A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KEYWORDS IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE CORPORATE PRESS RELEASES FROM EUROPEAN COMPANIES: INSIGHTS INTO DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

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Abstract

This study provides insights into discursive practices through a comparative study of keywords in English-language press releases from British, Spanish and Polish energy companies. Even though corporate press releases have been extensively researched, there is a lack of cross-cultural and corpus-based studies in this field. In the present research three corpora of approximately 120,000 words each, containing English-language press releases from British, Spanish and Polish energy companies, were used. The keywords were identified with the Wmatrix tool (Rayson 2009) and the reference corpus consisted of business periodical articles. The analysis of corpus keywords usually provides insights that would be difficult to gain by means of manual analyses of texts or qualitative approaches. The results obtained in this study show notable differences between the corpora with regard to the keywords identified. The use of more general meaning keywords by British companies or more technical keywords by Polish companies suggest that lexical choices might be indicative of different discursive practices used to reach stakeholders and the general public.

1   Introduction

This study is broadly framed within Intercultural Rhetoric (Connor et al. 2008), as it provides data from a comparative analysis of the English versions of corporate press releases published by companies based in different countries, and therefore in distinct cultural contexts. Within this perspective, the corporate press release is viewed as a professional genre (Bhatia 1993, 2004), used by a specific discourse community in a particular social context, and aimed to reach a set of established communicative goals (Swales 1990). In this sense, the professional genre of corporate press release is characterised by a range of formal conventions, which reflect particular discursive and professional practices of the determined discourse community. The combined perspective of Intercultural Rhetoric and the Genre Theory specifically focuses on the situatedness of a particular genre

and facilitates a comparative analysis of discursive practices in corporate press releases published in English on the websites of British, Polish and Spanish energy companies. Discursive practices in a professional context are understood as "the local, goal-driven actions that members of a professional community use to constrain and enable the unfolding discourse through recognized language" (Handford 2012: 19). Language features and items acquire a situated meaning in particular contexts, reflecting varying discursive and professional practices. Corpus linguistics in this case can help to identify aspects of those practices and the analysis of keywords focuses specifically on the similarities and differences between them (Handford 2012).

The research on corporate press releases as a professional genre has pointed to the combined use of promotional and informative functions and the fact that they are very often written to be directly inserted into journalists' own texts. Regarding the recurrent language forms, pre-formulation resources and evaluative expressions have been highlighted as the most important for this particular genre (Catenaccio 2007, 2008, Jacobs 1999a, 1999b, Jacobs 2014, Lassen 2006, McLaren & Gurău 2005, McLaren-Hankin 2008, Pander Maat 2007).

On a more general level, corporate press releases play an important role in the attempt to achieve the goal that most organizations pursue: the social approval of their activities. According to Sagiv and Schwartz (2007), companies need to evolve in harmony with the societal collectivity in which they are nested, in order to secure a workforce as well as all the necessary materials and financial resources. In other words, companies need to use values compatible with those of the society in which they are nested, and, most importantly, they need to convey them to the general public. Press releases seem to be a suitable communication channel for this end.

This overall communicative goal of organizations is especially sensitive to the cultural context in which a company operates. Given that clear differences between the values of the various national cultures of Europe have been attested (e.g. Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, Hofstede et al. 2010, Kaasa et al. 2013, Kolman et al. 2003, Sagiv & Schwartz 2007), one can reasonably hypothesize that companies from the same industry, but based in different European countries, would be likely to recur to different discursive practices, detectable through their press releases. This study aims to approach this unexplored area of research by looking into the differences between keywords detected in three corpora of English-language corporate press releases available on the websites of energy companies based in the UK, Spain and Poland. Each of these countries belongs to a different "macro geographical and economic continental region"

within Europe, according to the United Nations Statistics Division (2013): their respective regions, Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe, are at different stages in their economic development.

The identification of the corpus keywords, i.e. the unusually frequent lexical items in comparison with a reference corpus, can enable the detection of recurrent patterns of meaning, which would otherwise be difficult to access and recognise, especially in a horizontal reading of texts in a corpus (Scott 1997, Stubbs 2010). Keywords are likely to point to patterns of meaning, especially if they are analysed with regard to their collocations and within the thematic frame of the text. This enabling device, therefore, can be used to determine lexical differences with a reference corpus and in this way, to describe variations in salient patterns of meaning, considered as intentional content selections. This view can be framed within a cross-cultural pragmatic perspective, which regards language use as the making of meaningful choices on the basis of pragmatic norms accepted by individuals in a particular society or community (Boxer 2002, Wierzbicka 2003).

Therefore, this study specifically aims to identify the similarities and differences between the range of keywords in three corpora of corporate press releases written in English and published by companies based in three distinct cultural contexts. The study will try to answer the following research questions: (i) what type of key lexical items do comparable organizations from the same industry but based in different countries tend to use in conveying a wide range of news over the same time period? (ii) What do the key lexical items disclose about the possible salient patterns of meaning? Given the fact that most of the English language texts from the Spanish and Polish companies are translations of national language versions, the lexical items identified may demonstrate differences, perhaps reflecting that they are aimed at culturally distinct readerships. Due to the amount of data obtained from the electronic analysis of the corpora, an in-depth contextual analysis of keywords is beyond the scope of this study. However, the variations found in the use of general meaning keywords, specific meaning keywords, and grammatical keywords will be reported. This type of approach will help shed light on the informative foci chosen in communicating news by companies from the same industry but based in different countries.

2 Discourse characteristics of press releases

A press release is a genre in a sense indicated by Yates and Orlikowski (1992: 301): "a typified rhetorical action in the context of socially defined recurrent situations". As any other genre, press releases are characterised by a set of communicative goals for specific disciplinary and social groups or institutions,

which in turn determines the stable structural form of the text and the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discoursal resources (Bhatia 1993, 2004). The concept of genre also implies the existence of discourse community, which shares a set of common public goals, as well as discoursal expertise (Swales 1990).

Press releases, according to Jacobs (2014: 583), are short written texts sent to the media by companies, government agencies, political parties or non-profit institutions in order to provide the general public with news about those organizations. The above author places them on the borderline between media discourse and professional communication, pointing to the fact that they have been approached from both perspectives. Press releases have also been considered as socially relevant (Jacobs 2014): they serve as a "media channel" (Lassen 2006: 527), through which information is transmitted for a range of socially determined communicative objectives.

In the case of corporate press releases, the variety of communicative purposes for which they are written, such as making an announcement, building a positive image, expanding scientific knowledge, attracting investors or encouraging a particular political stance, led Lassen (2006) to suggest that press releases can be considered as a genre only with regard to their generic form, but not at a more specific level of their content and functions. Other scholars, however, regard press releases as a hybrid genre (cf. Catenaccio 2008, Jacobs 1999a, 1999b, McLaren & Gurău, 2005, Pander Maat 2007), as the combination of marketing and news reporting characteristics is employed in order to fulfil the main communicative purpose of building a positive image of the company. Indeed, the study of airline press releases by Pander Maat (2007) revealed that the use of promotional language is a pervasive feature of texts of this type. The author identified a broad range of evaluative language resources such as premodifiers, adjectives, adverb elements, and connectives, with the highest percentage being adverbial expressions. From a different viewpoint, Catenaccio (2008: 14) suggested that "the ostensible objectivity of press releases only thinly masks their underlying promotional intent". In fact, public relations manuals insist on the point that overtly promotional press releases should be avoided, as journalists prefer more neutral, and thus apparently more reliable texts.

The fact that press releases are an indirectly targeted, projected type of discourse (Jacobs 1998, 1999a, McLaren-Hankin 2008) in which "the journalists who receive press releases serve as mediators and the journalists' own readership as absent ultimate destination" (Jacobs 2014: 586), has an important influence on the language used. The use of self-reference, self-quotation and explicit semi-performatives have been noted as being very common "meta-pragmatic features" of these texts, also being called preformulation resources (Jacobs 1999a, 1999b).

Self-reference is undertaken exclusively in the third person, especially through the use of the organisation's proper name. Press releases thus move towards the journalist's perspective, abandoning the company's viewpoint, which could be expressed with the use of 'we'. Self-quotation, or pseudo-direct speech (Bell 1991), serves a similar role in the sense that it provides additional distance from the news reported, also creating the impression of neutrality and reliability. Finally, semi-performatives, such as 'announce' or 'remark' are frequently included as they facilitate journalists' reporting of the news included in press releases. As Jacobs (2014) argues, preformulation is closely linked not only with the notion of intertextuality, but more specifically with entextualization, which refers to the process of facilitating the re-insertion of discourse into a new interactional setting.

All of these preformulation resources are relevant to the identification in the corpora of lexical differences, which is attempted in this study. Finding these meta-pragmatic features by means of searching for keywords would not be surprising in the case of the British corpus of press releases, as these have been seen in previous studies of English-language press releases (Catenaccio 2007, 2008, Jacobs 1999a, 1999b, Jacobs 2014, Lassen 2006, McLaren & Gurău 2005, McLaren-Hankin 2008, Pander Maat 2007). However, it is still unknown whether these linguistic resources are also unusually frequent in the case of the Spanish and Polish English-language texts, as such texts still constitute an unexplored area of research.

The publication of e-releases on corporate websites, which make such texts freely available to the general public, has had an impact on the language used. E-releases seem to combine traditional preformulation features with a more direct type of discourse resembling direct mail (Jacobs 2014, Strobbe & Jacobs 2005). This type of discourse includes the use of superlatives, evaluative adjectives outside of quotes, direct reader address and imperatives. With this in mind, one would expect the keywords identified in the different corpora in this study to contain a range of such items.

3   Method and corpus

This study uses the corpus linguistics methods of identifying keywords employing the Wmatrix software tool (Rayson 2008). A keyword is a word that occurs with an unusual frequency in a given text or corpus in comparison with a reference corpus, without necessarily being the most frequent word in that text or corpus (Scott 1997, Scott & Tribble 2006). The procedure for identifying a keyword, in any software tool designed to this end, consists of creating and then comparing the frequency lists of two corpora: a reference corpus and a corpus

whose keywords one wishes to find. If there is a great disparity in the frequency of a given word between the two corpora, then such an item can be considered as key. Indeed, the most important idea underlying keyness is "outstandingness"; according to Scott (1997: 236): if a word is outstandingly frequent in a corpus, then it will be key.

The selection of the reference corpus is important, as different reference corpora may lead to different lexical items being identified as key in the corpus of interest, thus directly impacting upon the results. In the case of the three corporate press release corpora which occupy us here, a reference corpus consisting of business periodical articles dealing with a wide range of topics related to economy, management, industry and economic policy would seem to be appropriate in order to obtain fine-grained keyness data. The similar themes of the corpora studied and the reference corpus should ensure that the obvious words from the field of business and economics, such as 'company' or 'management' are not identified as key in the press release corpora. If a general corpus, such as the British National Corpus, were used as a reference corpus, such words would be identified as key. The business periodical articles in the reference corpus used in this study are samples of journalistic discourse on economy and business, while the corporate press releases in the three corpora studied are source texts for newspaper and business periodical articles. There is a clear relationship between the business periodical corpus and the press release corpora regarding the topics and the news writing process.

Three corpora made up of company press releases were used in this study. Their composition is shown in Table 1.

Corpus	Number of tokens per corpus	Number of texts	Companies	Number of texts per company	Average number of tokens per text for each corpus
British corpus (BC)	121,767	151	British Petroleum Centrica British Gas	75 76	806
Spanish corpus (SC)	123,498	155	Repsol Iberdrola	75 80	796
Polish corpus (PC)	122,896	200	PKNOrlen PGE	111 89	614

Table 1: The corpora used in the study

The companies selected for the corpora all belong to the energy sector, specifically the production and supply of petrol, electricity and gas: British Petroleum and Centrica British Gas from Britain, Repsol and Iberdrola from Spain, PKNOrlen and Polska Grupa Energetyczna (PGE) from Poland. The economic and social importance of the energy production sector motivated its selection for the study. The impact of this sector on economic development at all levels is undeniable, while the long-term consequences of the use of non-renewable resources and the need for transition to cleaner energies are two issues of both global and local concern at the present time.

All of the companies selected for this study are the market-leading energy providers in their countries, but they also operate internationally to a varying extent. The press releases were published on the companies' websites, from 2010 to 2014, in their great majority both in the original version (Polish and Spanish), as well as in English. The press releases were chosen randomly but with the aim of covering the broadest possible range of themes, such as company management, corporate responsibility, technological innovation, environmental issues or financial results. The average number of words per text varies in each corpus: the British corpus (BC) and the Spanish corpus (SC) are quite similar in this sense, with 806 and 796 words respectively. The Polish corpus (PC) differs significantly, registering an average of 614 words per text.

The reference corpus consisted of articles published in the online editions of well-known business periodicals: *The Economist* (149 texts), *BusinessWeek* (currently *Bloomberg Businessweek*) (92 texts) and *Fortune* (54 texts), covering the period from 2000 to 2014. This corpus consisted of 626,536 words, and included texts dealing with a wide range of economic and business topics, such as company management, industry development, financial issues, competition, markets, or economic policy. The periodicals are aimed both at experts and non-experts, and seek to inform as well as to provide an in-depth analysis of the issues mentioned. *The Economist* is the periodical with the highest impact on public opinion offering the authoritative insight on current economic affairs. The number of texts per periodical has been adjusted according to the periodical's impact.

4   Results and discussion

Varying numbers of keywords were identified in the three corpora: 890 in the PC, 640 keywords in the BC, and 272 in the SC. From the point of view of lexical differences, the press releases from the Polish companies seem to be the most distinct from the standard journalistic discourse about economics and business, as can be seen from the number of keywords, while the texts from the Spanish companies are the least different in this sense. As the analysis of all of

the keywords is not feasible given their high number, setting a cut-off point at a minimum relative frequency of five seems appropriate to facilitate the data examination, as the lexical items which are rarely used in the corpora are thus eliminated and a greater focus can be placed on more frequently used items.

Table 2 shows the keywords with a relative frequency of five or higher in the three corpora. There are 41 such keywords in the PC, 36 in the BC, and five in the SC. These figures replicate the proportions of all the keywords per corpus, mentioned previously.

PC keywords	LL	BC keywords	LL	SC keywords	LL
drivers	72.9	BP	287.4	euros	74.9
Polish	56.9	2010	63.4	approved	53.9
contract	54.8	refineries	57.1	the	17.9
driver	54.1	gulf	55.2	company	11.4
nuclear_power	49.5	intends	48.4	which	8.9
contracts	48.0	Mexico	47.7		
stops	45.0	value	41.3		
largest	42.1	its	34.7		
driving	38.2	opportunities	32.7		
Poland	37.5	safety	31.0		
supplies	36.9	dividend	29.7		
safety	35.8	will	28.4		
oil company	35.3	portfolio	26.2		
series	34.3	oil	25.5		
group	32.7	our	23.9		
safe	29.4	we	22.6		
trip	28.6	said	19.9		
programme	26.6	meet	19.8		
bonds	26.5	announced	19.5		
road	24.9	projects	19.4		
campaign	22.9	and	19.1		
generation	22.7	continue	17.4		
of	21.3	production	17.2		
retail	20.8	higher	16.7		
the	20.4	long-term	16.3		

PC keywords	LL	BC keywords	LL	SC keywords	LL
electricity	20.3	risk	15.8		
during	17.5	expected	14.6		
we	16.2	growth	14.6		
important	15.6	plans	13.0		
it	14.7	end	11.1		
process	13.3	also	11.0		
network	12.6	today	10.6		
make	12.4	management	10.0		
company	12.0	investment	8.3		
under	11.9	new	7.6		
oil	9.9	around	6.7		
and	8.7				
are	8.6				
will	8.2				
a	8.0				
that	7.4				

Table 2: Keywords in the British, Spanish and Polish corpora

The highest keyness value (LL: log-likelihood value) varies across the corpora: in the BC, it reaches around 287.4 for the abbreviation BP (British Petroleum), with the highest values in the SC and the PC being similar, between 72 and nearly 75 points. What is surprising about these two latter corpora is that the company names (e.g. Orlen, Repsol, etc.) were not identified as keywords, unlike the case of 'BP' in the BC. This suggests that there might be an overt preference for repeating the company name, BP, instead of using hypernyms ('company' or 'organization'). These repetitions may fulfil a promotional function, and may be symptomatic of a particular discursive practice. In contrast, 'company' is a keyword in both the SC and the PC, suggesting a more balanced use of company names and hypernyms in the two corpora, and a slightly different writing strategy. In addition, this may be caused by the avoidance of lexical repetition in Spanish and Polish and the preference for synonyms and hypernyms as cohesive devices in these languages.

Corpus	Open-class keywords		Closed-class keywords
	General meaning keywords	Business and technical keywords	
BC	gulf, intends, value, opportunities, safety, said, met, announced, continue, higher, long-term, risk, expected, growth, plans, end, today, news	refineries, dividend, portfolio, oil, projects, production, management, investment	its, will, our, we, and, also, around
PC	drivers, drive, stops, largest, driving, safety, series, group, safe, trip, road, important, make, are	contract, nuclear power, contracts, supplies, oil company, programme, bonds, campaign, generation, retail, electricity, process, network, company, oil	of, the, we, it, and, a, that, under, will
SC	approved	euros, company	the, which

Table 3: Open-class and closed-class keywords in the BC, PC and SC corpora (in order of keyness)

The following sections will report on the use of different types of keywords: open-class and closed-class in the three corpora (cf. Table 3). Open-class keywords have been additionally divided into general meaning items, on the one hand, and business and technical items, on the other. Such an approach will provide further details regarding the lexical choices and emerging patterns of meaning in the corporate press releases under study.

4.1 General meaning keywords

For the purposes of this study, general meaning keywords have been considered as all those open-class words which do not refer to company management (business words), nor to the technologies of petrol extraction and energy production (technical words).

Regarding the use of keywords of this type, the variation in the three corpora is notable. As can be observed in Table 3, half of the keywords in the BC (51%) are general meaning words. This percentage is notably lower in the PC with only 32%. The keywords in the PC referring to driving ('drivers', 'drive', 'driving') are related to the company Orlen and its well-extended and consolidated network of petrol stations in the context of safe driving and taking breaks from driving.

With regard to the SC, only five words qualified as keywords in accordance with the established cut-off point (Table 3), and there was only one keyword with a general meaning, 'approved', which represents 10% of all the keywords. This keyword makes reference to past actions and may have been used to gain credibility for the Spanish companies, which seemed to adopt a range of measures in the context of the economic crisis.

Many of the BC general meaning keywords are verbs ('intends', 'said', 'meet', 'announced', 'continue', 'expected', 'plans'), which is in contrast with the PC and the SC, where only one verb in each, 'driving' and 'announced' respectively, is key. Most of the BC keywords are reporting verbs, which can be attributed to the genre's main communicative function of reporting news, to the previously discussed use of preformulation devices, and, more specifically, to the presence of semi-performatives (Jacobs 1999a: 245-250). Other BC verbs express actions, intentions and planning. The SC verb 'announced' is another reporting verb, used in the manner described by Jacobs (1999a). The significant variation in the number of general meaning keyword verbs between the BC on the one hand, and the PC and SC on the other, suggests a more frequent use of preformulating devices in the BC press releases, and a distinct writing strategy, which, in contrast with the PC (and possibly the SC), aims to establish a more detached stance.

The general meaning keywords also include adjectives, all of which have an evaluative meaning. The BC keyword list in Table 3 includes 'higher' and 'new', and the PC 'largest', 'safe' and 'important'. In addition to adjectives, certain general-meaning key nouns may also have been used to express evaluation. This is the case of 'opportunities', 'safety', 'risk', and 'growth' in the BC, and 'safety' in the PC. The SC keyword list is markedly different from the other two in that it does not include adjectives or nouns expressing the company's stance. The references to importance, safety and novelty are significant for the press releases of energy companies, as they repeatedly seek to communicate their efforts to use the most modern infrastructures and to fulfil the most demanding safety requirements. Focusing on opportunities and growth also seem necessary to strengthen the positive image of the companies in question. The keyword data in this sense are in line with Pander Maat's (2007) view of the pervasiveness of promotional language in corporate press releases. Obviously, in order to fully support this claim a further qualitative approach to the texts under study would be necessary.

On the whole, the variation in the use of general meaning keywords is significant, indicating that the Polish press releases might be more oriented towards reporting business and technical matters, and therefore towards more

expert readers. It is also possible that the technicalities included are used to convey reliability and stability, on which the company's image is built. The British press releases seem to rely less on technical lexis, accommodating their content and language to the general public's needs and interests, and focusing more on the company's everyday performance and less on technical concerns. This points to a discursive practice that is possibly different from that of the Polish companies. In the case of the SC, the limited number of general meaning keywords renders any interpretation rather problematic.

4.2 Business and technical keywords

Regarding the keywords referring to company management and technical aspects of petrol extraction and energy production, the PC (cf. Table 3) includes the highest number of business and technical words or expressions, with 15, accounting for 37 per cent of all keywords ('contract', 'nuclear power', 'contracts', 'supplies', 'oil company', 'programme', 'bonds', 'campaign', 'generation', 'retail', 'electricity', 'process', 'network', 'company', 'oil'). The BC is next with six words, which account for 23 per cent of all keywords ('refineries', 'dividend', 'portfolio', 'oil', 'projects', 'production', 'management', 'investment'). The SC list includes two words ('euros', 'company'), which account for 40 per cent. Most of the keywords in this group are related to the companies' activities, but there seems to be a stronger focus placed on investment and returns in the BC, and on industrial aspects in the PC. It could be said that the communicative strategies of the British and Polish energy companies differ, with the former concentrating on investment and returns, while the latter on industrial activity. As has been previously mentioned, the SC provides little evidence that can be used for comparison. What is noteworthy is the keyword 'euro', which could point to an emphasis on money, and possibly on the companies' financial performance, which is an especially sensitive issue in the scenario of economic recess.

4.3 Closed-class keywords

With regard to the closed-class or grammatical words, the PC list includes nine such items (24%), which is the highest number in comparison with the BC, with seven items (20%), and the SC with two (40%). Both the PC and the BC lists include the first person plural pronouns: 'we' in the former, and 'we' (and 'our') in the latter. From the intercultural rhetoric perspective, it could be argued that the variation in the use of those pronouns is the result of the translation from Polish and Spanish, which may have used fewer or no self-references in the original texts. Moreover, the fact that these items were identified as keywords confirms that inclusive 'we' and 'our' are frequent in self-quotations by company

managers (Bell 1991). The neutrality gained in referring to the company in the third person is therefore counterbalanced by an unusually frequent use of the first person plural. In the case of the press releases from the Polish companies, this was particularly patent in direct speech, when self-quotations were inserted in the text. 'Will' is another closed-class word which has been identified as a keyword in the BC and the PC, indicating references to future actions in both corpora.

On the whole, the above findings point to notable variation between the three corpora with regard to the keywords with a minimum frequency of five occurrences. This variation has been detected in the use of general and non-general meaning keywords and can be considered symptomatic of distinct discursive practices, relying on different lexical choices. This could also reflect that the English versions of the Polish and Spanish texts, intended for an international readership, are influenced by their original versions, aimed at the national readership. The variations, which point to distinct discursive practices, highlight the need to adapt the English-language press releases to a more international readership, and in this sense modify the discursive strategies of the Polish and Spanish companies. In this sense, the study provides data for research on English as a lingua franca and points to an area of its use, which needs to be examined further.

5   Conclusions

This study provides quantitative data on keyword variation between press releases from British, Spanish and Polish energy companies, suggesting possible differences in discursive practices used. Given the lack of cross-cultural studies of this type of text, and the need to provide more evidence on cross-cultural communication within Europe, we hope that this study remedies the scarceness of available data and advances the field of study.

The analysis of the lexical differences between the three corpora and the reference corpus of standard journalistic business discourse has revealed significant variation in discursive practices between the company press releases from the three countries. The results of the keyword examination point to the English-language texts from the Polish companies as being the most different and the English-language texts from the Spanish companies as being the most similar to the discourse represented by the reference corpus. Furthermore, it seems that the discursive practices in the press releases from the Polish companies consist in highlighting the technicalities of company management and the energy industry, while in the British texts the focus is placed on strategies, objectives and opportunities. In the case of the Spanish companies, it was difficult to provide

comparable keyword data, even though certain references to financial issues were detected.

In addition to the differences mentioned, the keyword adjectives and nouns in the texts from the British and Polish companies pointed to the use of evaluation, while the keyword data from the Spanish companies' texts lacked this type of evidence. Similarly, the varying usage of keyword self-references unveiled different discursive practices involving such rhetorical devices. On the whole, the variations reported suggest that the discursive practices used to inform and build a positive company image differ from country to country. With the study concentrating on one industry, we have shown that the discursive practices used in the professional context of press release writing transcend when reaching out to the international readers. At the same time, this finding suggests that the professional community of press release writers is influenced by culture-dependent professional and discursive practices and there is a need for them to overcome these limitations in order to fulfil the communicative goals set for the corporate press release on a global level.

An approach that focuses on the lexical differences between the corpora studied and a reference corpus obviously has some limitations. The lexical items presented here need to be further investigated by delving more deeply into their co-text and context so that a more reliable impression of the variation in the patterns of meaning can be gained. Another constraint is the amount of data obtained through the identification of keywords, which necessarily need to be reduced and made manageable for a manual analysis, but which may produce distorted or incomplete results. Furthermore, the keyword distribution by the genre move has not been approached, as it clearly lies beyond the scope of this study, but will be a valuable addition to the research on corporate press releases.

Despite the limitations mentioned, this study contributes to the description of press releases, and opens the door for further cross-cultural studies of business communication within Europe. While the quantitative data offer a general view on lexical variations in the corpora examined, the information extracted may help to identify which linguistic features require further study (Rayson 2009: 521). Focusing on how lexically different text sets are can provide researchers with suggestions for further research, while business practitioners as well as press release writers can use that information to vary the focus of their texts to adapt them for different readerships and gain a more reader-centred dimension. As this study has shown in quantitative terms, professional intercultural communication may require greater efforts in transferring the awareness of cultural variation to discursive practices at work.

Note

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