

How Does the *Bangkok Post* Transform Press Releases into News Stories?

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Article information	
Abstract	<p>Over the past decade (2014-2023), there has been considerable research on the linguistic features of press releases worldwide. However, studies comparing the linguistic features of news articles and press releases are rare, particularly in the Thai context. In Thailand, coursebooks dedicated to press release writing in the English language are also limited. Most existing studies concentrate primarily on text analysis without collaboration with industry experts, which results in fewer valid findings for classroom use. This study addresses this gap by incorporating insights from industry professionals in an analysis of the <i>Bangkok Post</i>, comparing its news articles published in the PR news section with the corresponding press releases. The analysis of linguistic features targets headlines and lead paragraphs to provide more detailed findings. An interview with the news editor was also conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the process by which press releases are transformed into news articles according to the style and preferences of the <i>Bangkok Post</i>. The findings confirmed that the newspaper emphasizes conciseness during editing, with a stronger focus on headlines, though lead paragraphs are also refined. Insights from the interview also revealed the editor's flexibility, such as regarding headline capitalization. These</p>

	results, which identify specific newspaper preferences, offer insights for students aspiring to be public relations practitioners and highlight the importance of building a positive rapport with the media. The paper concludes with recommendations for bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements and for ensuring that students are well-equipped for their future careers.
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1. Introduction

A press release is a news story prepared by an organization and distributed to the media to inform journalists about new developments (Flowers, 2015) and with the ultimate goal of gaining publicity (Mizrahi, 2016). Earned media attention adds credibility to an organization and reaches a large audience at no cost (Bennett, 2023). While the media heavily relies on press releases for developing news stories (DiMarco, 2017), gatekeepers, including reporters, editors, producers, publishers, bloggers, and social media influencers, have the power to decide which press releases are picked up and turned into news stories to share with their extensive audiences (DiMarco, 2017).

Given this dynamic context, press releases are crafted with media needs in mind (Mizrahi, 2016) and are considered the cornerstone of public relations (PR) writing, representing a primary responsibility for PR professionals (Dimarco, 2017; Mizrahi, 2016). Mastering the art of writing effective press releases is therefore crucial for success in PR careers (Flowers, 2015; Smith, 2013).

Despite a substantial body of research analyzing the linguistic features of press releases, much of it remains concentrated on textual analysis (e.g.,

Skorczyńska Sznajder, 2016; Wei & Gampper, 2014). This emphasis raises questions about the validity of the findings, particularly when considering their application in English for specific purposes (ESP) courses, such as English for public relations. Furthermore, while some authors provide general guidelines for writing press releases (e.g., DiMarco, 2017; Flowers, 2015; Mizrahi, 2016), these often lack specificity.

In order to address this gap, the current study aims to investigate which characteristics of press releases correspond to the styles and preferences of specific media outlets, concentrating on headlines and lead paragraphs since these have been identified as key elements influencing reader engagement (Bennett, 2023; DiMarco, 2017). The findings offer valuable and comprehensive materials for students in ESP courses. Additionally, they can benefit PR practitioners by enhancing the chances of their press releases being published in targeted media.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Press releases

According to Smith (2013), the roots of PR writing lie in journalistic practices and follow the conventions outlined in style guides such as the Associated Press Stylebook in the US, the Canadian Press Stylebook, and the Reuters Handbook of Journalism, which are widely recognized across English-speaking countries. Flowers (2015) suggests that for press releases to be considered for inclusion in media stories, they must be factual and present information appealing to the media outlet's readers or viewers, ensuring that they possess qualities of newsworthiness, timeliness, and audience relevance. Moreover, DiMarco (2017) emphasizes the importance of honesty, ethical standards, and reliability in a news-writing approach.

When considering the length of a press release, opinions can vary. While Mizrahi (2016) recommends making the press release precisely as long as

necessary, Dimarco (2017) and Flowers (2015) emphasize that effective press releases should be concise in order to accommodate the schedules of busy reporters, allowing editors and reporters to quickly extract the essential facts and news value.

Furthermore, DiMarco (2017) suggests that small, concise paragraphs are more effective for readers than large blocks of text, which can obscure the main point with unnecessary details. In the same vein, Smith (2003) affirms that sentences and paragraphs should be brief, averaging 16 words per sentence and no more than six lines per paragraph, with frequent breaks to enhance readability for a general audience. Similarly, Flowers (2015) proposes that paragraphs should not exceed eight lines so as to keep readers engaged.

In terms of language and tone, press releases should use simple, neutral, and precise language, prioritizing strong nouns and verbs while avoiding jargon, marketing lingo, and hyperbolic adjectives in order to remain factual, clear, and succinct (DiMarco, 2017; Flowers, 2015; Mizrahi, 2016; Smith, 2013). Moreover, the tone of press releases should aim to inform rather than persuade (DiMarco, 2017; Smith, 2003). Furthermore, DiMarco (2017) and Smith (2003) argue against using superlatives and flattering adjectives such as “best,” “most useful,” “greatest,” “biggest,” “first,” “unique,” and “only.” In addition, personal pronouns such as “you,” “your,” “we,” and “our” should be avoided except in quotes, favoring third-person pronouns so that a professional and objective tone can be maintained (Flowers, 2015). Bennett (2023) recommends keeping the tone of the press release formal.

Regarding tense use, Flowers (2015) advises writing press releases in the present or future tense in order to keep the content timely, with the past tense reserved for direct quotes. Both DiMarco (2017) and Flowers (2015) emphasize the importance of using active voice, where the subject performs the action, in order to make the writing more engaging and clearer about who is acting and who

is affected. Likewise, Flowers (2015) suggests using precise dates instead of vague terms such as “today” or “tomorrow” and adapting releases for different English variants so that clarity and relevance can be ensured across diverse audiences.

According to Bennett (2023), the format for press releases can vary, but it is recommended to include the following elements: 1) contact name, email address, and phone number; 2) the date on which the release was sent; 3) headline, 4) the subheadline, 5) the dateline (the city and state where the story is taking place); 6) body text; 7) links; and 8) end. As indicated, the current study focuses specifically on headlines and lead paragraphs, as they are critical components of press releases designed to persuade readers, a view supported by most experts on effective press release writing (e.g., Bennett, 2023; DiMarco, 2017; Flowers, 2015; Mizrahi, 2016; Smith, 2013).

The purpose of headlines is to instantly grab attention (DiMarco, 2017), as Bennett (2023, p.18) suggests in the following:

The best headlines capture the spirit of a story, make a promise to the reader about what they will learn, and intrigue people enough that they want to learn more. If your headline can meet even two of these goals, you’ll be ahead of many of the people who write press releases.

Therefore, headlines should be carefully crafted in order to encourage journalists to continue reading the release (DiMarco, 2017). Flowers (2015) advises keeping headlines under two lines, while DiMarco (2017) recommends a concise headline of seven to ten words that encapsulates the story. Mizrahi (2016) points to a trend for headlines suitable for social media sharing to be around 80 to 100 characters in length, although longer headlines that clearly communicate the main point are also common.

DiMarco (2017) and Mizrahi (2016) emphasize using straightforward, clear language in headlines and avoiding repetition from the lead paragraph. Flowers (2015) notes that headlines do not require complete sentences or periods and should include the organization's name or its product and a verb, with varied advice on capitalization and formatting from style guides. Mizrahi (2016) suggests using present-tense verbs in headlines and omitting articles for brevity, while Bennett (2023) recommends including an active verb.

Press releases follow the inverted pyramid journalistic style, presenting the core facts upfront in the lead paragraph and then unfolding additional details in descending order of importance (Flowers, 2015). According to DiMarco (2017) and Smith (2013), the lead is another crucial part of PR news writing because it captures the interest of editors, reporters, and readers, ensuring that the story reaches a wider audience and keeps readers engaged.

Flowers (2015) recommends that a well-crafted lead paragraph should be able to stand alone because it could be the only part of the story that gets included. Most leads contain the relevant 5Ws (who, what, where, when, why) and sometimes H (how) (Flowers, 2015). DiMarco (2017) strongly emphasizes that PR practitioners should always use the five W's and H in news writing in order to increase the chances of getting published, even though leads might sometimes prioritize PR value over details, which is acceptable for internal publications but not for external submissions.

DiMarco (2017) advises keeping leads concise, aiming for 60-70 words, as well as localizing and highlighting the most crucial news in the lead. Correspondingly, Flowers (2015) suggests that a good lead must tell the story quickly and capture its essence since reporters are very busy and inundated with releases, making clarity essential. On the other hand, Mizrahi (2016) suggests that leads can often be extended to include more news value in the initial paragraph.

2.2 Previous Studies

There has been a considerable amount of research on the linguistic features of press releases within the past decade (2014 to 2023), such as Galița and Bonta (2016), Liu and Zhang (2021), Petrocelli et al. (2022), Skorczynska (2020), Skorczynska Sznajder (2016), and Wei & Gampper (2014). However, only a few studies in this research field are related to the current research, and it is to these that we now turn.

De Cock and Granger (2021) investigated the features of two business genres, corporate press releases and business news reports, examining 3-word lexical bundles. Their analysis reveals that the lexical bundles in press releases differ significantly from those in business news reports, particularly in expressing stance. While news reports are primarily informational, press releases serve both informational and promotional/persuasive purposes. Despite some similarities, press releases and news reports present information differently. News reports tend to use impersonal language (e.g., “there” bundles and “it” bundles), whereas press releases adopt a more personal approach (e.g., “we” and “I” bundles). Press releases frequently highlight firm intentions (e.g., “will” bundles) and positive elements (e.g., adjectives such as “leading” and “latest”). This personal and promotional style aims to persuade journalists to cover the news, often featuring quotes from high-ranking officials (e.g., “we are excited”).

In another related study, Nicholls (2019) addressed the debate on “churnalism” and online media using n-gram shingling. They found lower levels of reuse for news agency and press release copy than previous studies suggest, despite collecting extensive data and applying conservative criteria in their analysis.

In the Thai context, the only recent research closely related to the current study is by Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019). They conducted a detailed corpus-based move analysis in order to explore the structural and linguistic differences

between press releases from Thailand-based companies and corresponding news reports from local English-language newspapers, *The Nation* and *Bangkok Post*. Their findings indicate that while news reports generally utilize the same rhetorical structures as press releases, there are significant differences in lexical choices and grammatical patterns. The word counts for each move are noticeably different, with news articles being shorter. Headlines in news articles feature words that are almost 50 percent shorter and predominantly use more neutral verbs. Articles such as “the” and conjunctions such as “and” show statistical significance in press release headlines but not in news articles. Similarly, “its” and “is” appear frequently in press releases but not at all in news articles. Future events in press releases are often referred to using “to + verb” rather than “be going to + verb” or “will + verb.” Press release headlines tend to be more persuasive, employing words such as “experience,” “more,” and “most.” Regarding Chavanachid and Sripicharn’s (2019) findings on lead paragraphs, this element is slightly longer in press releases. The lead moves are often broken down into smaller segments in news articles. Many promotional keywords such as “game-changing,” “extraordinary,” and “most demanding” found in press releases are removed in news articles. In contrast, words such as “announced,” “today,” and “also” are used frequently in press releases. Leads in news articles tend to refer to the company in the third person using “its” and often employ the present perfect tense.

Building on this previous research, the current study centers exclusively on headlines and leads in the *Bangkok Post* newspaper, a leading English-language daily newspaper in Thailand since 1946. Data were drawn from the newspaper’s website and were supplemented with a one-on-one interview with the news editor in order to gain insights into the stylistic preferences of this publication. Specifically, we sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the differences between the news articles in the *Bangkok Post* and the corresponding press releases?
2. What are the *Bangkok Post* editor’s stylistic preferences and recommendations regarding press release writing?

3. Methodology

The scope of the study was on headlines and leads from the “PR news” section of the newspaper’s website. The newspaper’s news editor, who oversees the editorial team, served as the primary participant. Headlines and leads of press releases are essential for influencing editors’ publication decisions and readers’ engagement (Smith, 2013).

As its name indicates, the “PR news” section is primarily derived from press releases. Therefore, unlike the study by Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019), which first collected press releases and then gathered the corresponding news articles, this research collected news articles first and then identified the corresponding press releases.

The data collection covered a 30-day period from February 19 to March 19, 2024. A total of 124 PR news articles were retrieved. In order to find the corresponding press releases, keywords from each news item—such as the headline, company name, or portions of the lead paragraph—were used to search two main sources: 1) the official company websites and 2) press release distribution service websites based in Thailand, such as ThaiPR.NET, PR Newswire, Thailand4, and RYT9. The latter are platforms that help distribute press releases to a wide range of media outlets. Both sources maintain the original press releases from PR departments in corporate companies or PR agencies. Only corresponding press releases that exactly matched the news headline and lead of the news article, or part of them, and whose content focused on the same topic, were collected. For example, when searching the headline “Attendee Registration Now Open for IAAPA Expo Asia 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand” on the IAAPA website, the result showed an exact match of the press release title from the official IAAPA website in the NewsHub section. The press release contained the same topic as the news article but in a longer form. In this process, 61 corresponding press releases were located.

The research methodology was comprised of two stages:

1. Text analysis, including manual and corpus analysis using *AntConc* freeware (Anthony, 2004), in order to examine the linguistic features and frequency patterns in news articles and press releases

2. An in-depth, one-on-one interview with the *Bangkok Post's* editor in order to explore their editorial practices and stylistic preferences. The interview was conducted for one hour via the Zoom application.

The results from the textual analysis were emailed to the participant prior to the interview. After coding the interview, a member check validation technique was conducted through phone calls in order to prevent any misinterpretation.

4. Findings

4.1 Headlines

Among the 61 headline pairs of news articles and corresponding press releases, only ten (16.39%) were identical, with no variations in wording, capitalization, or punctuation. The remaining 51 headlines (83.61%) were revised by newspaper editors. Table 1 lists the ten identical headlines, indicating that, in these cases, the editors chose to retain the original press release headlines without modifications. The lengths of these headlines ranged from seven to 12 words. Six employed the present simple tense, three were noun phrases, and one omitted the verb “to be.” None of them ended with a full stop.

Table 1

Identical Headlines in PR News Articles and Press Releases

No.	Identical Headlines in PR News Articles and Press Releases
1	Hino Appoints First Female President, Leads to Change
2	AIT Engineering & Technology Open House Inspires Next Generation of Innovators
3	Supermodel Barbara Palvin is Longines' Newest Ambassador of Elegance
4	Brighton College Bangkok Hosts Inaugural Medical Careers Conference

No. Identical Headlines in PR News Articles and Press Releases

- 5 Chulalongkorn Business School's MBA Program Prepares Leaders for Tomorrow
 - 6 Shangri-La Bangkok's NEXT2 Café Presents Easter Brunch Eggs-travaganza
 - 7 "Hoppy" Easter Delights at Chocolate Boutique, Shangri-La Bangkok
 - 8 Summer Glow at Chi, The Spa at Shangri-La Bangkok
 - 9 Splashing Songkran Pool Party at Shangri-La Bangkok
 - 10 Attendee Registration Now Open for IAAPA Expo Asia 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand
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When comparing the corpus sizes, the corpus of the news headlines (488 tokens) was 47.48% smaller than the press release headlines (929 tokens). The length of the news headlines ranged from five to 12 words, with an average of eight words, while the corresponding press releases ranged from two to 30 words, with an average of 15.23 words. The news editor's shortened edition of headlines reflects DiMarco's (2017) recommendation to keep press release headlines concise, ideally between seven to ten words. This preference for brevity was evident in the news editor's practice.

The most notable linguistic features distinguishing news article headlines from press release headlines were also examined and are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2*The Analysis of Linguistic Features*

	Press Releases	News Articles
Similarities		
Present simple	37 (60.65%)	41 (67.21%)
Noun phrases	14 (22.95%)	13 (21.31%)
Imperative form	2 (3.28%)	3 (4.92%)
Differences		
Past simple	Frequent (6: 9.84%)	Rare (1: 1.64%)
Future simple	to+infinitive (2: 3.28%), will (1: 1.64%)	to+infinitive (3: 4.92%)
Passive voice	With (1: 1.64%) and without the verb 'to be' (2: 3.28%)	Without the verb "to be" (3: 4.92%)
Capitalization	Title capitalization (28: 45.90%), First letter capitalization (27: 44.26%), Mixed capitalization (4: 6.55%), Capitalization of all letters (2: 3.28%)	Title capitalization (57: 93.44%), First letter Capitalization (5: 8.20%)
Full stop	Full stop (9: 14.75%)	No full stop (100%)
Punctuation	Comma (18: 29.51%), Single quotation (7: 11.47%), Double quotation (7: 11.47%), Colon (3: 4.92%), Exclamation mark (2: 3.28%), Brackets (2: 3.28%), Semicolons (2: 3.28%), En dash (1: 1.64%), Em dash (1: 1.64%).	Colon (9 : 14.75%), Comma (9 : 14.75%), Double quotation (2 : 3.28%), Ampersand (2: 3.28%), Exclamation mark (2 : 3.28%).
Contraction	None (0%)	Rare (1: 1.64%)

The main similarities between the two genres were that the present simple tense dominated the analyzed headlines in both genres, with 60.65% of press release headlines and 67.21% of news article headlines using it. Noun phrases followed as the second most common feature, appearing in 22.95% of the press releases and 21.31% of the news articles. Both genres also used the imperative

form, with 3.28% in the press releases and 4.92% in the news articles, particularly in promotional content.

However, there were also noticeable differences between the genres. The press releases frequently used the past simple tense (9.84%), while this form was rarely used in news articles (1.64%). In terms of the future events, the press releases tended to use the future simple tense, including “to+infinitive” (3.28%) and “will” (1.64%), while the news articles mainly used “to+infinitive” (4.92%). Notably, the press releases displayed a mixed usage of the verb “to be” in the passive constructions (1.64% with “to be” and 3.28% without), whereas the news headlines more often omitted the verb “to be” entirely (4.92%).

In terms of capitalization, the headlines in both genres predominantly used title capitalization, with 45.90% of the press releases and 93.44% of the news articles doing so. The press release headlines showed more diversity in capitalization styles, including mixed capitalization (6.55%), as seen in headlines such as “Thai Credit Bank PCL Received 1st Runner Up in the National Leadership Award on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (RDPE) 2023 Presented by Ministry of Interior.” Additionally, 14.75% of the press release headlines ended with a full stop, while none of the news article headlines did. The press releases also used a wider variety of punctuation symbols, including commas (29.51%), single and double quotation marks (11.47%), colons (4.92%), exclamation marks (3.28%), and others. In contrast, the news articles mainly used colons (14.75%) and commas (14.75%). Finally, no contractions appeared in the press release headlines (0%), whereas one contraction, “it’s,” appeared in 1.64% of the news article headlines.

Keyword analysis is a widely used technique for examining discourse through corpora, identifying distinctive words that highlight the unique features of one text set compared to another (Hunston, 2022). In this study, keyness analysis was employed to compare the lexical items between the press releases and news

articles. Each was used as a reference corpus in order to identify the typical items salient to the genre being analyzed.

Table 3 details the results of the keyness analysis comparing the lexical items. The analysis highlighted the ten keywords with the highest keyness scores, underscoring significant linguistic differences between the two genres. The press release headlines showed a heavy reliance on function words, reflecting their distinct linguistic style. In contrast, the news article headlines were predominantly composed of content words, with only two function words (about and against) appearing among the top keywords.

Table 3

Keyness Analysis

Rank	Press releases			News articles		
	Freq	Keyness	Keyword	Freq	Keyness	Keyword
1	11	9.21	a	5	6.22	launches
2	29	8.57	the	2	4.31	empowering
3	31	7.76	to	2	4.31	season
4	24	5.76	and	3	2.8	expands
5	20	5.39	of	5	2.7	award
6	4	3.34	awards	1	2.15	about
7	4	3.34	brand	1	2.15	advanced
8	4	3.34	by	1	2.15	against
9	4	3.34	its	1	2.15	amplifying
10	4	3.34	partners	1	2.15	announcement

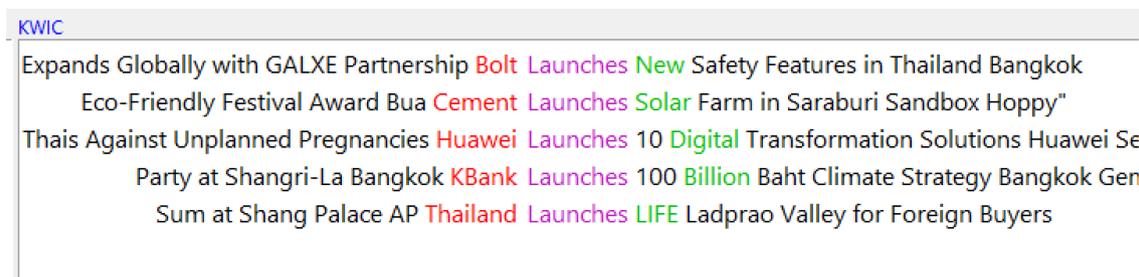
Overall, these results confirmed that news headlines were consistently edited to be more concise than those of press releases, reflecting the findings from previous research (Chavanachid & Sripicharn, 2019). This remained true even though the news articles analyzed were sourced from the PR news section, which is known to originate from press releases. This suggests that most press releases

may not fully adhere to newspapers' editorial standards, particularly in terms of conciseness and linguistic style, as highlighted by the differences observed in the headlines.

Examining the concordances of the word “launches,” which had the highest keyness score in news article headlines, for collocational and pattern analysis (as shown in Figure 1), highlighted the frequent use of the organization's name or its products or services in the headlines (Flowers, 2015), as well as the use of present-tense verbs (Mizrahi, 2016).

Figure 1

Concordance Result of the Word “Launches”



4.2 Leads

Among the 61 lead pairs analyzed, the press release leads were generally longer, with word counts ranging from 25 to 194 and an average of 80.79 words. In contrast, the news article leads were more concise, ranging from 25 to 134 words, with an average of 70.69 words. These results were consistent with the findings of Chavanachid and Sripicharn's (2019) study, which found lead paragraphs to be slightly longer in press releases.

The average of 70.69 words for news article leads was closely in line with DiMarco's (2017) recommendation for keeping leads concise, advising a limit of 60–70 words.

All of the leads in both genres were analyzed based on the grammatical tenses used, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Grammatical Features

Tense	Press releases	News articles
Present simple	41 (67.21%)	39 (63.93%)
Past simple	9 (14.75%)	23 (37.70%)
Present perfect simple	13 (21.31%)	16 (26.23%)
Future simple	6 (9.84%)	6 (9.84%)
Present continuous	3 (4.92%)	4 (6.56%)

Although the present simple tense was predominantly used in both genres (67.21% in the press releases and 63.93% in the news articles), the past simple tense appeared more frequently in the news article leads (37.70%) than in the press release leads (14.75%). These results contrasted with Chavanachid and Sripicharn’s (2019) findings, where the present perfect tense was found most often in news article leads, accounting for the majority of cases. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in the datasets, as Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019) focused on press releases and corresponding news reports related to products and services, whereas the present study included all news articles and corresponding press releases published during a specific period.

Unlike the headlines, where only ten pairs (16.39%) were identical without modification from the news editor, 29 pairs (47.54%) of the leads were identical, whereas 32 pairs (52.46%) were found to be revised during the transformation from press releases to news articles. Examples of leads that underwent no modification are shown in Table 5, illustrating how both writers aimed to cover the 5Ws in their leads. However, the words “biggest” and “first” were used, despite Smith (2003) and DiMarco (2017) recommending against the use of superlatives and flattering adjectives.

Table 5*Identical Lead*

Nestlé Pure Life, under Nestlé (Thai) Ltd.’s Water Business Unit, is investing 200 million baht to target Gen Z consumers with the launch of the “Nestlé Pure Life Fresh No Limit” campaign, its **biggest** summer campaign of the year. The campaign strategy includes a major revamp of the Nestlé Pure Life brand globally for the **first** time in five years under “The Ripples of Life” concept, spreading ripples of freshness to the new generation at scale. Nestlé Pure Life will further penetrate the market through a music collaboration by partnering with popular teen music label Sonray Music, featuring BUS, the popular T-pop band, as its summer presenters. They will team up with James Jirayu to inspire and share the Fresh No Limit experience with members of Gen Z nationwide.

Out of the 32 pairs identified, the modifications in the news articles based on their corresponding press releases varied widely, ranging from minor changes involving just a single word to extensive rewrites encompassing entire paragraphs. Examples of word-level edits across five pairs are provided in Table 6.

Table 6*Word-Level Edits*

-
- 1 Phyathai Hospital Group has been recognized as one of the finalists for Best Brand Performance in the healthcare industry, excelling in social media, at the 12th Thailand Social Awards. The event was organized by WiseSite Thailand. Ms. Watcharaporn Chareondhamavach, Digital Marketing and Business Development at Phyathai-Paolo Hospital Group, represented the organization in receiving the award at True Icon Hall, Iconsiam **recently**.

 - 2 Huawei hosted the 5G Beyond Growth Summit at MWC Barcelona 2024 **today** → **on February 28, 2024**. At the summit, Li Peng, Huawei’s Corporate Senior Vice President and President of ICT Sales & Service discussed how carriers can achieve business success in 5G and how 5.5G will further unlock the potential of networks and create new growth opportunities.

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- 3 “Whizdom Craftz Samyan” by MODC has again created a stir in the Thai real estate industry by linking up with Knightsbridge ~~Partners~~ to reach overseas buyers, confidently targeting foreign purchasers with 100 condo units ~~totaling~~ → **totalling** 1.7 billion baht with its outstanding location at the heart of “Samyan Rama IV.”
-

Most word-level edits as shown in Table 6 included revising date details to be more specific, removing certain words to achieve conciseness, and changing American English spelling to British English.

Two of the seven pairs of phrase-level edits are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7

Phrase-Level Edits

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- 1 Executive Chinese Chef Tan Kwan Aik is delighted to present one of ~~a rare delicacy~~ → **the most exquisite delicacies** in the culinary world, ‘White Asparagus’ featured in his limited special seasonal menu.
-
- 2 Glico ~~starts~~ → **kicks** off 2024 with ~~an~~ → **the** exciting launch of ‘Pocky Crushed,’ ~~which is set to compete for greater market share, continuing to~~ → **poised to compete for a greater market share and further** solidify its position as the top brand in the Thai biscuit market ~~and aiming to expand...~~ → **. The aim is to** expand its customer base among the new generation ~~with~~ → **through** Experiential Marketing strategies. This strategic move is complemented by the introduction of Glico Friend ‘Zee & Nunew,’ ~~to extend~~ → **extending** its reach to the Gen Z consumer group.
-

Table 7 shows more complex, phrase-level edits that demonstrated a clear editorial preference for precision, clarity, and impactful phrasing. For instance, “a rare delicacy” was replaced with the more powerful phrase “the most exquisite delicacies.” Once again, the editor used the phrase “the most,” contrary to Smith’s (2003) and DiMarco’s (2017) argument against using superlatives.

The phrase-level edits in Example 2 demonstrated the news editor’s preference for shorter sentences, consistent with Smith (2003), who emphasizes that sentences and paragraphs should be brief, with frequent breaks to improve readability for a general audience. Other edits at this level included grammar corrections, such as changing the pronoun ‘their’ to ‘its’ in order to accurately refer to a singular company entity, and a preference for precision, as seen in the expansion of the acronym “YoY” to “year-over-year.”

Examples of sentence-level edits from the five pairs are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Sentence-Level Edits

Press release	<p>Jasmine Technology Solution Public Company Limited (JTS) revealed a 106% profit increase in 2023, up 111 million baht from a loss of 105 million baht in 2022. Revenue from the telecommunications and internet service business grew by 194 million baht in 2023, a 10% increase compared to the previous year, and aims to continuously increase revenue from network expansion and data centers to meet customer needs.</p>
News	<p>Jasmine Technology Solution Public Company Limited (JTS) reported a remarkable 106% increase in profits for the year 2023, marking a significant turnaround from a loss of 105 million baht in 2022. Revenue from <u>its</u> telecommunications and internet service segment also saw a notable uptick, growing by 194 million baht, a 10% increase compared to the previous year. The company aims to sustain this growth trajectory by further expanding its network and data centres to cater to evolving customer demands.</p>

In the sentence-level edits, both press release and news article leads are presented in the example for comparison. It is evident that the entire sentence in

the news lead was rewritten and rearranged in order to adopt a more descriptive tone. A common modification in the news lead version is the addition of the pronoun “its” to create a clear reference to the company. The lengthy sentences in the press release were divided into two, reflecting the news editor’s preference for brevity. Interestingly, the news version in the example (79 words) was slightly longer than the press release version (66 words). This demonstrated that news articles were not necessarily always shorter; at times, clarity and flow were prioritized over brevity, reinforcing Mizrahi’s (2016) suggestion that leads can be expanded to incorporate additional news value within the opening paragraph.

Table 9 presents the paragraph-level edits, which were the most common type, occurring in 15 out of 32 pairs, and accounted for 46.87%.

Table 9

Paragraph-Level Edits

Press release	<p>Mr. Auttapol Rerkpiboon, President & Chief Executive Officer, PTT Public Company Limited revealed PTT is Thailand’s only brand listed in Brand Finance’s ranking of the world’s 500 most valuable brands this year, with a brand value of over USD 8 billion. It has remarkably ascended 78 places from last year to 267th in the current ranking, reflecting the organization’s operational excellence across all aspects. This list is based on Brand Finance’s brand evaluation methodology, which encompasses various factors such as brand strength, brand loyalty, and business performance.</p>
News	<p>PTT Public Company Limited has once again positioned itself as Thailand’s beacon of brand excellence by being the only Thai brand to make it to Brand Finance’s list of the world’s 500 most valuable brands in 2024, marking its 12th consecutive year on this prestigious ranking. Under the leadership of Mr. Auttapol Rerkpiboon, President & CEO, PTT has seen its brand value surge to over USD 8 billion, climbing 78 spots to rank 267th this year.</p>

Table 9 also presents both the press release and news leads for comparison. These edits frequently involved repositioning the company name to begin the lead paragraph. Most wording changes occurred at this level. Notable of the edits in the examples included changing general references to a specific year and splitting lengthy paragraphs to begin a new sentence.

The edits found in the lead analysis underlined that press releases should be written to be more appealing to readers, ensuring newsworthiness and timeliness with specific dates and conciseness, as suggested by Flowers (2015). Small, concise paragraphs are preferred, as advised by DiMarco (2017). The results also confirmed the findings of Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019), showing a preference for leads to be brief, specific, and concise.

A keyness analysis was also conducted in order to compare the leads of news articles with those of press releases, and the results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Keyness Analysis

Rank	Press releases			News articles		
	Freq	Keyness	Keyword	Freq	Keyness	Keyword
1	5	6.2	organization	8	4.83	significant
2	3	3.72	astronomical	2	3.09	ai
3	3	3.72	chief	2	3.09	complemented
4	3	3.72	country	2	3.09	consumer
5	3	3.72	home	2	3.09	enjoy
6	3	3.72	more	2	3.09	exceeding
7	3	3.72	officer	2	3.09	exquisite
8	3	3.72	prevent	2	3.09	extending
9	3	3.72	princess	2	3.09	interior
10	3	3.72	prostheses	2	3.09	leadership

Of the 32 pairs analyzed, the press releases comprised 4,765 words compared to 4,102 words in the news articles, revealing distinct linguistic styles. In the press releases, the top-ranked keyword was “organization,” which appeared five times with a keyness value of 6.2. Several other keywords, such as “astronomical,” “princess,” and “prostheses,” as well as terms such as “chief” and “officer,” which were used to denote spokesperson positions, all had a frequency of 3 and a keyness value of 3.72. These words often appeared as part of company names, reflecting the corporate tone commonly employed, with “organization” frequently used as a pronoun to refer to the company itself. Promotional language was also evident in the use of words such as “more,” which was ranked 6th, with a frequency of 3 and a keyness value of 3.72.

In contrast, the news articles exhibited a more neutral and descriptive tone, prioritizing clarity and informativeness. The top-ranked keyword, “significant,” appears eight times with a keyness value of 4.83, reflecting the news editor’s preference for precise language that conveyed importance without exaggeration. Lower-ranked keywords, such as “ai,” “consumer,” and “exceeding” (each with a frequency of 2 and keyness value of 3.09), reflected the descriptive and factual reporting style. Multiword units, such as “is complemented by” and “is complemented with,” further emphasized precision and detail in the reporting process. While promotional elements were less prominent, occasional use of words such as “enjoy” (ranked sixth, frequency of 2, and keyness value of 3.09) indicated a subtle integration of promotional language, often found in leads with a softer tone.

These results contrasted with De Cock and Granger’s (2021) findings, which have suggested that press releases frequently emphasize information about the company, whereas news articles are primarily informational. Bennett (2023) also highlights that the body text of press releases should focus on the newsworthiness of actions rather than promoting the organization. Nevertheless, the news articles in the current analysis also included promotional language, which may have been

due to the type of sources or corresponding press releases that leaned toward soft news.

The concordance for the word “significant” was further examined for collocational and pattern analysis, as shown in Figure 2

Figure 2

Concordance Result



The use of “significant” frequently preceded nouns associated with business, marketing, and strategic changes (e.g., “significant brand overhaul,” “significant marketing initiative,” “significant step,” etc.), demonstrating a collocational preference. This pattern reinforced the word’s role in emphasizing important actions or developments, suggesting that it was strategically employed in order to highlight impactful events or decisions within the articles.

In conclusion, the analysis confirmed the findings of Nicholls (2019) and Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019) that news editors frequently modified press releases in order to adapt them into news articles, reflecting their preferred linguistic and grammatical choices, such as the frequent use of the word “significant” observed in the current study. Headlines were modified more often than leads, which may be due to newspaper-specific standards that prioritize headlines over leads.

4.3 The *Bangkok Post* Editor's Stylistic Preferences and Recommendations

This section presents the results validating the news editor of the *Bangkok Post*, along with additional insights and recommendations.

Conciseness

The primary theme derived from the interview with the news editor was conciseness, which is crucial when transforming press releases into news articles due to space constraints and the visual appeal of the design layout, as highlighted in the following excerpt from the interview with the news editor:

Headlines should be concise to fit the website's design, where news is displayed in an orderly array. This ensures that each headline occupies minimal space and maintains the site's visual appeal.

According to the editor, headlines should typically be around ten words, although there was some flexibility. This guideline was supported by DiMarco (2017), who suggests an ideal headline length of seven to ten words. The importance of brevity was a recurring theme throughout the interview, particularly regarding the headlines. For example, noun phrases were commonly used to achieve conciseness. The use of a colon in headlines often substituted the word "said" to save space. Pronouns and articles were rarely included in news headlines to keep them short. The news editor also explained the rationale behind adjusting leads to achieve brevity in the following excerpt:

Adjusting to put the company or event name instead of an individual's name enhances conciseness by emphasizing the company or event, with the individual mentioned in subsequent paragraphs.

The news editor also noted that conciseness was also intended to engage the reader, stating:

Long sentences in press releases are difficult to read. We want readers to be able to understand easily in just one round of reading,

Furthermore, according to the editor, the verb “to be” or the main verb was typically omitted in headlines and photo captions, not only for conciseness but also to comply with the news rhetorical style. Otherwise, as he explained, headlines would be too bland. He also recommended that press releases be made more concise by focusing on the most significant topic and removing any advertising language. Redundancy should also be avoided. This is why pronouns such as “it” or “its” were often used in news articles to replace company or brand names. The words “Thailand” and “Bangkok” were used less frequently in news articles because their locations were generally known. Countries or cities were mentioned only when the news referred to other provinces or countries.

Editorial guidelines for effective news writing

During the interview, other insights into the *Bangkok Post's* preferred writing style also emerged.

Regarding tenses, basic tenses were preferred for simplicity. Even the past perfect tense, commonly found in press releases, was revised to the past simple tense. As the editor pointed out, the present simple tense was primarily used in news writing, especially in headlines and leads, because it conveyed immediacy and emphasized the freshness and factual nature of the news. This preference confirmed the findings from the textual analysis and contradicted the results of Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019), who found that the present perfect tense was most often used in news article leads. This approach is highlighted in the following excerpt from the interview with the news editor:

The present simple tense is primarily used in headlines and lead paragraphs of news articles to maintain freshness. In subsequent

paragraphs, however, the tense should accurately reflect the context of the news.

Dates should be clear and specific as seen in Table 6, with words such as “today” or “recently” typically removed and replaced with exact dates. These findings mirrored the results of Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019). Moreover, the writing should maintain a factual and neutral tone. Exclamation marks, which were sometimes found in press releases, were removed from news headlines in order to avoid conveying emotion.

Adherence to the news report writing style guide was also important. For example, in headlines, no full stop was used, and first-letter capitalization was standard. Only single quotation marks were allowed in headlines, and British English was primarily used at the *Bangkok Post*.

The inverted pyramid structure was also emphasized in news writing with the most significant information placed first, as the editor noted in the following:

Press release writers will put all information in the lead paragraph, but when we transform it into news articles, we normally digest it and present the most important angle first, with less important angles in paragraphs after the lead.

Primary emphasis on modification

A third key theme that emerged during the interview was the emphasis on modifications when transforming press releases into news articles. The editor confirmed that headlines and paragraph leads were the focus of these modifications, primarily for conciseness and in order to quickly engage readers.

Another focus was on making the language sound more natural, reflecting the style of native English speakers rather than adhering strictly to grammatical

correctness. Commonly used news industry vocabulary was prioritized over overly refined language.

The editor also provided insights into flexibility in style. For example, while our research showed that 93.44% of the news articles in the *Bangkok Post* used title capitalization in line with the publication's style guide, this feature was not a primary focus during the revision of press releases, as the editor commented.

For news from PR agencies and companies, we typically do intensive revision when the grammar is obviously incorrect, but we are not that strict about capitalization in PR news.

Other elements identified during the textual analysis, such as the use of brackets and semicolons in press release headlines and contractions such as “it’s” in news article headlines, were inconsistent with the publication's style guide, as revealed during the interview.

This information was important for researchers to consider when analyzing texts, as it underscored the need to validate findings with expert insights rather than relying solely on textual analysis. Moreover, analysis should not rely solely on press releases, since the goal is to communicate effectively with the media (Flowers, 2015); therefore, the writing style should conform to the targeted publication's style.

5. Limitations

This study was limited to analyzing only headlines and leads for detailed examinations. Considering these useful results, further detailed investigation of other elements, such as the remainder of the body in news articles and quotes, is recommended. Extending the same practices to other leading English publications in Thailand would benefit ESP teachers by providing validated results that can be utilized in the classroom.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The findings have provided a wealth of information that can be strategically integrated into ESP courses. These insights, particularly focused on authentic media formats and the alignment with actual media preferences, offer significant pedagogical value, as in the following proposals:

1. ESP courses should emphasize the importance of adhering to the writing styles that are favored by authentic media sources rather than just relying on general press release samples available online. This approach ensures that students learn to produce content that is more likely to be accepted and published by real-world media outlets.

2. While using real media articles as examples or templates in class, it is crucial to discuss the potential for errors or deviations due to the fast-paced nature of media environments. This will teach students the importance of flexibility and adaptability in their writing.

3. Students could be tasked with identifying and correcting errors in both news articles and corresponding press releases. This not only would improve their editing skills but also enhance their understanding of the nuances in professional writing.

4. Students should be taught the importance of customizing press releases to match the stylistic preferences of specific media outlets. This could include exercises where students rewrite a standard press release to suit different media outlets based on their distinct editorial guidelines.

5. Students should practice writing effective headlines and leads under the guidance of the identified standards.

6. Simulating the role of a media editor can give students a practical perspective on the editorial process, helping them understand the rationale behind certain stylistic choices and the importance of matching media preferences.

7. In order to enrich the learning experience, ESP courses could benefit from inviting industry experts into the classroom. These professionals can provide firsthand insights into the current trends and expectations in media writing, offer feedback on student work, and discuss the nuances of adapting writing to different media outlets.

These pedagogical strategies aim to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that ESP students are not only proficient in language use but also effective communicators in their specific professional contexts.

7. Conclusion

The current research aimed to analyze how press releases are edited and transformed into news articles by the *Bangkok Post's* media editors. This was achieved through a combination of textual analysis and validation by industry experts. This approach is intended to yield robust and credible results that can be effectively utilized in classroom settings, providing students with practical, real-world experience.

The findings corroborated the general writing guidelines identified in the literature, such as employing a factual style and conciseness (DiMarco, 2017; Flowers, 2015), using short sentences (Smith, 2003), avoiding flattering adjectives (DiMarco, 2017), and adapting releases for different English variants by using the present tense and precise dates (Chavanachid & Sripicharn, 2019; Flowers, 2015).

Effective press release headlines, confirmed to align with media standards, should be composed in clear, concise language, ideally around ten words,

incorporating the present simple tense, excluding articles and full stops, as recommended by Flowers (2015) and an editor from the *Bangkok Post*. The study also highlights the use of an organization's name or its products or services in headlines (Flowers, 2015). The lead paragraph should also be concise, aiming for 60-70 words, and should quickly tell the story while strictly adhering to the inverted pyramid style of journalism (DiMarco, 2017; Flowers, 2015).

Furthermore, the results agreed with the findings of Nicholls (2019) and Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019), that major differences existed between news articles and corresponding press releases, suggesting that press releases are subject to intensive editing by the newspaper.

On the other hand, this research also presented contrasts with previous studies. While Chavanachid and Sripicharn (2019) found frequent use of the present perfect tense in news article leads, our findings indicated a predominant use of the present simple tense in both genres, which was also preferred by editors at the *Bangkok Post*.

Crucially, the present study identified the *Bangkok Post's* key practices in transforming press releases into news articles. These included a preference for British English spelling, simple tenses, and industry-specific vocabulary over strict grammatical correctness. Editors prioritized conciseness in order to accommodate website space constraints and to enhance visual appeal, essential for engaging readers and adhering to the rhetorical style of news media. Only glaring errors in capitalization and grammar were corrected.

Based on these findings, we recommend that press releases be tailored to closely match the stylistic and structural preferences of targeted media outlets in order to improve media relations.

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