaliteti, lingvistička obilježja*

Appendices

Appendix A - Apple Introduces iPod nano – Press release by Apple Inc.

Linguistic feature	Number of occurrences
Describing adjectives	16
Classifying adjectives	14
Emphasising adjectives	5
Comparative	2
Superlative	3
Submodifying adverbs	2
Noun modifiers	23
Word formation	1
Figures of speech	0
Pronouns	5
Discourse markers	0
Retrace-and-repair sequences	0

Appendix B - Apple Introduces iPod nano – News article by Phys.org

Linguistic feature	Number of occurrences
Describing adjectives	16
Classifying adjectives	14
Emphasising adjectives	5
Comparative	2
Superlative	3
Submodifying adverbs	2
Noun modifiers	23
Word formation	1
Figures of speech	0
Pronouns	5
Discourse markers	0
Retrace-and-repair sequences	0

Izjava o pohrani i objavi ocjenskog rada
(završnog/diplomskog/specijalističkog/doktorskog rada - podcrtajte odgovarajuće)

Student/ica: Nikola Marunić

Naslov rada: Linguistic features of English in different modalities

of Business Communication

Znanstveno područje i polje: Humanističke znanosti; Filologija

Vrsta rada: Diplomski rad

Mentor/ica rada (ime i prezime, akad. stupanj i zvanje):
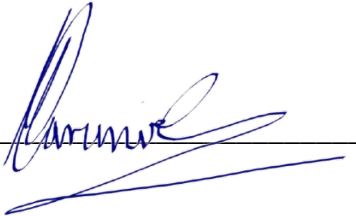doc. dr. sc. Mirjana Semren

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