

Communicative Purposes of Press Releases Announcing  
Reduction in Workforce

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Tämä tutkielma käsittelee kaupallisten yhtiöiden julkaisemia lehdistötiedotteita, joissa ilmoitetaan henkilöstövähennyksistä. Erityisenä tutkimuskohteena ovat lehdistötiedotteiden informatiiviset ja promotionaaliset päämäärät ja tarkoitukset sekä näiden päämäärien ja tarkoitusten ilmentyminen tekstin retorisen rakenteen, valittujen retoristen strategioiden sekä leksikaalisten ja kieliopillisten valintojen kautta.

Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu 50 englanninkielisestä lehdistötiedotteesta, jotka sisältävät ilmoituksen henkilöstövähennyksistä. Lehdistötiedotteet kerättiin yritysten verkkosivuilta. Tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehityksenä toimivat soveltavan kielentutkimuksen alalla erityisesti ammattikielentutkimuksessa (*ESP, English for Specific Purposes*) laajalti käytetty Swalesin (1990) tekstilajia (*genre*) koskeva määritelmää ja Bhatian (1993) kehittämä generisen analyysin malli.

Ennen aineiston kielitieteellistä analysointia tutkimuksessa perehdyttiin Bhatian (1993) mallin mukaisesti lehdistötiedotteiden historiaan, kohdeyleisöihin, diskurssiyhteisöön ja sen tuottamiin muihin tekstilajeihin, aikaisempiin lehdistötiedotteita käsitteleviin kielitieteellisiin tutkimuksiin sekä erityisesti yritysten henkilövähennyksiin liittyvään tilannekontekstiin. Kielitieteellisessä analyysissä tutkittavista teksteistä tunnistettiin kahdeksan retorista vaihetta (*move*), jotka olivat tyypillisiä tutkituille teksteille. Kunkin retorisen vaiheen yksittäiset ilmentymät koottiin yhteen erillisiksi aineistoiksi, joista pyrittiin tunnistamaan kullekin vaiheelle tyypilliset retoriset strategiat sekä toistuvat leksikaaliset ja kieliopilliset valinnat.

Tutkimuksessa todettiin, että vaikka tutkittujen lehdistötiedotteiden pääasiallinen tarkoitus oli yhtiön toiminnasta tiedottaminen, niillä oli myös promotionaalinen päämäärä, joka ilmeni mm. pyrkimyksenä välittää yhtiöstä mahdollisimman positiivinen kuva eri kohdeyleisöille, erityisesti sijoittajille. Tämän positiivisen kuvan välittämiseen käytettyjä keinoja olivat mm. odotettavissa olevien saavutusten korostaminen, ulkoisten tekijöiden nimeäminen nykyisen tilanteen aiheuttajaksi, passiivin käyttö sekä erilaiset yrityksen julkisen kuvan säilyttämiseen pyrkivät (*face-saving*) strategiat.

Asiasanat: englannin kieli, genre, liikeviestintä, soveltava kielitiede, tekstianalyysi, pragmatiikka

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## List of abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
PE	Promotional Element
R&D	Research and Development
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics

# 1. Introduction

The press release is considered as one of the core genres in public relations. Companies issue press releases generally to provide journalists with information in the hope that it will be turned into actual news stories and passed on, preferably verbatim, to the general public (Jacobs 1999b: 219). The chances of being published are enhanced, if the press release follows the conventions of news reporting, as “journalists favour texts which have already been prefabricated in an appropriate news style and therefore require the minimum of reworking” (Bell 1991:58). Several linguistic studies about textual aspects of press releases have shown that the press release indeed mirrors the structure and style of the news article.

Although corporate press releases are designed to look like news articles, providing information is only one of their communicative purposes. While being ostensibly informative, press releases are typically designed in a way that presents the company in as favourable light as possible, even in adverse circumstances. In other words, promoting the company is also an important communicative purpose of press releases. As the genre incorporates both informative and promotional elements, it can be classified as a mixed or a hybrid genre (cf. Fairclough 1992: 207, 2003: 34; Bhatia 2004b: 223).

Maintaining the right balance between informative and promotional can be a challenging task for the writer: on one hand, if the text is overtly promotional, it is more likely to be perceived as an advertisement and rejected, or at least modified, by journalists. On the other hand, dispassionately phrased press releases might not serve the public relations purposes of the company or even attract the interest of the press. Thus, every press release issued by a business company can be assumed to carry at least a mildly promotional or persuasive overtone.

Although several corpus-based studies have been published about generic features and, especially, promotional aspects of press releases in the past few years, very few of the studies concern press releases dealing with sensitive topics, i.e. issues which are likely to be perceived as inherently negative by at least one stakeholder group (i.e. employees, shareholders and investors, customers, market analysts or general

public). Large reductions in headcount, for instance, will most likely gain publicity, but the angle from which the information is presented by the media could be unbeneficial for the company's reputation. Through a press release the company can try to convince the affected personnel and communities that redundancies are absolutely necessary, while persuading (potential) investors to believe that despite of, or even due to the layoffs, the prospects of the company are bright as well as assuring customers that the quality of services or products will not deteriorate. As attending to the interests of the different audiences serves the public relations needs of the company, although perhaps not as much to promote the company as to prevent possible damage to its public image, it can be assumed that at least some kind of promotional or persuasive techniques are used also in the press releases which announce reduction in workforce. However, it is clear that those press releases cannot be promotional in the same way as e.g. press releases that announce new products or services. Therefore the promotional purpose should be seen as 'umbrella' under which there are several identifiable sub-purposes or intentions (cf. Akar & Louhiala-Salminen 1999: 213).

This study aims to contribute to our understanding of the genre of press releases and, in particular, press releases announcing reduction in workforce. The study addresses two main questions:

1. What kind of communicative purposes and intentions do press releases announcing workforce reduction carry?
2. What kind of rhetorical strategies and linguistic devices are used for reaching those purposes?

The analysis builds on principles drawn from genre theory research within applied linguistics, most notably that of John Swales (1990) and Vijay K. Bhatia (1993, 2004a,b, 2008a,b, 2010) as well as on previous linguistic studies on the genre of press releases (e.g. Jacobs 1999a,b; McLaren and Gurău 2005; Pander Maat 2007; Catenaccio 2008). The analysis is conducted on a corpus of corporate press releases collected from 50 corporate websites.

The plan of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 describes the principles of genre theory on which I build the analysis. In chapter 3, I discuss the genre of press release, including its history, role, audiences and interrelations with other genres. In chapter 4, previous linguistic studies on the genre of press release are introduced. The methods of the analysis are presented in chapter 5, an analysis of the situational context in chapter 6 and the actual linguistic analysis of the corpus texts is in chapter 7. In chapter 8 the findings are discussed further, and chapter 9 provides the conclusion.

## 2. Genre theory

### 2.1. Approaches to genre studies

During the past three decades, a number of new approaches to genre studies have emerged. What is common to most of these approaches is that while traditional definitions of genre focused on textual regularities, current genre studies have been able to connect the recognition of regularities with a broader social and cultural understanding of language in use (Freedman & Medway 1994: 1). In current genre studies, three main approaches can be distinguished: the Australian Sydney School approach, the North American New Rhetoric approach and the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach. Although these three approaches have specific and identifiable research agendas, there is also significant overlapping in e.g. recognition of purpose or goal as the most important genre determinant. The present study of press releases announcing workforce reductions will mostly follow the ESP approach, drawing on Swales' (1990) definition of genre and Bhatia's (1993) framework for genre analysis. However, as many genre scholars within ESP, including Swales and Bhatia, have been influenced by the systemic-functionalist model of analysis as well as the ethnographic orientation of the New Rhetoric approach to genre, I will in the following paragraphs shortly review each of the three main approaches.

The Sydney School approach to genre studies is an educational application of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) pioneered by M.A.K. Halliday. In SFL, studies of genre developed from the research on *register*, which examined how language varies according to situational context. According to Halliday & Hasan (1989: 12), registers are characterized by three main dimensions of variation: the nature of the social action that is taking place (*field*), the roles of the interactants, including the relationship between them (*tenor*), and how the language is functioning in the interaction, for instance, whether it is spoken or written (*mode*). The early work on register largely meant analysing the relevant linguistic features related to a particular situational configuration of field, tenor and mode as general 'register features', which lead to descriptions of specialised registers of economy, technology,

art etc. (Ventola 2005: 24). Later, it was noticed that linguistic realisations (e.g. lexis, sentence structure) are not spread evenly throughout the text or interaction: different phases or stages of the discourse seem to evoke different linguistic realisations (ibid.: 25). This observation gave rise to the notion of genre and the examination of schematic (or generic) structuring of a genre (ibid.: 26).

In the Sydney School approach genre is considered as “staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity” in which the interactants engage as members of their culture (Martin 2000: 155). The argument is that texts unfold through various (culturally specific) stages and the register features (field, tenor, mode) as well as the linguistic realisations vary stage by stage in reaction to the goals of the interactants (Martin 2000: 161). Thus, there is a strong expectation that generic stages correlate with lexical, grammatical and semantic differences. The identification of different stages of a genre is therefore a descriptive process rather than an interpretive one. Hence, a close analysis of linguistic realisation of different generic stages is an important characteristic in Sydney School tradition of genre research (Solin 2009: n.p.).

The New Rhetoric approach to genre studies developed in North America in the 1980s and 1990s within the field of rhetoric and composition studies (see e.g. Devitt 2004: 2). This approach, which differs from the Sydney School in many ways, builds especially on the theoretical synthesis and argument provided by Carolyn Miller in her article “Genre as Social Action” (1984). Miller argues that “a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (Miller 1984: 151). Thus, although the New Rhetoric researchers also look at textual products, the emphasis is on the settings in which genres are used, especially the institutional, cultural and historical factors which influence writing practises. The perspective of study is primarily ethnomethodological.

Another characteristic of the New Rhetoric genre studies is the perception of genres as dynamic forms which “evolve, develop and decay” (Miller 1984: 163). Considerable amount of research has been done on the evolution of specific genres in response to changes in their socio-cultural contexts (e.g. Bazerman’s (1988) monograph on the history and character of the experimental article in science,

Yates' (1989) study of the history of management communication in America). Also the concept of intertextuality is central to the New Rhetoric genre research. "Genres interact with one another in the context of genres and in genre repertoires, genre sets, genre systems, overlapping genres, call and response genres, and other possible relationships that further research will uncover" (Devitt 2004: 58-59).

The present study of corporate press release follows the approach of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), a subfield of applied linguistics. An important aspect of the ESP approach is its pedagogical agenda: to assist non-native English speakers in mastering academic and professional genres. Another important feature is research into how spoken and written texts work: how they are used within a particular discipline or profession and how they attempt to persuade their audiences of the validity of their claims and arguments (cf. Dudley-Evans & St John 1998: 17). The ESP approach to genre analysis is multidisciplinary: works of genre scholars within ESP have been influenced by a number of disciplines, such as sociolinguistics, SFL, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition studies and cultural anthropology (see e.g. Swales 1990: 13-20; Bhatia 1993: 3-12). In recent years, there has also been a strong influence of critical discourse analysis (CDA) in genre studies within ESP (see e.g. Bhatia 2008b; Bhatia 2012). However, the influence is not only in one direction. Many of the findings of ESP genre scholars have been acknowledged by scholars working within other disciplines, and e.g. Swales' definition of genre is widely recognized and cited also outside ESP (e.g. Fairclough 2003:70; Devitt 2004: 37).

In ESP genre research, as in Sydney school, the overall structure of genre texts is defined in terms of moves (cf. 'stages' in Sydney school). What is different, however, is that in ESP the process of identifying the moves is interpretive and the moves are defined rhetorically rather than linguistically (cf. Solin 2009: n.p.). Among the best known move structures is the CARS-model (Create a Research Space) of introductions in research articles identified by Swales (see e.g. Swales 1990: 137-166; Swales & Feak 2004: 242-268).

Since the identification of a move structure is interpretive in ESP, the genre analyst needs to have a clear understanding of what is going on in the genre texts. Therefore

it is very important that the analyst does not only look at the textual products in isolation, but also the context in which the texts are produced and used, including the rules and conventions of the discourse community which ‘owns’ the genre. Although the importance of context in genre analysis is acknowledged already in the early works of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), in recent years the contextual aspects, especially the intertextual and interdiscursive connections between different genres, which will be discussed in section 2.4., have gained even more importance in genre studies within ESP (see e.g. Bhatia 2008b, 2010).

## **2.2. Swales’ definition of genre**

John Swales is one of the best known genre theorists within the field of ESP. His work is frequently cited also outside applied linguistics and, for instance his definition of genre has an established position within the Sydney School and the New Rhetoric. Although not all aspects of Swales’ definition are approved by other scholars – particularly the central role of the parent discourse community has been challenged by also Swales himself – it is probably the most comprehensive definition of genre that has been published and, therefore, it serves as a starting point for the current study.

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale of the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation. (Swales 1990: 58)

The first defining feature of a genre is, according to Swales, that it consists of a group of communicative events. By communicative events Swales refers to events or situations in which language plays both a significant and an indispensable role. The occurrence of a particular communicative event may vary significantly: news articles and service encounters, for instance, are extremely common while e.g. presidential press conferences are relatively rare (Swales 1990: 46). Swales highlights that in addition to the discourse itself and its participants, a communicative event also comprises the role of that discourse as well as the environment of its production and reception, including historical and cultural contexts (ibid).

The second criterial feature of genre in Swales' definition is that in order to be identified as a genre, a collection of communicative events has to have a common set of communicative purposes. These shared purposes constitute a rationale for the genre, that is, they trigger a particular schematic structure, and also affect the content and style of the genre text. Therefore, a shared set of communicative purposes can be seen as the primary determinant of genre-membership.

In his definition of genre, Swales further argues that the expert members of the parent discourse community recognize the communicative purposes of a genre (Swales 1990: 58). With the concept of discourse community Swales refers to communities which, in contrast to speech communities, are defined by common goals rather than shared social background of its members (Swales 1990: 24). Depending on their interests, their politics or their professions, individuals are often members of several discourse communities. For instance doctors, journalists, radio amateurs and boy scouts can be seen as examples of discourse communities. Swales maintains that established members of discourse communities are familiar with the key genres used in the community. These expert members would employ genres to achieve the goals of their communities, while new members would not necessarily recognize the communicative purposes of a particular genre (Swales 1990: 52-53).

Even though it is widely agreed that expert opinions are important in genre analysis, especially for confirming the findings of the analysis (see e.g. Bhatia 1993: 34), several genre theorists, including Swales himself, have later warned against relying solely on expert opinion in identifying the communicative purposes: firstly, the

experts of a discourse community do not always agree about the purposes of a genre, and, secondly, if they do agree, there is always the possibility that they are wrong (Askehave & Swales 2001: 198). Also, as noted by Bhatia (1993), it is possible for an expert member to exploit the rules and conventions of a genre in order to achieve private intentions (Bhatia 1993: 14). Experienced newspaper reporters, for instance, may be able to impose their own perspectives on otherwise objective news reports (Bhatia 1993: 15). Indeed, as Askehave and Swales suggest, the set of communicative purposes of a genre must be seen as complexly layered. Some purposes may not be officially acknowledged by the institution, even though they may be recognized by some expert members (Askehave & Swales 2001: 199). Therefore, as noted by Lassen (2006), a great deal of analysis is needed before genre analysts as well as experts of the discourse community are able to identify the communicative purpose of a genre, especially as there “seems to be no one-to-one relationship between linguistic form and communicative function” (Lassen 2006: 505).

In addition to the shared set of communicative purposes, instances of genre show similarities in structure, style, content and intended audience (Swales 1990: 58). However, Swales asserts that it is not possible to identify an all-encompassing set of defining features that are not only necessary but also sufficient to identify all the members of a particular genre. Instead, he suggests that the inter-relationship between instances of a genre must be seen as “a somewhat looser kind” (Swales 1990: 49). As a solution, Swales discusses the prototype theory (see e.g. Rosch 1975), which proposes that a category may include a range of members from highly prototypical that very closely reflect the features of the category to others that reflect the features less closely. Swales suggests that while communicative purpose is the privileged property of a genre, other properties, such as form, structure and audience expectations operate to identify the extent to which an exemplar is prototypical of that particular genre (Swales 1990: 52).

Swales notes that genres are often, especially in professional contexts, named after the purposes they are supposed to carry. For instance in many academic genres, such as introductory lecture, qualifying exam, survey article and review session, the name incorporates a pre-modifying noun indicating purpose (ibid: 55). However, as

Swales points out in his definition, the genre names “typically need further validation” (ibid: 58).

### **2.3. Bhatia’s method for genre analysis**

Bhatia (1993: 22-36) develops Swales’ framework for genre analysis further and proposes a seven-step method for analysing unfamiliar genres. Among the advantages of Bhatia’s method is that it is very thorough, yet flexible: while reminding the analyst of all aspects that affect the construction of a genre, it allows a selective application of the steps depending e.g. on the purpose of the analysis and the background knowledge the analyst already has of the genre in question. The flexibility of Bhatia’s method also enables it to comply with the current development in genre research within ESP, i.e. the increased interest towards text-external features. The list of steps in Bhatia’s method for genre analysis is presented in Table 1.

<b>Bhatia’s method for genre analysis</b>
<b>1. Placing the given text in a situational context</b>
<b>2. Surveying existing literature</b>
<b>3. Refining the situational/contextual analysis</b>
<b>4. Selecting corpus</b>
<b>5. Studying the institutional context</b>
<b>6. Linguistic analysis</b>
- <b>Level 1: Lexico-grammatical features</b>
- <b>Level 2: Text patterning or textualization</b>
- <b>Level 3: Structural interpretation of the text genre</b>
<b>7. Specialist information</b>

*Table 1. Bhatia’s method for genre analysis (Bhatia 1993: 22-36).*

The first step in Bhatia’s method of genre analysis is to place a typical representative example of the genre intuitively in a situational context. This can be done by looking at one’s previous experience, the internal clues in the text as well as the encyclopaedic knowledge of the world that one already has (Bhatia 1993: 22). If the analyst is a member of the relevant discourse community to which the genre belongs,

s/he is likely to already possess background knowledge of the procedures as well as understanding of the communicative conventions of the area of activity<sup>1</sup>. Bhatia suggests that a non-member analyst can acquire this knowledge by surveying available literature on and around the genre in question (Step 2). This would include e.g. previous linguistic analyses of the genre or other related or similar genres, guide books or manuals relevant to the discourse community as well as discussions of e.g. the social structure, interactions, history, beliefs and goals of the community (Bhatia 1993: 23). In the present study, previous linguistic analyses of the genre of corporate press release are discussed in chapter 4 and the discourse community involved in the process of writing corporate disclosures in chapter 3 (section 3.2.3.).

After intuitively placing the text in a situational/contextual framework, the analyst then needs to look at the situation and the context in more detail (Step 3). The detailed analysis of context entails defining the writer of the text, the audience, their relationship and their goals as well as the historical, socio-cultural, philosophic and/or occupational placement of the relevant discourse community (Bhatia 1993: 23). Bhatia maintains that the analyst needs to identify the topic, subject or “the extra-textual reality which the text is trying to represent, change or use and the relationship of the text to that reality” (ibid.). Bhatia (1993: 23) also recommends exploring the network of surrounding texts, an aspect which has gained importance in genre studies during the past few years. In the present study, the genre of the press release, including its history, audiences and surrounding genres, is discussed in chapter 3 and the situational context of workforce reductions in chapter 6.

The fourth step in Bhatia’s method of genre analysis is to select the corpus for the analysis. The suitable size of the corpus depends on the scope of the analysis: a long single text would be enough for a detailed analysis while an investigation of a few specified features through easily identifiable indicators, would require a large statistical sample. I consider my own study to be more of an exploratory investigation, the type of study which, according to Bhatia, requires a corpus of a few randomly chosen texts (Bhatia 1993: 24). Bhatia claims that in order to select the

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<sup>1</sup> Bhatia (1993) uses the term *speech community* to refer to the relevant professional or academic community. For the sake of clarity, I have replaced it with Swales’ (1990) term *discourse community*, the content of which is explained in section 2.2

right kind of texts for the corpus, one needs to “define the genre/sub-genre that one is working with well enough so that it may be distinguishable from other genres either similar or closely related in some ways” (Bhatia 1993: 23). Bhatia suggests that the definition may be based on the communicative purposes, the situational context(s) in which the genre is generally used and/or some textual features typical of the genre (ibid). Bhatia also states that the analyst needs to make sure that the criteria for deciding whether a text belongs to a specific genre are clearly stated (ibid.).

Although I agree with Bhatia about the need for careful specification of the principles for selecting the corpus, defining the criteria for genre membership at this point of the analysis would be problematic. As established in section 2.2., the current view among genre theorists is that identifying communicative purposes of a genre should be the outcome rather than the starting point of genre analysis. Without a detailed analysis of the texts, the analyst can only have assumptions or preliminary ideas of the communicative purposes. Thus, the analysis might reveal that the analysed texts do not have shared communicative purposes after all, and, therefore they do not belong to the same genre or sub-genre (as an example, see e.g. Lassen 2006). This dilemma has been acknowledged by e.g. Askehave and Swales (2001) who propose two alternative procedures for genre analysis, a text-driven and a context-driven. What is common to these alternative procedures is that they both include “repurposing of the genre” in the end of the procedure (Askehave & Swales 2001: 207-208). The reason for that is that at the early stages of the analysis the analyst needs to treat the given (or assumed) communicative purposes of the texts as provisional, because they might need to be revised as the analysis progresses (ibid.: 207). With the adjustment of viewpoint towards this direction, however, my understanding is that Bhatia’s multiperspective approach (1993), which includes both text and context, will result in a more reliable picture of the genre than procedures which take into account only one of those two dimensions.

The fifth step in Bhatia’s method is to study the institutional context in which the genre is used, as well as the rules and conventions that govern language use in such institutional settings. According to Bhatia, these rules and conventions, which may be linguistic, cultural, social, academic or professional, are most often implicitly understood and unconsciously followed by the participants, but they can also be

explicitly enforced as e.g. cross-examination in the law-court (Bhatia 1993: 24). Because of the hybrid nature of the subject of the present study, the corporate press release, the institutional context is bipartite. On one hand corporate press releases are typically produced by communication professionals working in a business environment. On the other hand they are written for journalists to be quoted as verbatim as possible in the news media, which sets requirements concerning the structure and style of the press release. The sensitive nature of the topic of the press releases, workforce reductions, makes the institutional context even more complex, as the writing process may involve consulting e.g. the management of the company, HR specialists and company lawyers. The institutional settings involved as well as rules and conventions that govern language use in those settings will be discussed further in section 3.2. of this thesis.

The sixth step in Bhatia's model of genre analysis is linguistic analysis, which Bhatia divides into three different levels. Depending on the scope of the study, the analyst can choose to concentrate on one or more levels. On the first level (Level 1) is analysis of lexico-grammatical features, which is often performed as statistical analysis using a large corpus. Lexico-grammatical analyses can be useful in genre analysis as they provide evidence to confirm or contradict intuitions and impressions of the occurrence of certain features in various genres (cf. Bhatia 1993: 25). However, as Bhatia notes, the findings of such analyses are constrained by their emphasis on surface features, and, therefore they do not provide adequate information on how communicative purpose is accomplished in a particular genre (Bhatia 1993: 25).

With analysis of text-patterning (Level 2), the analyst aims to bring out the tactical aspects of language use in the specific genre. This can be done by investigating the form-function correlation of linguistic features typical for that genre. Noun phrases (NP), for instance, are extremely common in certain types of advertisements. The reason for this phenomenon, as Bhatia points out, lies in the fact that one of the most typical strategies that advertisers use is the positive description of the product. The high density of NPs in the text provides more slots for adjectives, which are the most common linguistic devices for positive description. So, the NPs can be seen as

facilitators for positive product description in certain types of advertisements (Bhatia 1993: 26-28).

The structural interpretation of a genre (Level 3) highlights the cognitive aspects of language organization. In principle this means that the communicative purposes are reflected in the interpretative cognitive structuring of the genre. In other words, the communicative purposes of a genre are realised through rhetorical moves. Each move serves a typical communicative intention, which in turn serves the overall communicative purpose(s) of the genre (Bhatia 1993: 30). To realize a particular communicative intention at the move level, the writer of the text can choose from a number of different rhetorical strategies (*ibid.*). For instance, Bhatia identifies the following seven moves in the structure of the sales promotion letter: *establishing credentials, introducing the offer, offering incentives, enclosing documents, soliciting response, using pressure tactics* and *ending politely* (*ibid.*: 48-49). The first move (establishing credentials), for example, can be realized by referring to the well-established nature of the company or by referring to the needs of the potential customer and implying that the company can fulfil them (*ibid.*: 49-50).

As noted in section 2.2. of this thesis, Swales (1990) suggests that while communicative purpose is the privileged property of a genre, other properties, such as form, structure and audience expectations operate to identify the extent to which an exemplar is prototypical of that particular genre (Swales 1990: 52). Thus, as agreed by several other genre scholars (see e.g. Bhatia 2004b: 223; Askehave & Nielsen 2005: 123), all instances of a genre do not need to contain all of the moves typical of that particular genre. Instead, the structural elements of genre texts can be selected from a common move repertoire.

The seventh, final step in Bhatia's model of genre analysis is to confirm the findings of the analysis against reactions of a specialist informant who, in general, is a practising member of the discourse community in which the genre is frequently used (Bhatia 1993: 34). However, as Bhatia points out, consulting a specialist informant in genre analysis is not an easy task. Firstly, it is difficult to find a suitable specialist informant, and, secondly, "it takes quite an effort, time and understanding to develop a common understanding about the purpose of the enquiry" (*ibid.*: 35). In regards to

the current study of corporate press releases, the ideal situation would be to have a PR professional, who writes press releases, or a journalist who turns them into news articles, as specialist informants, which, unfortunately, has not been possible. I have, however, had the opportunity to discuss the topic of this thesis with a few experienced business professionals who have provided me with valuable insight concerning the processes of writing corporate disclosures as well as conducting layoffs.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, one of the advantages of Bhatia's method of genre analysis is that it is very thorough, yet flexible. Although the steps are enumerated and discussed separately, in actual practise they are part of a holistic approach. In other words, each step must be understood in the context of the whole (ibid: 40). Moreover, the analyst does not necessarily have to go through all the steps in the analysis or follow the order in which the steps are listed (ibid.). Bhatia notes that, for instance under levels of linguistic analysis, instead of beginning by analysing surface features, it is sometimes more convenient to start with Level 3 looking at the regularities of organization (ibid.). That is also how the present study was conducted.

#### ***2.4. Intertextuality and interdiscursivity***

As discussed in previous sections of this thesis, analysis of interrelations between different texts and genres has assumed an increasingly important role in genre analysis during the past decade. In this section, I will look at how the concepts of *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity* are defined within genre research. The presence of prior texts in various genre texts in the form of intertextuality has been subject to a number of genre-based analyses (e.g. Devitt 1991; Akar & Louhiala-Salminen 1999). According to Devitt (2004: 55), "the concepts of intertextuality and dialogue allow us to see the inherent relatedness of genres within the same social group and its actions". As an example of this kind of intertextual relations Devitt discusses a genre set that operates within a legal community in court cases:

Achieving a trial's purposes requires a charge, which requires a plea; opening statements and summations, which respond to each other;

witness questioning, which results in cross-examinations; and, with increasing frequency, a verdict requiring sentencing, which is responded to in an appeal (Devitt 2004: 55).

Similarly, a press release announcing workforce reductions can be intertextually connected with e.g. minutes of the meetings where layoffs were discussed, layoff notices to employees, the company's layoff policy, the news articles written on the basis of the press release as well as other news articles possibly generated by the news concerning the layoff. Fairclough uses the term *genre chain* to refer to this kind of connection between genres (see e.g. Fairclough 2003: 31).

The concept of interdiscursivity has, until recently, attracted less attention among genre theorists than intertextuality. Bhatia defines the distinction between the two concepts by stating that while intertextuality refers to the use of prior texts in relatively conventionalized and standardized ways,

interdiscursivity [...] refers to more innovative attempts to create various forms of hybrid and relatively novel constructs by appropriating or exploiting established conventions or resources associated with other genres and practises. Interdiscursivity thus accounts for a variety of discursive processes and professional practises, often resulting in “mixing” “embedding” and “bending” of generic norms in professional context (Bhatia 2010: 35).

Bhatia also argues that “interdiscursivity is central to our understanding of the complexity of professional genres which are typically used in professional, disciplinary, institutional as well as workplace contexts” (Bhatia 2010: 33). To illustrate the idea, Bhatia introduces an analysis of the genre of corporate annual reports. One of the findings of the analysis was that the annual report is typically a combination of at least four different discourses: accounting discourse in the form of numbers, tables and graphs; discourse of economics in the form of financial review; public relations discourse in the form of the Chairman's letter to shareholders and legal discourse in the form of disclaimers (ibid.: 39). The genre of annual reports will be discussed further in section 3.2.3. of this thesis.

### **3. The corporate press release**

In this chapter, I will first look at the history of the press release as well as the contexts in which press releases are typically issued. In section 3.1., I will discuss how the nature of the press release as projected discourse addressing multiple audiences affects the style and structure of the texts. In section 3.1., I will look at genres which are in different ways related to the genre of press releases.

A press release (also known as a news release or a media release) is a written or recorded communication generally directed at journalists in the hope that it will be published, preferably verbatim, in the news media. The history of the press release can be traced back to October 28, 1906, to a train crash in Atlantic City, in which over fifty people lost their lives. Ivy Lee, a public relations pioneer, persuaded the owner of the train, the Pennsylvania Railroad, to provide the media with an explanation of circumstances which lead to the crash. He also convinced the company to provide a special train to transport reporters to the scene of the accident (Jarboe 2006: n.p.). The New York Times was impressed with this new approach to corporate communications and printed the first press release verbatim as “Statement from the Road” in October 30, 1906 (ibid.). In the following weeks the Pennsylvania Railroad was praised by both newspapers and public officials for its openness and honesty (ibid.).

Today the press release is considered to be one of the key genres in public relations discourse. Business companies issue press releases to announce e.g. scheduled events, new products and services, sales accomplishments or changes in management. Being a public relations genre, press releases are typically designed in a way that presents the company in as favourable light as possible, even in adverse circumstances. Thus, press releases are not only informative, but also promotional. Therefore the genre of press releases can be seen as a ‘mixed’ or a ‘hybrid’ genre, incorporating elements of the news article as well as promotional discourse.

### **3.1. Press release audiences**

One of the key aspects of press releases in their original role is their nature as mediated, or more precisely, projected discourse (see Jacobs 1998). Press releases are, in general, sent to members of the press, who then decide whether they want to publish the press release as a news article. According to Bell, chances of being published are enhanced, if the press release follows the structure and style of a news article and therefore requires a minimum amount of editing from the part of the journalists (Bell 1991:58). Thus, the role of journalists would not be so much to convert the text into a news article (the same way as they might turn an interview into a report) as to act as gatekeepers between the authors of the press releases and their actual target audiences, i.e. the readers of the publication. This seems to be the case at least in small newspapers (Walters, Walters & Starr 1994: 353).

Several linguistic studies have indicated that the structure and style of the press release indeed mirror the structure and style of the news article. The structure of a press release typically includes a newspaper style headline often followed by a lead sentence or paragraph before the actual body of the release. Because press releases need to look as if they were written from the perspective of an independent outsider (i.e. a journalist) they also contain a number of specific metapragmatic elements including third-person self-reference ('the company' instead of 'we'), pseudo-quotations (e.g. sections imitating the specialist comments typical for news articles) and the use of semi-performatives, such as 'announce' (see e.g. Jacobs 1999 a,b; Sleurs, Jacobs & Van Waes 2003; Sleurs & Jacobs 2005; Strobbe & Jacobs 2005).

As discussed above, the message of the press release is not meant for the journalists but for the journalists' own audiences. Therefore, writers of press releases have to aim at being persuasive on two accounts: on the one hand they have to persuade journalists that the information they provide is newsworthy; on the other hand they must convince the audiences of the publication that the company is trustworthy, profitable or provides interesting products (cf. Catenaccio 2008: 14). Depending on the topic of the press release or the nature of the publication, the audiences may include e.g. (potential) investors, market analysts, contractors, customers, competitors, politicians, and/or employees of the company.

The genre of press release has provoked much interest within PR education and a large number of books and websites offer advice on how to write ‘perfect’ press releases (e.g. Fletcher 2004; Donnelly 2010; Media College.com; wikiHow 2012; Press Release 365 2012). One of the most common tip given in those guides is, besides instructions to follow the style and structure of a news article, that writers of press releases should avoid using promotional language, since “[n]o matter how it is packaged, advertising is not news” (Fletcher 2004: 49). Indeed, a study of Pander Maat (2007) indicates, that newspapers tend to reject press releases containing promotional elements. Yet the press release can be seen as “one of the most inexpensive, cost-effective ways to boost a business’s sales and profits” (Fletcher 2004: 49). Because of this obvious paradox, the promotional purpose of the press release cannot be manifested through surface linguistic features, such as positively evaluative adjectives, to the same extent as in advertisements. However, other similarities, for instance in the cognitive structure and rhetorical strategies, are likely to occur.

In recent times the emergence of the World Wide Web has changed the role of journalists as unavoidable gatekeepers between the company issuing the press release and the actual target audiences. It is now a common practise that companies and institutions include sections for the media in their websites, where anyone interested has a chance to read the press releases online. There is also a large number of commercial websites specialized in the online distribution of press releases. Strobbe and Jacobs (2005) studied two of these websites in order to find out whether the preformulated nature of press releases has been affected by the more direct access to them via Internet. The results of the study suggest that while some of the press releases are written in a more direct style (including superlatives and other persuasive features) from which preformulation is being phased out, the majority of texts still follow the conventions of the news article (Strobbe & Jacobs 2005: 290). This suggestion is also supported by the fact that the online guides for writing press releases continue recommending writers of press releases to organize their texts in the form of the news article (see e.g. wikiHow 2012; Donnelly 2010).

### **3.2. *Interrelations with other genres***

As discussed in the previous sections of this thesis, the corporate press release typically shares at least some features of structure and style with the news article. In other words, there is an interdiscursive connection between the two genres. In addition to the aforementioned connection, the press release and the news article are also members of the same genre chain, since press releases are meant to be reproduced, preferably verbatim, as news articles. Therefore, there is also an intertextual connection between individual press releases and the news articles based on them. The connection between the advertisement and the press release is less visible. However, as corporate press releases aim to promote a positive image of the company, they are likely to employ some linguistic resources which are typical to advertisements, although perhaps not to the same extent.

When placed in the institutional context, the corporate press release can be considered as a member of the family of corporate disclosures. Other corporate disclosure genres include for example financial disclosures (annual, semi-annual and quarterly reports), notes of general meetings and shareholder circulars. The genre of financial disclosures and, especially the CEO's letter to shareholders, which is typically included in the annual report, have been subject to a number of linguistic studies (e.g. Kohut & Segars 1992; Subramanian, Insley & Blackwell 1993; Thomas 1997; Hyland 1998; Clatworthy and Jones 2003; Bhatia 2008a,b; Bhatia 2010). Corporate disclosures are typically produced by corporate communication professionals, who work, depending on the genre and the topic of the specific text, in co-operation with the corporate management, lawyers, accountants and/or HR professionals. This group of professionals contributing to the production of the disclosures can, following Swales' definition (Swales 1990: 24; see section 2.2. in this thesis), be considered as the parent discourse community of corporate disclosures. The main objective of corporate communication is to communicate messages, which are often required by law, to all stakeholder groups of the company.

The following subsections of this thesis will provide more insight to the linguistic characteristics of three different genres, the news article, the advertisement and the

annual report, which can, as discussed above, in various ways be connected to the genre of the corporate press release.

### **3.2.1. The news article**

One of the most typical features of the news article is the ‘inverted pyramid’ structure, where the most newsworthy information is placed on top and the remaining information follows in diminishing order of importance (see e.g. Scanlan 2011: n.p.). The reason for this kind of structure is twofold: firstly, most newspaper readers do not have time or interest to read the whole article, and, thus concentrating the main informative message(s) at the beginning of the article can be considered as reader friendly. Secondly, since the editor of the newspaper may, due to lack of space available, decide to shorten the article, it can easily be done by cutting from the end without losing any essential information.

The first two sections of the news article, the headline and the lead paragraph, are the parts which together “express the major topics of the text” (Van Dijk 1988: 53). Van Dijk, who names the combination of headline and lead as Summary on the basis of a shared summarizing function, notes that the actual headline may consist of several parts, such as a main headline, a superheadline and a subheadline (ibid.). The lead paragraph typically answers the questions ‘who’, ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘what’ and sometimes ‘why’, and thus establishes the point of the story (Bell 1991: 177-181). Bell notes that the headline, which is produced by a subeditor after the journalist has written the lead and the rest of the story, is completely derivable from the story and, most often, from the lead alone (Bell 1991:187). This interdependence between the headline and the lead has also been observed by White, who notes that in the overwhelming majority of hard news reports the headline repeats the informational content of the lead (White 2005:111).

White (2005) divides the generic structure of the hard news report into two main components, the Headline+lead nucleus and the main body of the text, which he divides further into five subcomponents. He notes that in the hard news reports, the story does not progress linearly, so that meaning would be accumulated sequentially. Instead, each subcomponent of the body of the news story reaches back to specify the

Headline+lead nucleus, which “acts as the text’s anchor point or textual centre of gravity” (White 2005: 116). Therefore, White (2005) calls the structure of hard news reports as *satellite structure* (ibid.).<sup>2</sup> The *Elaboration* subcomponent provides a detailed description or exemplification of information presented in the Headline+lead nucleus or restates or describes it in different terms (White 2005: 115). In *Cause-and-effect* subcomponent, the causes of the ‘crisis point’ presented in the nucleus as well as its consequences or purposes are described (ibid.). *Justification* provides the evidence or reasoning that supports the newsworthy claim presented in the nucleus. According to White (2005) this subcomponent could be seen as text-internal cause-and-effect as it explains why the claim presented in the nucleus has been made (ibid.). *Contextualization* places the events or statements of the Headline+lead nucleus in a temporal, spatial or social context and possibly compares it to prior events of similar nature (ibid.) Finally, in *Appaisal*, elements of the nucleus are evaluated, typically by an external expert, for instance in terms of their significance or their emotional impact (ibid.).

In regards to the use of language, reporters writing hard news articles aim for objectivity. This means, for instance, that the reporters refrain from expressing their own opinions or feelings concerning the material presented and confine all explicitly subjective evaluations to the quoted comments of attributed sources (White 2000: 382). Iedema, Feez & White (1994: 203) use the term *Authorial Voice* to refer to a system of language features which “contribute to our sense of the presence or personality of a text’s writer”. They divide the Authorial Voice of news reporting into two subsystems: *Reporter Voice*, which is the voice of hard news reports, is impersonal and objective. *Writer Voice* is the subjective, personalized voice used in journalistic commentary (ibid.: 204). According to Iedema, Feez & White, the construction of a sense of subjectivity depends on a number of language resources. These resources include for example the use of modal verbs (*should, might, will, may, etc.*), expressions of emotional response (*sad, unmoved, etc.*), intensifying adverbs (*very, somewhat, etc.*), means of measure (*a little, for ages, etc.*) and judgement (*insensitive, etc.*)(ibid.: 204-205).

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<sup>2</sup> The satellite structure of the news article is also described by Iedema, Feez & White (1994: 115-120), however, they do not give names or functions of individual subcomponents, and therefore their description is in that sense more general than White’s (2005).

### 3.2.2. The advertisement

The advertisement can be considered as the most influential genre of promotional discourse. Several studies have shown that many of the rhetorical moves and strategies typical of advertisements are also employed in other promotional genres, such as sales promotion letters (Bhatia 1993: 45-59) and job applications (ibid: 59-68) as well as genres, which are not promotional in the traditional sense, but aim to be persuasive, such as academic introductions (ibid: 83-93). Interestingly, the study of Catenaccio (2008), which will be discussed in section 4.2., indicates that also the genre of corporate press releases employs some of the rhetorical moves typical of the advertisement.

Table 2 shows Bhatia's (2004b: 222) interpretation of the generic structure of advertisements in terms of rhetorical moves (The structure is also presented in Bhatia (2004a: 65), but without the 10<sup>th</sup> move).

<b>Generic structure of advertisements</b>
<b>1. Headlines</b>
<b>2. Targeting the market</b>
<b>3. Justifying the product or service</b>
<b>4. Detailing the product or service</b>
<b>5. Establishing credentials</b>
<b>6. Endorsement or Testimonial</b>
<b>7. Offering incentives</b>
<b>8. Using pressure tactics</b>
<b>9. Soliciting response</b>
<b>10. Signature line and Logo etc.</b>

**Table 2.** Generic structure of advertisements in terms of rhetorical moves (Bhatia 2004b: 222)

Bhatia points out that copywriters often select some of the rhetorical moves listed above to be used in the advertisement (Bhatia 2004b: 223). However, there is great variation in the selection of moves applied in individual advertisements, and it would

be exceptional to find all the moves in the same advertisement and in the same order (ibid.).

In terms of rhetorical strategies, Bhatia (2004a: 63) notes that because advertising has become “a dynamic, innovative and versatile genre”, it would be difficult to name all the strategies which are used to influence the target audience. He does, however give a few examples. The Justification move, for instance can be realized “by indicating the importance or need of the product or service” or “by establishing a niche” (ibid.: 65). The Detailing move is typically realized by “‘offering a product description’ that is good, positive and favourable” (ibid.: 64). That kind of product appraisal is, according to Bhatia, the most common persuasive strategy in advertisements focusing on product selling, whereas image-building advertisements focusing on brand popularization tend to rely more on establishing credentials as the main source of persuasion (Bhatia 2004b: 226). Bhatia (2004a, 2004b) does not discuss how Establishing credentials move can be realized in terms of rhetorical strategies, but according to an earlier account (Bhatia 1993: 49-50), these strategies include, for instance, highlighting the achievements of the company, its speciality or the company’s long experience of producing a particular line of products or services.

### **3.2.3. The annual report**

Corporate annual report is a report of the company’s activities during the preceding fiscal year. Annual reports are intended to provide shareholders as well as the company’s other stakeholder groups with information concerning the health and performance of the company. For stock-listed companies the preparation and disclosure of corporate annual reports (as well as semi-annual and/or quarterly reports) are required by the law.

In terms of interdiscursivity, the study of Bhatia (2010) indicates that annual reports typically incorporate four different discourse types (Bhatia 2010: 39). The *accounting discourse*, which forms the most important part of the report, includes a balance sheet, an income statement, a financial summary and a cash flow statement in the form of tables and numbers. In the financial review section, which represents

*financial discourse*, the company's performance is reviewed on the basis of the numbers presented in the accounting section by "someone in the corporation who specializes in financial management" (ibid.). The CEO's letter to shareholders is an example of *public relations discourse*, providing, for example, predictions and projections based on the company's performance (ibid.: 40). *Legal discourse* is included in the form of disclaimers, which, according to Bhatia (2010: 39) are often needed for full understanding of the implications of the information disclosed in the report.

As mentioned in section 3.2. the genres of financial disclosures and, especially the CEO's letter to shareholders, which is typically included in the annual report, have been subject to a number of linguistic studies. According to the studies of Hildebrandt and Snyder (1981) and Rutherford (2005), CEO's letters to shareholders are more positive than negative, regardless of the financial performance of the company. Furthermore, the study of Clatworthy and Jones (2003) reveals that executives tend to blame environmental factors for negative results, but take credit for good results, and the study of Bhatia (2008b) suggests that emphasizing future opportunities over poor past financial performance is a communication strategy used especially by companies with low ROE (return on equity).

In terms of lexico-grammatical resources used in annual reports, Subramanian, Insley and Blackwell (1993: 58), who studied the relationship of the readability of annual reports and the financial performance of the company, found that annual reports of companies with a negative net income were more difficult to read than those of companies that had performed well. The factors which affected readability included, for instance, the use of long and complex sentences and passive voice. Increased use of passive voice in annual reports reporting of poor financial performance has also been observed by Thomas (1997).

## 4. Corporate press release in linguistic studies

From the end of the 1990's many scholars working in the domain of linguistics have taken interest on the genre of press releases. One of the most notable of these scholars is Jacobs (1998; 1999a; 1999b) whose studies have been briefly discussed in previous sections of this thesis. During the past decade Jacobs' concept of preformulation in press releases has been studied further in corpus and genre analyses as well as in the actual process of writing press releases and reproducing them as news articles. For instance, Sleurs & Jacobs (2003) provide an ethnographic perspective on how press releases are written, especially as regards the construction of pseudo-quotations and Pander Maat (2007) examines the occurrence of promotional elements as well as how journalists deal with those elements when editing the press release into a news article.

The study of Pander Maat (2007) is interesting regarding the present study, as one of the aims of this thesis is to find out how promotional purpose is manifested in press releases announcing workforce reductions. Pander Maat poses two requirements for an element of text to be counted as promotional: Firstly, the promotional element (PE) needs to "intensify a statement in a direction favourable to the sender" (ibid.) and, secondly, it can either be left out without affecting the grammaticality and the interpretation of the sentence or it can be replaced by a weaker element (Pander Maat 2007: 68). The promotional elements found in the corpus were divided into four main categories and thirteen subcategories, which are listed in Table 3.

Categories of promotional elements		
Category	Subcategory	Examples
Premodifiers		<i>ultramodern, brand new</i>
Adjectives	Intensifying adjectives	<i>large, strong, important</i>
	Evaluative adjectives	<i>leading, special, terrific</i>
	Property specifying adjectives	<i>reliable, clear, efficient</i>
	Intensifying quantifiers	<i>all, various, several</i>
	Comparative and superlative degrees	<i>the <u>most</u> important</i>
Adverb elements	Intensifying adverbs	<i>tremendously, considerably, well</i>
	Time adjuncts	<i>already, always, constantly</i>
	Place	<i>internationally, throughout the world</i>
	Intensifiers of numerals	<i>almost, more than, well over</i>
	Mitigators of numerals	<i>only, less than</i>
	Modal intensifiers	<i>simply, of course</i>
Connectives		<i>moreover, besides</i>

**Table 3.** Categories of promotional elements after Pander Maat (2007: 69-71).

The results of the study of Pander Maat indicate that the proportion of promotional language in a press release depends on the topic it deals with: press releases announcing new products or services contained significantly more promotional elements (0.56 PEs per sentence) than press releases announcing e.g. financial results (0.26 PEs per sentence). The smallest frequency of PEs, 0.04 PEs per sentence, was found in press releases announcing changes in the board of directors (Pander Maat 2007: 73). Although promotional language was used throughout the texts, quote sentences were found to be more promotional than others (ibid.: 76). Pander Maat also found that attitudes towards promotional language are different in different sectors of the press. For instance, in the domain of special interest media (e.g. travel magazines), promotional language can be quite acceptable, and even overtly promotional press releases are being published virtually verbatim, whereas e.g. the economic sections of newspapers tend to reject press releases containing promotional elements (ibid.: 93).

Another study which is relevant in regards to the present study is Lassen's (2006) analysis of move structures and communicative purposes of press releases offering

information about genetically engineered rice. Lassen found that although the texts dealt with the same topic, there was a significant diversity in the move structures, and therefore also in the communicative purposes the texts carried. On the basis of her analysis, Lassen argues that even though the press release may be seen as a genre on the account of textual form, it does not qualify for the genre label if analysed in terms of content and communicative purposes (Lassen 2006: 503). Lassen sees the press release rather as a media-channel or a vehicle that is used for carrying a variety of genres (ibid: 506). However, it must be noted that Lassen's study included press releases issued by both pro- and non-profit organizations, and the results are therefore not directly applicable to my study of corporate press releases. Nevertheless, it proves the importance of communicative purpose as a key criterion in genre analysis. Lassen's study also demonstrates that naming a text as press release or using the channel provided for press releases should not be taken as a guarantee for genre membership.

In addition to Lassen's study, also McLaren and Gurău (2005) and Catenaccio (2008) have explored how communicative purposes are codified in different rhetorical moves of corporate press releases. The main difference between the outcomes of the two studies is that while McLaren and Gurău suggest that press releases include both an information-oriented move and a (positive) evaluative move, Catenaccio claims that the same move can carry an informative and a promotional intent simultaneously. I will discuss the two studies in more detail in the following sections of my thesis.

#### ***4.1. McLaren and Gurău (2005)***

McLaren and Gurău (2005) studied approximately 50 press releases issued by 20 British biotechnology companies between 2000 and 2002 and accessed on the companies' websites. The texts in the corpus covered a variety of topics, including e.g. financial results, business developments, collaboration between companies, updates and results of clinical trials and decisions taken by regulatory authorities. These topics are not, as McLaren and Gurău note, exclusive to biotechnology

companies, although e.g. results of clinical trials play a more important role in this particular section than in other sections of industry. (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 15).

On the basis of their study, McLaren and Gurău claim that “most press releases follow a very distinctive format or structure and that there is little divergence from the standard model” (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 16). The texts included in the study typically began with an announcement (the news the company wished to disseminate), which was subsequently elaborated. The elaboration move was followed by comments from the CEO or another important figure. Finally, contact details were given for obtaining further information. In some cases, a separate appendix containing e.g. background information about the company or definitions of scientific or technical terms was included. This appendix, which according to McLaren and Gurău was mainly aimed for the benefit of journalists, was usually called Editor’s note and it could be several pages long (ibid.). The moves identified by McLaren and Gurău are listed in table 4.

The format of the press release (McLaren & Gurău)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Announcement</b></li> <li><b>2. Elaboration</b></li> <li><b>3. Comments</b></li> <li><b>4. Contact details</b></li> <li><b>5. Editor’s note (optional)</b></li> </ol>

**Table 4.** The standard format of a corporate press release according to McLaren & Gurău (2005: 16).

McLaren and Gurău propose that each of the structural components (or stages / moves) of the press release has its own characteristic textual features. These textual features can be related to the purpose of the component as well as to the role the component plays in the press release as a whole (McLaren and Gurău 2005: 19). Indeed, McLaren and Gurău see a clear structural division in the realization of informative and promotional purposes of the press release: The facts are presented in the *announcement* and the subsequent *elaboration* move, whereas the *comments* move provides a positive evaluation of the news presented in the preceding moves.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the textual features McLaren and Gurău identify as characteristic to the different moves of the press release.

According to McLaren and Gurău, typical textual features of the informative section (i.e. the announcement and the elaboration) include third person self-reference, past tense and non-modalised categorical assertions, and the combined effect of these features is “an air of detachment and objectivity” (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 20 – 21). The significance of third person self-reference as a means for showing objectivity has also been underlined by Jacobs (1999b) who points out that third person self-reference makes press releases look disinterested and neutral in contrast to the use of first person self-reference *we*, which can be seen as an advertising device, when it refers to a business organization (Jacobs 1999b: 232). Third person self-reference in press releases also enables the journalists to use the text in news articles without making any changes in terms of reference and point of view (Jacobs 1999b: 228; McLaren & Gurău 2005: 20).

McLaren and Gurău note that the elaboration move in the texts they studied were characterized by the reporting of actions which had been undertaken and/or events which had taken place, and therefore the actions and events were reported in the past tense (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 20, 21). McLaren and Gurău also bring up the use of non-modalised categorical assertions as a device for enhancing the sense of objectivity in the elaboration part. This means that the writers present their propositions as absolute truths by avoiding the use of modal auxiliaries (e.g. *must* or *could*) that express high or low confidence in what is being said (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 21). As an example of a non-modalised categorical assertion McLaren and Gurău mention the clause “You are right”, as opposed to “You must be right” or “You could be right” (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 20). However, I argue that since the absence of modal auxiliaries is a natural phenomenon when reporting about something that has already happened, it is somewhat problematic to label it as a characteristic feature of the elaboration move. Rather surprisingly, McLaren and Gurău also remark a few pages later that the modal auxiliary *will* was frequently used in the elaboration move of the press releases to express certainty or confidence about future events (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 25).

In addition to the aforementioned features of the announcement and the elaboration part of the press release (i.e. third person self-reference, reporting of actions in past tense and the use of categorical assertions), McLaren and Gurău (2005: 21) state that in many cases this part of the press release displays features which are also common in scientific discourse. These features include the use of passive voice and long and complex noun phrases (ibid.).

In contrast to the information-oriented announcement and elaboration moves, McLaren and Gurău find that the main purpose of the comments move in press releases is to provide positive evaluation about the company and the activities or developments reported. In the press releases they studied this was evident already from the very beginning of the comments move, which typically started with expressions such as “We are pleased that...” or “We are delighted that...” (McLaren and Gurău 2005: 21). As those examples also demonstrate, first person plural pronoun was used for self-reference in this section. This is, McLaren and Gurău (2005: 22) note, because the speaker is explicitly identified (most often it is the CEO of the company), and therefore there would be no confusion about whose words are being reported. The plural pronoun can be perceived as referring to the company and signalling that the positive evaluation represents the reaction or the viewpoint of the company as a whole, rather than just the speaker (ibid.). Besides positively evaluative, the CEO’s comments in press releases included in the study were also found to be highly speculative. Speculation was realized on the surface level of the text as hedging, as the writer was attempting to balance between making positive claims about the company and acknowledging the risks associated with the business, and hence also with investment in the company (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 26).

In terms of communicative purposes, the analysis of McLaren and Gurău (2005: 26) come to the conclusion that, at least when regarding press releases of British biotechnology companies, the purpose of the announcement and the elaboration move is to provide impartial information, while the comments move is aimed to project a positive corporate image. Thus, the informative and the promotional purposes of press releases could be easily identified as they would be located in separate rhetorical moves. On the basis of their study McLaren and Gurău (2005: 27) suggest that the genre is highly conventionalised and static, and in this respect it

differs from “more creative” genres, such as advertisements. However, McLaren and Gurău admit that it is possible, although unlikely, that their findings are only valid for e.g. British biotechnology company press releases, and therefore further research would be needed to establish whether the generic norms found in their study apply to all English-language corporate press releases (ibid.).

Although the study of McLaren and Gurău (2005) provides a good starting point to the present study, there are some weaknesses especially in the way the results of the analysis are reported. For instance, no numerical data is provided of the findings, and also the number of texts in the corpus is announced rather vaguely (“approximately 50 press releases” (McLaren & Gurău 2005: 15)). It would give the study more credibility and facilitate comparison to other studies within the genre of press releases, if accurate figures or proportions were announced instead of using vague determiners such as *some* and *most*. I also do not find sufficient grounds in the article for the suggestion that the press release would be a static genre, as the texts studied were published during a relatively short period of time (2000 - 2002).

#### **4.2. Catenaccio (2008)**

Catenaccio’s (2008) study builds partly on the study of McLaren and Gurău (2005) presented in the previous section (see Catenaccio 2008: 10), but provides a more detailed move structure as well as some more insight on the rhetorical strategies employed in press releases. Catenaccio examined a corpus of 70 press releases collected from a variety of sources, both print- and web-based. The majority of texts in the corpus were business releases announcing new products or services, although also other topics, such as crisis responses or corporate activity not directly linked to product promotion, were included. The exact proportions of different topics in the corpus were not provided, which is slightly unfortunate from my viewpoint, as the topic of my own corpus would mostly fall into the category of crisis responses.

Catenaccio divides the move structure of corporate press releases into peripheral and core features based on their typical location in the release and their function in the text. The peripheral features function as “explicit indicators of the press release as

professional practice” (Catenaccio 2008: 17). These features, which are located at the beginning and at the end of the release and are not aimed to be reproduced in news reports, include press / news release caption, contact details, company logo, ‘for immediate release’ formula and company description. Catenaccio argues that although Jacobs considers the peripheral features of press releases as *bracketing*, i.e. “ritual openings and closings, establishing and concluding certain kinds of participations” (Jacobs 1999a: 20), they should be accounted for as part of the generic structure as they are essential for the correct interpretation of the text as a press release (Catenaccio 2008: 17).

In the analysis of the core of the press release, i.e. the part of the text which is meant to be reproduced in news articles, Catenaccio (2008: 24) identifies six moves. *Headline*, *summary* and *lead* seem to have a fixed place on top of the inverted pyramid, while *justifying the product / service / newsworthiness of the information*, *detailing the object of the press release* and *explicit promotional component* can be recursively organized. The complete list of moves identified by Catenaccio is presented in Table 5.

Generic structure of the press release (Catenaccio)

- 1. Press / News release caption**
- 2. Headline**
- 3. Summary of main points (optional)**
- 4. “For immediate release” formula (optional)**
- 5. Lead: announcing newsworthy information**
- 6. Justifying the product or service or the newsworthiness of the information**
- 7. Detailing product / service / company / other event which is the object of the release**
- 8. Explicit promotional component: Attributed to company official**
- 9. Boilerplate description(s) / establishing credentials**
- 10. Contact details**
- 11. Company logo**

**Table 5.** Move structure of corporate press releases according to Catenaccio (2008:24).

One drawback of Catenaccio’s article is that she is not consistent with naming of the individual moves, which causes some difficulties in following some of her arguments. For instance, company description, which was mentioned above in connection with the peripheral moves, is not included in the list of moves. However, since Catenaccio notes that the company description is less markedly peripheral than the rest of the features, as it is not necessarily separated from the main body of the press release (Catenaccio 2008: 17), it can be assumed, that the ninth move, boilerplate description(s) / establishing credentials, includes description of the company (The term *boilerplate* refers to a unit of text that can be reused in other texts without changes.). This assumption is supported by the fact that in the present study of press releases announcing workforce reduction, a boilerplate typically labelled as “About the company” was found to be a common feature of the corpus texts.

Catenaccio notes that of the peripheral moves, press / news release caption (1), contact details (10) and company logo (11) seem to be obligatory, while the ‘for

immediate release formula' (4) is often omitted (Catenaccio 2008: 24). Considering the core moves, Catenaccio finds that "headline, lead, justification of the newsworthiness of the information and some form of positive evaluation appear to be constant characteristics" (ibid). The positive evaluation can be placed in the body of the text where it is "fairly mildly worded", and / or in the quote, where it can be expressed "in bolder terms" (ibid).

Catenaccio (2008: 24-25) notes that headline, lead and an expansion containing evaluative elements are typical features of the news article, but the press releases were also found to share several characteristics with the advertisement structure described by Bhatia (Bhatia's (2004) move structure for the advertisement is presented in section 3.2.2., Table 2.). Particularly, both the advertisement and the press release provide justifications of the value of product / company-related news (Catenaccio 2008: 25). Other points which appear to be common to both genres are the use of endorsements, detailing and positive evaluation of products or services, identification of customer needs and establishing of credentials through reference to past history, awards, successful partnership etc. (ibid.). Catenaccio notes that sometimes similar strategies are used in different moves. Quotes, for instance, are typically used in advertisements to feature celebrity or typical user endorsements, while in press releases they are used for providing the view of the company issuing the press release (ibid.).

Catenaccio (2008: 23) suggests that the concepts of what qualifies as promotional in press releases may have to be interpreted in a broader sense than what is customary in advertising, as the codification of promotional purpose is not necessarily realized in the form of promotional language. She claims that openly promotional statements in press releases can only be presented in quotations, because quotes "are always attributed, thus enabling journalists to avoid responsibility for the statements" (ibid.). As an example of promotion in the broader sense Catenaccio mentions the use of face-saving strategies in press releases issued in crisis response situations (ibid.). She also notes that typical elements of informative discourse (such as neutral description in the 'detailing' move) can be used strategically to achieve a promotional aim, which in the case of press release would be the reproduction of the text as a news

article (Catenaccio 2008: 27). Hence, the same move could be interpreted in the light of reporting and promoting (ibid.).

On the basis of her analysis Catenaccio suggests that defining the communicative purposes of press releases is difficult, because the different purposes are often conveyed through the same cognitive moves and strategies (ibid.). She claims that the peripheral moves (i.e. the explicit declaration that it is a press release, the company logo, company description and contact details) are needed to activate a promotional interpretation of the press release (ibid.).

Although I do not share Catenaccio's view that the peripheral features are essential for interpretation of the press release as promotional (also news articles can implicitly promote ideas, political views etc.), I find the division of moves into peripheral and core features somewhat useful on two accounts. Firstly, it separates the parts of the press releases which are meant to be reproduced as a news article from the parts which are not, and, secondly, since the peripheral moves remain similar regardless of the topic of the press release, placing more emphasis on the core of the press release can help the analyst to distinguish features which are typical for a certain subgenre.

## **5. The present study**

### ***5.1. The corpus***

The corpus used in the study includes 50 press releases announcing reduction in personnel. The press releases were collected from the Internet pages of business companies during the period between March and September 2011. As the reduction of workforce is not necessarily mentioned in the headline or even in the lead paragraph of the press release, searching for appropriate releases directly from the news archives of business companies would have required significantly more time that was available for the task. Therefore, I first searched the Internet for news about reductions in headcount using search terms such as ‘layoff’, ‘reduction in workforce’ and ‘job reduction’. This task became easier after I ran into a website specialized in providing information about job cuts and bankruptcies ([dailyjobcuts.com](http://dailyjobcuts.com)). Having obtained information about the companies and the dates of the layoff announcements, I went to the home page of the company in question and read the available press releases issued around the date of the article.

Because personnel reductions can be made for various reasons (mergers, relocation or closing-down of offices or manufacturing units, poor financial situation etc.), I posed two requirements for a press release to be included in the corpus: firstly, it should be mentioned in the text that the number of people working for the company will be reduced. Secondly, earnings releases (announcements of financial results) would not be included, because of their length (several pages) and because, the main focus being in financial matters, the proportion of text dedicated to potential workforce reductions in earnings releases is very small. Finding suitable texts proved to be a more challenging task than expected, as a press release that met the requirements was found in approximately 15 % of the cases where news about layoffs had been obtained. This may be due to several reasons: firstly, in many of the news articles concerning the layoffs it was stated that the information was announced in a press conference. Very often it was also the case that information about future redundancies was embedded in financial disclosures (e.g. quarterly reports) where it was simply listed as one of many corrective actions to e.g. weak financial

performance. It is also possible that press releases announcing workforce reductions are not stored in the news archive of the company website as long as the more positive news.

The companies included in the corpus represented different branches of industry (e.g. Information technology, pharmaceuticals, banking) and different geographical locations (24 of the companies have their head office in the North America, 20 in Europe, four in Asia, and two in Australia). However, all the press releases were written in English language. There was considerable variation in the length of the texts, the longest text (1242 words) being fifteen times as long as the shortest one (82 words). The average length of the texts was 476 words (additional information aimed for the use of journalists, such as company description, disclaimer and contact details are not included in the word count).

For copyright reasons, all references to the names of the companies, their products and the locations (i.e. town and country) of their facilities have been removed from the examples provided in the analysis section. However, a list indicating the business sectors which the companies represent as well as the continents on which the head offices are located are presented in Appendix 1.

## ***5.2. Method of analysis***

Before proceeding to linguistic analysis of the corpus texts, I will, in chapter 6, look at the situational context of workforce reduction, especially reasons for conducting workforce reduction, effects of the reduction within different stakeholder groups (employees, customers, shareholders/investors and local communities) as well as rules, regulations and ethical guidelines which govern the ways workforce reductions can be carried out. In chapter 7, I will move on to linguistic analysis of the corpus texts. All three levels of linguistic analysis included in Bhatia's (1993: 22-36) method of genre analysis, i.e. structural interpretation, analysis of text-patterning and analysis of lexico-grammatical features, were applied in the study. First, the press releases in the corpus were analysed for structural regularities. The first step of this structural analysis involved identification of features which Catenaccio (2008)

classifies as peripheral, i.e. the parts of text which are not meant to be reproduced in news articles. These features may include, for instance, an explicit declaration that the text is a press release, the company logo, company description and contact details (see Catenaccio 2008: 27).

After identification of peripheral features, the core of each press release, i.e. the part which is meant to be reproduced in news articles, was analysed in order to identify the rhetorical moves they contained. Attention was also paid to occurrence of different moves as well as to the order in which the moves appeared in individual texts. As some of the texts in the corpus dealt with multiple topics, the reduction of workforce being just one of them, it was possible to identify moves which occurred in just few of the texts and/or did not concern the topic of layoffs. Therefore, a more detailed analysis was performed only on the moves which occurred at least once in every three texts.

For the detailed analysis, all instances of each typical move was first copied to a file dedicated to that specific move, so that there was a separate file for each of the moves. In cases where two or more moves were incorporated in the same sentence or clause, the sentence/clause was included in each of the relevant files. These files were then examined in order to discover rhetorical strategies as well as lexicogrammatical and / or stylistic patterns applied in that particular move. All of the moves were also examined for occurrence of promotional elements (PE) by applying Pander Maat's (2007) method, which was discussed in chapter 4 in this thesis. This was done in order to find out to what extent the promotional aspect of press releases announcing workforce reduction is manifested through openly promotional language, as well as to discover possible differences in the occurrence of PEs between different moves. The goal of this detailed analysis was to find out the communicative intention(s) of each move as well identify the stakeholder group(s) which the move was particularly addressing.

## 6. Situational context

Corporates that contemplate workforce reduction are generally doing it in order to maintain or enhance their position in the marketplace. Reduction in workforce, also referred to as *layoff*, *collective redundancy* or *downsizing*, can be temporary or permanent in nature. The situation in which companies contemplate workforce reduction can be caused by e.g. decline in the product demand, closing of a plant, restructuring of the company or a merger. In this chapter I will, following Bhatia's (1993) model of genre analysis make an attempt to analyse the situational context of press releases announcing workforce reduction by looking at the extra-textual reality which the press releases are trying to represent, change or use (see Bhatia 1993: 23). In section 6.1., I will look at some potential effects of downsizing, which companies have to take into consideration when contemplating layoff, as well as when making a public announcement of it. After that, in section 6.2., I will view some of the rules, regulations and ethical guidelines, which govern the process of layoff.

### 6.1. *Effects of workforce reduction*

Although downsizing may have positive effects on the profitability and/or competitiveness of the company, these benefits can be offset by long-term negative effects on the firm's reputation (cf. Zyglidopoulos 2003:12). What makes the decision whether or not to conduct workforce reductions even more difficult for the company, is the fact that different stakeholder groups may have different reactions to downsizing activities: Among the employees the layoffs are likely to evoke negative emotions, such as anger, embarrassment and insecurity. Customers may be concerned about the availability and/or quality of the products or services, but also, of the ways the company treats its employees. In case of large reductions of workforce, local communities will have concerns for instance of increasing unemployment rates and decreasing tax revenues. Also, companies that want to rehire qualified workers after a downsizing cycle may find it harder to do so because of the damage that downsizing has had on the company's reputation (Zyglidopoulos 2003: 23). At the same time, the layoffs can have a positive impact on the firm's reputation within the industry's managers or investor community (ibid: 15). Studies

have also shown that reactions of different stakeholder groups vary according to the circumstances in which the downsizing takes place. For instance, higher financial performance prior to downsizing may lead to greater negative impact on the firm's reputation for social performance (ibid.: 23).

As discussed above, the company needs to consider numerous aspects, of which I have mentioned just a few, before deciding about workforce reductions. However, it is very difficult to predict or influence how investors will react to the announcement. Elayan et al. (1998: 329-330) propose that the market reaction to corporate layoff announcements depends on investors' perceptions of the cost savings achievable through the layoffs, the information content of the layoff announcement and the information available to investors before the announcement is made. For instance, announcement of larger and/or permanent layoffs often result in stronger negative market reaction than announcements of smaller and/or temporary layoffs (Elayan et al. 1998: 349). Also, layoff announcements that come unexpected tend to result in more negative market reaction than anticipated layoff announcements (ibid: 334). Furthermore, Elayan et al. suggest that layoff announcements in which the stated reason is that the operations are not profitable are likely to result in more negative market reaction than layoffs that take place for restructuring reasons. This suggestion is confirmed by Hahn and Reyes (2004: 366) who, in their empirical study of stock-market reactions to corporate layoff announcements, found that investors tend to react negatively to layoffs caused by low demands of corporate's products or services and positively to layoffs attributed to corporate restructuring.

## ***6.2. Rules, regulations and ethical guidelines***

In most industrialized societies, employees cannot be laid off and/or re-hired simply according to the short-term needs of the company. There are rules, regulations and ethical guidelines, both company-external and company-internal, which outline the circumstances in which a business corporate can conduct workforce reductions, as well as what would be the mode of operation in such cases. These rules, regulations and guidelines naturally also affect the way the company discusses the downsizing in public. As the corpus used in the present study contains press releases issued by

companies which operate in different continents and internationally, it would be impossible to list all of the relevant rules here. I will, however, shortly look at some of them in order to provide an idea of what these rules might be.

The most powerful rules and regulations are provided by the authorities via legislation. In the USA, for instance, the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act requires employers with 100 or more employees to provide written notice at least 60 calendar days before plant closings and mass layoffs (ETA 2003: 2). This requirement, however, does not apply to situations where “the closing or layoff is a result of a relocation or consolidation of all or part of the employer’s business” (ETA 2003: 6). The full 60-day notice requirement also does not apply if the company has reason to believe that advance notice would prevent it from obtaining new capital or business, or if the closing or layoff is caused by unforeseeable business circumstances or a natural disaster (ETA 2003: 11). In addition to the WARN act, which is a federal law, individual states may have their own laws and regulations to protect the rights of their citizens in case of job losses.

In European Union, the council directive 98/59/EC (on the approximation of the laws of the member states concerning collective redundancies) requires employers contemplating mass layoffs to consult staff representatives in order to find means to avoid the redundancies or to reduce the number of affected employees, and to mitigate the consequences by applying social measures aimed at redeploying or retraining of affected employees (Council of the European Union 1998: Article 2).

After the consultations with staff representatives the company is required to notify the competent public authority of the projected collective redundancies, and the redundancies can take effect at the earliest 30 days after the notification (ibid: Article 3). However, the member states have the right to apply or to introduce laws, regulations and administrative provisions which are more favourable to workers than the council directive (ibid: Article 5).

The company’s own values and value and/or mission statements usually provide some ethical guidelines, although typically on a very general level, on how the company acknowledges its responsibilities to its employees and the community it serves. Although the company values probably do not stop the company from

conducting layoffs, they can influence the ways the layoffs are carried out, especially in countries where employee rights are not well protected by legislation. Many companies also have a specific written layoff policy, which prescribes the mode of operation as well as the compensation offered to the employees in cases where reduction in workforce is found necessary. In the U.S.A, for instance, it is common for companies to offer one week's pay per year of service as severance, often with the maximum of 12 weeks' pay (IOMA 2008: 14).

In addition to the rules and regulations which prescribe the ways layoffs must be conducted, there are also rules prescribing how the stakeholder groups should be informed. In most jurisdictions, stock-listed companies are required to publish without delay information of any decisions or activities that are likely to influence the value of the security.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for instance employees of a stock-listed company cannot be informed about future layoffs before the information is made public. However, it is naturally in the best interest of the company to inform the employees simultaneously or as soon as possible.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the Finnish Securities Market Act, Section 7. Available [Online]: [finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1989/en19890495.pdf](http://finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1989/en19890495.pdf) (7.3.2013)

## **7. Analysis of the corpus texts**

In this chapter, I will present the analysis of the press releases included in the corpus. In section 7.1., I will first look at visual organization of the texts. This includes an overview of the appearance of the texts on the company websites as well as identification of peripheral features, which are not meant to be included in news articles written on the basis of the press release. Next, a structural interpretation of the core parts of the press releases, i.e. the parts which are intended to be reproduced as news articles, will be presented. In section 7.2., the rhetorical strategies as well as lexico-grammatical and/ or stylistic patterns typical for each individual move will be analysed and explained in order to reveal the communicative intention(s) of the move.

### ***7.1. Structural interpretation***

During the collection of the corpus it became clear that, at least when concerning the visual organization of the texts, the genre of press releases is not highly conventionalised. First of all, as mentioned in section 5.1., there was a great deal of variation in the length of the texts. Secondly, there was no consistent visual structure or layout pattern in the press releases studied. This may be, at least partly, due to the fact that the press releases used in this study were published on the company websites, where they are not necessarily presented in the same format as the texts sent directly to the journalists. However, all the features which Catenaccio (2008) classifies as peripheral – i.e. the explicit declaration that the text is a press/news/media release, the company logo, company description and contact details – were displayed on the website in connection with the press release, although not always incorporated in the actual file containing the specific press release text. Company description, for instance, was absent in some of the press release texts, but a link to similar kind of information was always provided.

When looking at the actual press release texts collected for the corpus, company description was included in 36 (72 %) of them. Company description was typically separated from the core of the press release with a subhead stating ‘About the

company' or 'About Company X'. The company description can be categorized as a boilerplate, since the same piece of text can be reused in all of the press releases published by the company. The fact that it was separated from the rest of the text indicates that its purpose was not necessarily to be reproduced in news articles, but to provide some positively charged background information of the company. The company description typically included facts about the history, size and location(s) of the company as well as its core businesses.

The occurrence of promotional elements in the company descriptions found in the corpus was relatively high, 0.74 PEs per sentence. Below is an example with five occurrences of PEs, which I have underlined.

- (1.) <Company> is a science company. Founded in 1802, <Company> puts science to work by creating sustainable solutions essential to a better, safer, healthier life for people everywhere. Operating in more than 70 countries, <Company> offers a wide range of innovative products and services for markets including agriculture, nutrition, electronics, communications, safety and protection, home and construction, transportation and apparel. (C27)

Of the underlined promotional elements, the intensifier *more than* could be replaced by more neutral *about*, and the other PEs could be completely left out without affecting the grammaticality or interpretation of the sentence. *Essential*, however, cannot be counted as a PE, because removing it would require replacing the preposition *to* with more suitable *for*.

In addition to the examples of PEs, also the semantic content of example 1 is designed to promote an image of a well-established multinational corporation with multiple fields of expertise and a mission to improve everyone's quality of life. A similar kind of tendency to highlight the expertise of the company was found in the other company descriptions in the corpus as well. For instance, in 61 % of the company descriptions, the company claimed that it is a leader in what it does. Therefore, as suggested also by Catenaccio (2008: 24), this move can be compared to the establishing credentials move of the advertisement, which was discussed in subsection 3.2.2.

Besides the company description, another additional piece of writing, a disclaimer often explicitly titled as Cautionary Statement, was included in 30 (60 %) of the press releases in the corpus. The disclaimer is a legal provision that eliminates or reduces the company's liability under the law, provided that the company acted in good faith (McLaren-Hankin 2008: 637). Hence, the main function of the disclaimer is clear: it protects the company against lawsuits in case the events forecasted in the press release do not materialize. The cautionary statement was typically presented in smaller font than the rest of the press release and/or in cursive letters. The majority of the Cautionary statements in the corpus, including example 2, could be categorized as boilerplates, because they were general enough to be attached to any press release issued by the company.

- (2.) This announcement contains certain statements that are neither reported financial results nor other historical information. These statements are forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the US Securities Act, and Section 21E of the US Securities Exchange Act of 1934. These statements include information with respect to <Company's> financial condition, results of operations and businesses, strategy, plans and objectives. Words such as "anticipates", "expects", "intends", "plans", "believes", "seeks", "estimates", "targets", "may", "will", "continue", "project" and similar expressions, as well as statements in the future tense, identify forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements are not guarantees of <Company's> future performance and are subject to assumptions, risks and uncertainties that could cause actual future results to differ materially from those expressed in or implied by such forward-looking statements...(C38)

In 27 % of the texts containing a disclaimer, the move had clearly been designed for the specific press release texts it was accompanying. For instance, example 3 is effectively disclaiming each claim that is made in the core of the press release.

- (3.) Certain statements in this press release including, but not limited to, statements as to: timing and execution of the workforce reduction; number of positions impacted worldwide; [...] are forward-looking statements that are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause results to be materially different than expectations. Important factors that could cause actual results to differ materially include: our ability to execute the workforce reduction; negative

consequences from our workforce reduction such as disruptions to our business; ... (C14)

Because the disclaimer is a legal provision embedded in public relations discourse, its presence can be counted as an instance of interdiscursivity. As discussed in section 3.2.3, similar kind of disclaimers can occur also in other corporate discourse genres, such as annual reports. Analogous to the company description, the disclaimer is not meant to be reproduced in the news article, and therefore it can be considered as a peripheral move.

When looking at the core parts of the press releases, i.e. the parts which are meant to be reproduced as news articles, two features – headlines and lead - were immediately distinguishable because of their fixed location at the beginning of the text as well as their textual and typological properties. First of all, each text in the corpus had a main headline typically highlighting the most important message of the release (from the author's viewpoint). In about half of the texts the main headline was followed by a subhead or a summary, which in newspaper jargon is often called *standfirst*. The standfirst was written in bold letters and with dashes or bullet points, and, similar to the main headline, it typically consisted of incomplete clauses often missing the finite verb element. As discussed in section 3.2.1. of this thesis, in news articles the standfirst can be seen as a component of the headline (van Dijk 1988: 53).

In 46 (92 %) of the texts the main headline and the (optional) subhead or standfirst were followed by a newspaper style lead paragraph. The lead typically opened with identification of date and place and an explicit announcement (“The <Company> announced today...”) which was followed by one or two sentences describing the main message(s) of the press release. As discussed in section 3.1., the combination of headline and lead as well as the use of third-person self-reference and semi-performatives (e.g. *announce*) are so-called preformulating devices, which enable the journalists to reproduce the press releases as news articles with very little changes (see e.g. Sleurs, Jacobs & Van Waes 2003: 193). Regarding the semantic content of the combination of headline and lead in the press releases studied, it functioned, analogous to news articles, as a top of an inverted pyramid, containing in condensed form the information the author of the press release had considered as essential.

In previous genre analyses of the corporate press release, Catenaccio (2008) lists each of the three features, headline, standfirst (which she names as *summary*) and lead as separate moves, and McLaren and Gurău (2005) only identify the lead (which they label as *announcement*) as a move. However, due to the shared summarizing function, the main headline, the standfirst and the lead were, in the present study, considered as elements of a single cognitive move, which was named as Summary. In the present study, a press release was considered to contain a Summary move, if at least two of the three aforementioned features could be found in the text.

In addition to Summary move, five further moves were identified in the core part of the press releases: Elaboration, Justification, Expressing sympathy, Making amends and Addressing customer needs. These moves did not appear in a fixed order and sometimes not even as physically fixed entities separated by sentence boundaries. Some of the moves (esp. Elaboration and Justification) could be relatively long and recursively organized, while others (esp. Expressing sympathy) typically consisted of a single sentence or clause. There were also a handful of instances, where a sentence could be identified as a representative of two different moves, for instance when actions were justified by referring to expectations of improved customer satisfaction.

The Elaboration move, which presented details of the actions described in the Summary, corresponds with the Elaboration move identified by McLaren and Gurău (2005) as well as the Detailing move identified by Catenaccio (2008). A similar kind of move can also be identified in the generic structure of the hard news report (White 2005: 115) and in the advertisement (Bhatia 2004a: 65; 2004b: 222).

In the Justification move the actions described in the Summary and Elaboration were justified, usually by first referring to the circumstances which had made the actions necessary and then introducing the advantages that would be gained by performing the actions. Some justification for the actions had typically been provided already in the Summary, sometimes even in the headline (this will be discussed further in section 7.2.1.). The Justification move identified in the present study corresponds well with the Cause-and-effect subcomponent of the news story (see White 2005: 115 or section 3.2.1. of this thesis). It also corresponds to some extent with the Justification move identified previously by Catenaccio (2008: 24) as a component of

the press release, and with the similar move in the structure of the advertisement identified by Bhatia (2004a: 65 2004b: 222). However, due to the specific topic, workforce reductions, the texts analysed for the present study did not try to justify any products, services or the newsworthiness of the announced actions, but rather the actions themselves.

In addition to the aforementioned moves, two further moves, Establishing credentials and Estimating the costs of restructuring, were distinguished in the cores of some of the press releases. However, as those moves occurred in less than one third of the texts, and therefore were not counted as typical, they were not analysed further in the study.<sup>4</sup>

As discussed above, Elaboration and Justification have been identified as components of the press releases also in previous studies, and, therefore they can be considered as typical moves of press releases in general. Expressing sympathy, Making amends and Reassuring customers, however, appear to be moves that are specific to press releases announcing workforce reduction. The complete list of typical moves identified from the texts in the corpus is presented in Table 5. The moves are listed in their most typical order of appearance. Since not all moves occurred in each of the 50 press releases in the corpus, also the occurrences of different moves are presented in the table.

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<sup>4</sup> Establishing credentials appeared in 7 (14 %) of the texts, Costs of restructuring in 14 (28%) . However, Costs of restructuring can also be considered as a part of Elaboration move.

<b>Move structure of press releases announcing reduction in workforce</b>			
	<b>Move</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Location</b>
1	Summary	49 (98 %)	core
2	Elaboration	48 (96 %)	core
3	Justification	50 (100 %)	core
4	Expressing sympathy	24 (48 %)	core
5	Making amends	24 (48 %)	core
6	Addressing customer needs	28 (56 %)	core
7	Company description	36 (72 %)	peripheral
8	Disclaimer	30 (60 %)	peripheral

**Table 5.** Move structure of press releases announcing workforce reduction.

Ten (20 %) of the texts contained all of the six moves typical of the core part of the press release (i.e. the first six moves in Table 5). As this combination of moves was also the most typical for the texts in the corpus, it can be considered as the prototypical rhetorical structure of press releases announcing workforce reductions.

## ***7.2. Rhetorical strategies and text-patterning***

This section of the thesis presents an analysis of each of the moves identified in the previous section. The analysis involved identifying and explaining rhetorical strategies and lexico-grammatical patterns typical for the specific move in question. The goal of the analysis was to identify the communicative intentions the moves carry. Each of the moves were also analysed for occurrence of promotional elements using Pander Maat's (2007) method, which was explained in chapter 4 of this thesis. An overview of the occurrence of promotional elements will be provided in subsection 7.2.7.

### **7.2.1. Summary move**

Each of the press releases in the corpus opened with a newspaper style main headline. As mentioned in section 3.2.1., newspaper headlines are typically not written by the journalist themselves, but by a subeditor after the rest of the article has

been completed (see e.g. Bell 1991: 187; Iedema, Feez & White 1994: 110; White 2005: 112). This means that although the rest of the press release may be published as a news article with very little changes, the headlines are more likely to be rewritten. Therefore, it is possible for the authors of press releases to use headlines to directly address certain stakeholder groups, such as investors, by using language which is not typical for news article headlines. However, it must also be noted that headlines are also the most important places for inserting keywords in order to help search engine optimization, and, thus, to draw traffic to the release once it is online (cf. Master Black 2012: n.p.; Donnelly 2010: n.p.). Hence, a carefully constructed headline can help the company to gain publicity for its press release.

In order to find out how promotional the headlines are on a surface linguistic level, the main headlines were first searched for promotional elements. It was found that from the 50 main headlines, only four contained a PE. If each of the main headlines is considered a sentence, the mean number of PEs per sentence was 0.08. Concerning the whole Summary move, the corresponding number was found to be 0.10 PEs per sentence. Thus, the proportion of promotional elements was even smaller in the main headlines than in the Summary move in general.

In an analysis of semantic content, it was found that the majority (66%) of the main headlines focused on the actions the company was planning to take. Examples 4, 5 and 6 represent this kind of headlines.

- (4.) <Company> Announces Restructuring (C36)
- (5.) <Company> Announces Global Reduction in Force (C4)
- (6.) <Company> to Eliminate Approximately 1,200 Positions (C34)

Instead of ostensibly attending to the interests of any particular stakeholder group, the headlines in examples 4, 5, and 6 are simply stating a fact. However, there is a difference in the level of preciseness in which the actions are described. Example 4 is very general, as it does not specify any concrete actions, nor provide any further information, concerning, for instance, the divisions or locations which will be affected by the restructuring. Example 5 represents the majority of the headlines in the level of preciseness. It defines the action (reduction in force) and that it affects

the company globally. Example 6, which is the most accurate of the three examples, could very well be directly used as a newspaper headline, since it highlights, from the viewpoint of the general public, the most important message of the announcement, i.e. the number of jobs that will be lost. From the investors' point of view, however, (4.) is likely to be the most interesting of the examples, because it announces restructuring. As discussed in section 6.1. of this thesis, the study of Hahn and Reyes (2004: 366) shows that investors tend to react positively to layoffs attributed to corporate restructuring.

If mentioning restructuring of the company in the headline is likely to attract the interest of investors, a similar kind of effect can be expected, when the headline focuses on the expected positive effect of the planned actions. This was the case in nine (18 %) of the main headlines, including examples 7 and 8.

- (7.) <Company> takes steps to accelerate company transformation and increase effectiveness (C2)
- (8.) <Company> announces initiatives to improve profitability and enhance operational efficiencies in its <division> (C21)

What example 7 states, is that the company is advancing the planned changes in its organization. The use of the verb *to accelerate* instead of *to advance* gives the impression of controlled expediting of actions in order to reach the goal more rapidly, rather than e.g. rushing into actions to save the company. The verbs used in Example 8, *improve* and *enhance*, are inherently positive, and also the noun phrases *profitability* and *operational efficiency* carry a positive overtone. Furthermore, neither of the two headlines actually specifies the actions the company is going to take, and example 8 focuses solely on the potential positive outcome of the planned actions. Thus, it is clear that this kind of headlines are mainly addressing (potential) shareholders, as from the employees' perspective (8.) implies that jobs will be lost and example (7.) that the layoffs will happen sooner and possibly affect more employees than was originally planned.

In addition to the 33 (66 %) headlines focusing on actions and nine (18 %) focusing on the expected results of the actions, five (10 %) of the main headlines in the corpus

referred to a strategy, for instance a transformational strategy (as in example 6).<sup>5</sup> One possible reason for this may be that the word *strategy* promotes the image of carefully planned and controlled series of measures which are conducted over a long period of time. Thus, headlines referring to a strategy are likely to address (potential) shareholders rather than any other stakeholder groups.

In regard to the relationship between the headline (i.e. main headline + standfirst) and the lead, it was noticed that, similar to news articles, in the majority of the press releases the headline was directly derivable from the lead paragraph (cf. Bell 1991: 187; White 2005: 111). In other words, the semantic content of the headline reflected the semantic content of the lead, as examples 9 and 10 demonstrate. I have underlined the points of interdependency.

(9.)            **<Company> announces new cost savings plan**

- Plan aimed to achieve \$ 120 million of annualized savings by end of 2012
- Includes global workforce review that may affect up to 500 employees worldwide
- Company also pushes out target for break-even based on current visibility

<Town>, <Country>, <Date> - <Company>, a joint venture of <Company 2> (NYSE:xxx) and <Company 3> (NASDAQ:xxx), today announced that due to recent changes in the business environment and reduced demand for <product type> at certain customers, it will launch a cost savings plan to achieve about \$120 million of annualized savings by the end of 2012.

(C41)

The Summary move in example 9 has a very high density of information. It answers the questions who, what, when, why, how and for what purpose, featuring thus the characteristics of the news article summary, not only in regard to the structure and style but also to the amount of information. The standfirst highlights the most important details of the press release and the lead provides justification for the actions by first explaining why the actions are necessary and then offering projection of the expected positive outcome of the actions, i.e. the savings. The expected

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<sup>5</sup> One of the headlines fits into two categories, four headlines could not be placed into any of the three categories.

savings are emphasized by mentioning them also in the standfirst. This emphasis, together with the use of economic jargon (*annualized savings, break-even*), indicates that this part of the text is primarily aimed for (potential) shareholders.

Example 10 is similarly formulated to follow the style and structure of the news article summary.

(10.)      **<Company> Accelerates Implementation of its Transformational Strategy**

**New Streamlined Operating Model to Reflect New Portfolio and Current Economic Realities**

<Town>, <State> -<Date>

The <Company> (NYSE:xxx) today announced a series of aggressive actions to accelerate its transformational strategy in light of current economic realities. (C26)

As (9.), also (10.) appears to be aimed for investors. However, while example 9 concentrates in providing accurate information, example 10 is significantly less informative. None of the ‘aggressive actions’, which, as becomes evident from the rest of this particular press release, include workforce reduction and closure of several facilities, are specified in the lead. Especially due to the two instances of the adjective *new* in the standfirst, example 10 could very well be promoting a new product or service, if the nouns were changed accordingly. Only the expression *current economic realities* implies about the nature of the actions and, at the same time, justifies them. This kind of vague promotional summary, however, represented a clear minority among the texts studied.

As discussed above, in the majority of the press releases studied, Summary move followed the structure and style of the news article summary. By looking at the semantic content and lexical choices, however, it could be concluded that many of the instances of Summary move were constructed in a way that conveyed a positive image of the company to (potential) investors. This was done, for instance, by concentrating on the expected positive outcome of the actions announced, referring

to restructuring or a strategy instead of workforce reductions and/or using economic jargon.

### 7.2.2. Elaboration

In the Elaboration move, information about the actions described in the headline and lead was given in more details. These details typically included the distribution of the workforce reduction in terms of locations and numbers of personnel affected as well as the schedule, as demonstrated in the following examples.

- (11.) The cost efficiency initiatives will be implemented across all divisions throughout <Company> and will result in a headcount reduction of 5,300, an 11% reduction of the <Company's> workforce. These reductions, the vast majority of which will have taken place by the end of the first half of 2009, will be primarily in <Division> and in related support areas. (C8)
  
- (12.) The downsizing affects up to 400 temporary employees in <Location 1>, where the temporary night shift will close by the end of December this year. In <Location 2>, the ambition is to reduce the evening shift, which will affect up to 610 persons. In <Location 3>, approximately 370 employees are affected as the <product> plant is planned to downsize in April next year.[...] Negotiations with the unions will start immediately. (C20)

In 12 (24 %) of the texts containing an elaboration move, the company mentioned that the number of personnel to be made redundant was subject to local laws and regulations and/or negotiations with employee representatives, as in example 13.

- (13.) The restructuring program will take place over three years and includes a workforce reduction that will streamline the combined company's services businesses. Workforce reduction plans will vary by country, based on local legal requirements and consultation with works councils and employee representatives, as appropriate. Approximately 7.5 percent of the combined company's workforce, or about 24,600 employees, will be affected over the course of the program, with nearly half of the reductions occurring in <Country>. (C10)

As can be seen from the examples above, Elaboration move was highly informative. Only four (4) occurrences of promotional elements were found in the 251 sentences of Elaboration in the corpus, which equals 0.02 PEs per sentence. Besides those four promotional elements, the instances of Elaboration move did not contain any explicit evaluation or judgement. Thus, the style of the elaboration move corresponded largely to the reporter voice described by Iedema, Feez and White (1994: 203-204). Although the instances of the Elaboration move were ostensibly objective, many of them, including the examples above, were written in a way that did not present the company as an active participant responsible for the workforce reduction. When the examples above are examined in terms of sentence structure and clause constituents, it can be seen that the company is not placed in the position of the syntactic subject in any of them. Passive voice is used in many of the clauses, and all the clauses written in active voice have an inanimate subject other than the company (e.g. *these reductions, the restructuring program, the downsizing*).

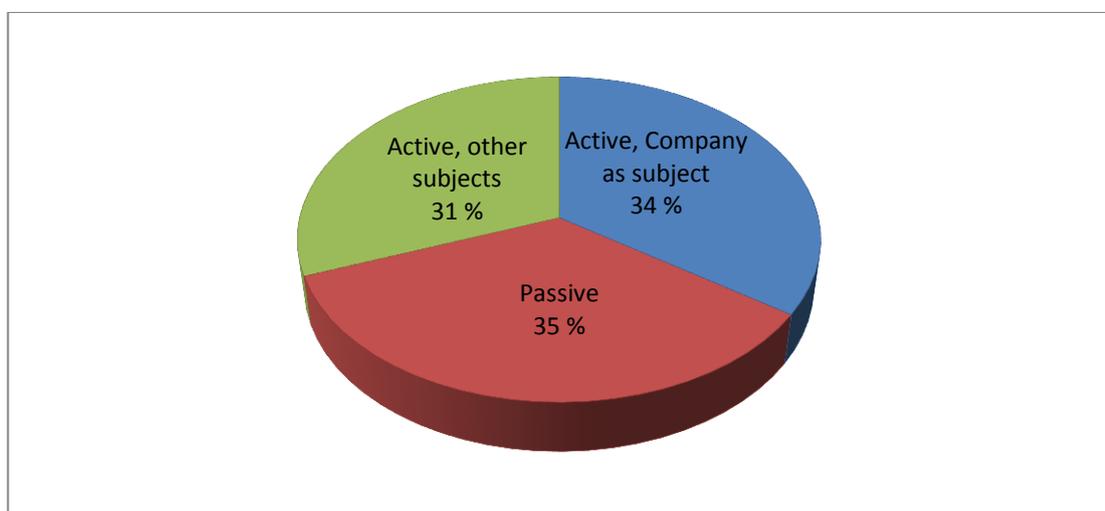
According to Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 46), one of the reasons for the use of the passive without the agent (*by*-phrase) is that the writers “want to avoid identifying the agent because they do not want to assign or accept responsibility”. Although this may not be exactly the case in these examples of the Elaboration move, avoiding the use of the company’s name distances the company from the actions which may not be given a warm reception among all stakeholder groups. A similar tendency to the use of passive voice has been observed by Subramanian, Insley & Blackwell (1993) and Thomas (1997) in CEO’s letters to shareholders reporting of loss-making years. Thomas (1997), who analysed a series of management’s letters which were issued during a five-year period by one company, found that in the years the company made profit, passive construction was used in 10% to 15 % of the clauses, whereas in the loss-making years the corresponding proportion was 20% to 21% (Thomas 1997: 53-54).

Although the elaboration moves analysed for the present study in general showed heavy use of passive voice as well as avoided using the company as the subject of the clause, there were also four relatively long instances of the move (C21, C35, C37 and C40) in which the company is the subject in most of the finite clauses. Example 14 shows an excerpt of such move (subjects underlined).

- (14.) <Company> intends to reallocate and optimize its workforce through programs including work reassignments and outplacements. As a result of these measures, by March 31, 2010, <Company> plans to reduce headcount in the electronics business worldwide by approximately 8,000, out of approximately 160,000 as of September 30, 2008. At the same time, <Company> plans to reduce headcount in its seasonal and temporary workforces. In addition to these measures, <Company> will continue to implement measures... (C21)

In example 14, all sentences follow a similar structure even to the extent that makes the text appear monotonous. However, the message is clear and concise, and it promotes an image of a dynamic company taking responsibility of its actions.

When looking at the Elaboration move subcorpus as a whole, it was found that passive voice was used in 35 % (110 out of 316) of the finite clauses. None of those clauses contained an agent that would be responsible for the action (such as e.g. “The employees are made redundant by the company.”). In 109 of the clauses written in active voice, the company’s name, its division, a pronoun referring to the company, or the noun *company* was used as the syntactic subject, whereas in 97 clauses the subject was other than the company or its division. Thus, the company was an active participant (i.e. as the subject of a clause written in active voice) in 34 % of the finite clauses in Elaboration move, as illustrated in Chart 1.



**Chart 1.** Distribution of active and passive voice in finite clauses in Elaboration move.

### 7.2.3. Justification

All of the press releases in the corpus contained a section where justification for the announced actions was provided. In terms of semantic content, this move typically entailed background information about the circumstances which made the actions necessary and projection about improvement that would be achieved through the actions. As discussed in section 7.2.1., some justification for the actions had often been provided already in the Summary move. The Justification move itself then typically appeared, partly or entirely, in a quotation, which, according to Catenaccio (2008: 23) as well as McLaren & Gurău (2005: 22), is the part of the press release where openly promotional statements can be made. The present study confirms this assertion, as some of the quotes justifying the layoffs were found to be highly promotional, such as example 15.

- (15.) “We have taken immediate and aggressive actions to maximize cash flow by reducing cost, working capital and capital expenditures in response to current market challenges,” said <Company> Chairman and CEO <Person>. “We will build on our strong financial and market positions and continue prudent financial discipline in navigating through this challenging economic environment. <Company’s> plan is intended to better position a number of its market-leading global businesses for future growth.” (C27)

In example 15, each of the three sentences contains two adjectives which fulfil Pander Maat’s (2007) requirements for promotional elements (underlined). In the first sentence, adjectives *immediate* and *aggressive* create a picture of a dynamic company. Those adjectives could be removed without affecting the grammaticality or the interpretation of the sentence, especially since the actions that are being referred to have already taken place. The second sentence of example 15 contains three evaluative adjectives, which, together with the verb *to navigate* create a metaphor of the company as a strong ship sailing through rough waters with a wise captain who is determined not only to keep the ship afloat but to build it stronger. The adjectives *strong* and *challenging* can be classified as promotional elements, because they could be replaced with more neutral words, for instance *existing* and *current*. It could, however, be argued that *challenging* is so widely used for modifying the noun phrase

*economic environment* that the combination can be considered as a fixed concept.<sup>6</sup> The third evaluative adjective of the sentence, *prudent*, would be difficult to replace or remove without affecting the interpretation of the sentence, and, therefore it cannot be counted as a PE. The adjectives of the third sentence, *market-leading* and *global*, are clear examples of PEs, as their purpose is to underline the popularity of the products, and thus they could be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence. The following example (16.) is semantically very similar to (15.), but contains only two PEs, *rapid* and *strong*.

- (16.) Despite actions already taken during 2008 to respond to the global crisis, worsening conditions are prompting the need for further changes to the company's cash management strategy, business structure and investment plans. "The additional actions we are announcing today will reinforce our ability to manage through this global crisis, but they also position <Company> for rapid, strong growth when conditions improve. An organization needs to be flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the business, and I am confident we have the talent, diversity and experience to lead <Company> effectively." (C13)

Although in example 15 the adjective *global* was considered as a removable PE, in example 16 the word is not a PE as it is needed for specifying the *crisis* that is being referred to. Semantically, however, *the global crisis* is an even stronger expression than *the challenging economic environment*. Both expressions are used for pointing out that the situation, in which restructuring of the company has become necessary, has not been caused by the company itself. Improvement (or even strong success), on the other hand, would be achieved through the active measures the company has taken or is about to take. This seems to be a very common strategy, as in 56 % of the press releases analysed for the present study, the economic environment was named as a cause for the actions. The obvious reason for companies to choose this kind of strategy is that attributing the difficulties to company-external factors and claiming credit in advance for the future success may help to promote a positive image of the company. As discussed in subsection 3.2.3., a similar strategy has been observed by Clatworthy and Jones (2003: 183) in CEO's letters to shareholders. Following the

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<sup>6</sup> 4.1 Million search results in Google (9.1.2013)

aforementioned strategy, however, does not require the use of promotional language, as example 17 demonstrates.

- (17.) “ However, our recently announced 11 percent decline in orders for spring 2009 and our expectation that <Country’s> market conditions will remain challenging through 2009, make it necessary for us to better align our planned spending with those realities. We have approached this decision thoughtfully to ensure that we are able to continue investing in our expanding retail store platform and increased marketing. Although difficult, we believe these actions will ultimately strengthen the company and position us well for when the economy recovers.” (C45)

Basically, the semantic content of example 17 is the same as in examples 15 and 16 (Due to difficult market conditions the company has to take certain actions, which will eventually make the company stronger, especially when the market conditions improve.). However, differences in the selection of adjectives and adverbs naturally conjure different kind of images of the companies. Examples 15 and 16 promote a picture of a dynamic company adjusting rapidly to the changing market environment, which is likely to interest shareholders and potential investors. Example 17 takes a more analytic stand by approaching ‘this decision thoughtfully’ and providing a hint of self-criticism by implying that there is something the company could have done better (“...make it necessary for us to better align...”). Thus, example 17, although providing good news for the shareholders, also implicitly addresses other stakeholder groups, to which the news announced is not positive.

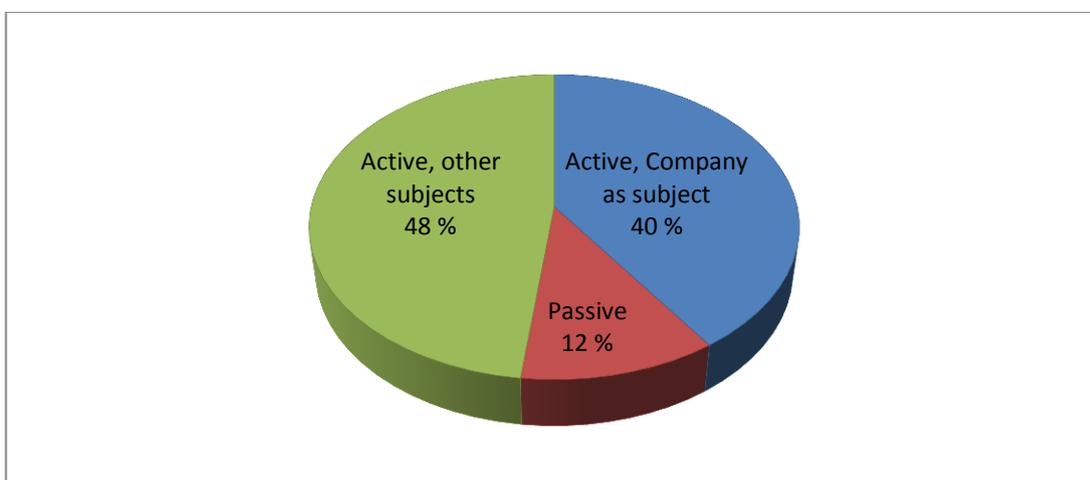
The following example of Justification move is addressing shareholders and potential investors more explicitly and exclusively.

- (18.) The company also will announce plans to restructure <Division> to streamline costs, invest in growth and drive shareholder value. Once completed, the restructuring program is expected to result in annual cost savings of approximately \$1.8 billion. These savings are net of reinvestments in areas including sales coverage, delivery optimization and emerging markets. (C10)

In example 18, Justification move is not embedded in a quote. It is written using the objective Reporter voice which is also used in most of the instances of Elaboration move.

All of the examples of Justification move presented above are aimed to promote a positive image of the company in front of the shareholders and potential investors, and some of them use openly promotional language. However, the mean number of lexical items matching Pander Maat's (2007) definition in Justification move was relatively low, 0.14 PEs per sentence. When counting only the parts which appeared in a quote, the occurrence was somewhat higher, 0.21 PEs per sentence. There appears to be three main factors contributing to the (low) occurrence of PEs: Firstly, in many of the texts the justification move was written as objectively as the elaboration move. Secondly, there were many borderline cases which, in the present study, were not counted as PEs. For example, *successful*, *successfully*, *significant* and *significantly* appeared frequently in the justification move, but in most cases their purpose was to highlight the newsworthiness of the message rather than promote the company. Those words also appear frequently in 'objective' news articles. Thirdly, as verbs and nouns are not gradable, Pander Maat's method does not detect all promotionally used lexemes, such as inherently positive verbs (e.g. *boost*, *improve*, *reinforce*) and nouns (e.g. *efficiency*, *talent*, *flexibility*).

In subsection 7.2.2. it was established that passive voice was used in 35% of the finite clauses in Elaboration move. For the sake of comparison, a similar analysis was performed also to the instances of Justification move. As a result, it was found that passive constructions were used only in 12 % of the finite clauses of Justification move.



**Chart 2.** Distribution of active and passive voice in finite clauses in Justification move.

In addition to significantly lower occurrence of passive constructions in comparison to Elaboration move, Chart 2 also shows that in more than half of the finite clauses the subject was other than the company (or a pronoun referring to the company or a part of it). This seems to be reflecting the balance between the external factors causing the need for the actions and the expected positive effect of the actions performed by the company.

#### **7.2.4. Expressing sympathy**

As seen in Table 5 in section 7.1., approximately half of the press releases examined for the present study contained a move in which the author expressed sympathy towards the employees affected by the reductions, their families and/or the communities connected to the company. In all of the texts which contained a sympathy move, the move was embedded in a quotation, most likely because emotions in general have to be attributed to a person (a company cannot have feelings).

As discussed in section 4.2., Catenaccio (2008: 23) suggests that in press releases responding to a crisis, the promotional purpose of the text may be realized through face-saving strategies. Indeed, the rhetorical strategies of Expressing sympathy move can be interpreted in light of *face-work*. The most influential and widely applied framework in that domain is probably the politeness theory of Brown & Levinson's (1987). However, for the purpose of the present study, Brown and Levinson's theory is problematic, because it presents the process of deciding for the suitable face-saving strategy in the form of a decision-making tree, which does not allow simultaneous use of two or more strategies. Therefore Goffman's (1967) notions of face and face-work, which are more general, and in that sense also more flexible than Brown and Levinson's theory, was be applied to enlighten the strategies realized in Expressing sympathy move. Because Goffman's (1967) notions were in the present study applied only in the analysis of Expressing sympathy move, they are not explained in the theory part of this thesis. For this reason, I will shortly discuss the main principles of the theory in the following paragraphs before proceeding to the actual linguistic analysis of the move.

According to Goffman's (1967: 5) definition, *face* is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others have assumed he has taken during a particular contact". The notion of *line* in this definition refers to a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which the person "expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (ibid.). Social encounters are in general performed in a way that maintains the face of the speaker as well as that of the other interactants (Goffman 1967: 11). However, as Goffman (1967: 12) notes, maintenance of face is usually not the objective of the interaction, but rather a condition of it.

With the notion of face-work Goffman refers to "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (Goffman 1967: 12). An individual has two points of view, a defensive orientation (saving one's own face) and a protective orientation (saving the others' face), and these two orientations are often applied at the same time (ibid.). Furthermore, Goffman (1967: 14) distinguishes three levels of responsibility a person may have because of the threat to face they have caused. Firstly, the person may have acted innocently, in which case the offense is unintended and unwitting. Secondly, the person may have acted malevolently, with the intention to cause open insult. The third level of responsibility includes incidental offenses that arise as an unplanned, although sometimes anticipated, by-product of an action which the person performs despite its offensive consequences (ibid.). From the point of view of a particular participant, the offense can be introduced by herself against her own face or against the face of the others, or it can be introduced by the others against their own face or against the face of particular participant (ibid.: 15). In order to handle the offensive situation, the participant will have to have "a repertoire of face-saving practices for each of these possible relations to threat" (ibid.) Although Goffman's notions of face and face-work were originally constructed to describe interaction between individuals, they are also suitable for analysing interactions where one of the participants is an institution, or, as in the present study, a business company. However, the term 'public image' will be applied in this study to correspond with 'face' in connection with a company.

As discussed in section 6.1., when the management of a company decides to conduct layoffs, it has to take into consideration a number of possible negative consequences

of the layoffs to various stakeholder groups, especially to the employees that will lose their jobs. Besides the obvious financial impact, the employees are also affected emotionally. They might feel offended, embarrassed, disappointed and angry. Similarly, the layoffs are a threat towards the company's public image (cf. 'face'), since the actions may damage the company's reputation as a socially responsible employer. By expressing sympathy the company (or the management) can diminish the effects of the layoffs to company's public image (defensive face-work) as well as allay the sense of embarrassment among the employees (protective face-work).

In the analysis of the semantic content of Expressing sympathy move, the following rhetorical strategies were found.

- A. Stating/implying that the decision to reduce workforce was a difficult one.
- B. Apologizing for / acknowledging the impact of the reductions to those affected.
- C. Praising the qualities and/or contribution of the employees.
- D. Referring to layoffs as a norm rather than an exception (under the current market conditions).

While strategies A and B were used as the sole constituent of the sympathy move as well as in connection with the other strategies, C and D were only used together with A and/or B. The most common rhetorical strategy in the corpus texts was A, which was used in 21 of the 24 texts containing Expressing sympathy move. In six of those texts it was the only strategy, as in examples 19 and 20.

(19.) "Changes impacting personnel are always difficult..." (C2)

(20.) "This was clearly a difficult decision to make, and not one that we've taken lightly..." (C18)

Example 19 is the mildest possible expression of sympathy, as it presents the difficulty of making the decision as a general rule, and thus, only implies that the company is not an exception in this matter. Example 20 is slightly more explicit and empathetic, but its message is still the same. Using this kind of minimal expressions of sympathy may be considered a safe choice for the author, because it does not require significant deviation from the objective style of the rest of the text. In terms

of face-work, strategy A is clearly used for diminishing the threat towards the company's public image in front of socially conscious investors and customers, as well as for allaying the sense of anger towards the company among employees. Thus strategy A can be seen as an example of defensive face-work.

Most often, Strategy A was used together with another strategy. Example 21 presents a combination of A and D, which was found in four of the corpus texts.

- (21.) "Labor reductions are always the most difficult action to take, but many companies are finding it necessary in this environment"  
(C19)

Example 21 is similar to example 19 in the way that it generalizes the situation, and by doing so it distances the company from the actions. Naming the environment as the cause of the actions further mitigates the responsibility of the company. Hence, this combination of rhetorical strategies in Expressing sympathy move is aimed for defending the public image of the company.

Example 22 represents a combination of strategies B and A.

- (22.) "We fully understand the impact that today's announcement has on our employees, contractors and their families. These decisions are never easy but"  
(C25)

This example, although expressing more sympathy towards the employees than previous examples, is also used for the purpose of maintaining a positive image of the company. Acknowledging that the layoffs have an impact on employees and their families may help to reduce angry reactions of employees towards the company, but it is not likely to make the employees feel better about themselves.

Example 23 represents the combination of strategies A and D. This combination was found in four of the corpus texts.

- (23.) "It is extremely difficult to release these outstanding people who have contributed substantially to the Company over the years, but"  
(C36)

In this example, the use of the euphemism *to release* instead of e.g. *to dismiss* not only highlights the company's reluctance to dismiss their personnel but also diminishes the imposition on the employees, because it gives the (false) impression that the employees are leaving on their own initiative. Positive evaluation of the personnel using the adjective *outstanding* as well as referring to the valuable contribution of the employees are also aimed to reduce the embarrassment of the employees which are made redundant. Hence, example 23 serves to protect the face of the employees. The impact of this type of move on the company's image, however, is not that clear. Especially the adverb *extremely* may reduce the credibility of the CEO, as it can be interpreted as a sign of weakness.

In four of the corpus texts, the Expressing sympathy move consisted of three different rhetorical strategies, for instance A, B and C, as seen in example 24.

- (24.) "While we believe these actions are necessary to support <Company's> competitive advantage, they required difficult decisions that will impact some of our colleagues, their families and local communities. We will implement our restructuring plans with the utmost care and respect for the hard-working and talented employees of <Company>" (C37)

The quote in Example 24 is skilfully constructed. After providing justification for the actions it states that the decision was difficult (Strategy A) and acknowledges the impact of the layoffs to the affected employees (which are referred to as colleagues to reduce the distance between the management and the employees) as well as to their families and local communities (Strategy B). Finally, contribution and talents of the employees are praised (Strategy C).

As can be seen from the examples above, strategies A (i.e. stating that the decision was difficult), B (apologizing / acknowledging the impact of layoffs) and D (referring to the layoffs as the norm) are mainly used for defending the public image of the company. Strategy C, praising the qualities and/or contribution of the employees, is the only one that can be seen as protecting the face of the employees. As it was used in only 29 % of the sympathy moves, it can be said that the majority of instances of Expressing sympathy move in the corpus texts, while being ostensibly

sympathetic, concentrated solely on maintaining the (good) reputation of the company.

The instances of Expressing sympathy in the texts studied contained a number of evaluative adjectives and adverbs, which in another context could be classified as promotional elements. For instance, praising the employees of the company for their work performance and talents would, in general, make the company look good. However, in the circumstances where the company dismisses these “outstanding people who have contributed substantially to the Company”, promotional effect of these positively evaluative adjectives and adverbs is questionable. Therefore, the promotional aspect of Expressing sympathy move was realized through rhetorical strategies designed to maintain a positive public image of the company rather than through promotional language.

### **7.2.5. Making amends**

In Making amends move, which occurred in 24 of the corpus texts, the company expressed willingness to take measures in order to minimize the impact of downsizing on affected employees. In six of the texts, the move was embedded in the quotation, while the majority (18) appeared in the body of text. In only three of the texts the measures had been mentioned also in Summary move. The measures included in Making amends move can be divided into two main categories: preventative measures and compensation. Preventative measures included promises of fair and transparent conduct of layoffs, offering employees an opportunity to choose a voluntary layoff package and cooperation with trade unions and employee representatives in order to find ways to minimize the number of redundancies.

- (25.) <Company> intends to work closely with the unions in order to achieve the required reduction by voluntary means wherever possible. (C18)

- (26.) <Company> has a strong history of consultation with employees and is committed to working with elected representatives to consider ways of achieving the necessary reductions. (C17)

The semantic contents of examples 25 and 26 are almost identical, except for the fact that in C18, which is an Asian-based company the trade unions represent the other negotiating party and in the European-based C17 the other party includes elected employee representatives. Both companies emphasize their willingness for co-operation, C18 by using the adverb *closely* and C17 by referring to a *strong* history and *commitment* to consultation. However, neither of the companies expresses willingness to negotiate about the number of redundancies (defined as *required / necessary*) nor make any promises concerning the results of the negotiations. C18 is downplaying the company's commitment by adding the adverbial *wherever possible* and C17 is using a semantically weaker verb *to consider* instead of e.g. *to work out* or *to find*.

Six instances of Making amends move announced that the company would provide compensation to affected employees in the form of severance packages and help in finding a new job inside or outside the company, as in examples 27 and 28.

- (27.) <Company> will provide employees affected by this restructuring program with severance packages, counselling and job placement services. (C10)

- (28.) All impacted employees will receive severance packages and outplacement support. (C39)

All of the six texts offering severance were announcing layoffs in the U.S.A.. As discussed in section 6.2., even though not required by the law, it is common for companies in the U.S.A to offer severance packages to impacted employees in connection with layoffs. The amount of severance often depends on the person's service time and/or job level (IOMA 2008: 14).

Many of the instances of Making amends move announced both preventative measures as well as compensation, although not in the form of money, as examples 29 and 30, which were issued by European-based companies, demonstrate.

- (29.) “We are committed to managing these changes in a way that reflect <Company's> values, and will support affected employees with alternative solutions, such as helping them find new positions within the company...” (C2)
  
- (30.) <Company> will immediately begin discussions with employee representatives in the respective countries and will conduct the consultation process in an open and constructive manner. <Company> is committed to carrying out this workforce reduction in a socially responsible way. Among other things, this will include informing affected employees as soon as possible and offering them appropriate assistance and support. (C46)

Example 29 refers to the company’s values as a kind of code of conduct. However, it does not mention what these values are and how the actions will reflect them, and therefore the statement is vague. Nevertheless, as values in general can be perceived as something positive, it may evoke positive associations among stakeholders. The expression *socially responsible way* in example 30 is equally vague, because the examples given are vague: The decision of how soon ‘as soon as possible’ is and what is included in ‘appropriate assistance and support’ are left for the company to make.

As discussed in section 6.2., for instance in European Union, the council directive 98/59/EC requires employers contemplating mass layoffs to consult staff representatives in order to find means to avoid the redundancies or to reduce the number of affected employees. Furthermore, actions should be taken to mitigate the consequences by applying social measures aimed at redeploying or retraining of affected employees (Council of the European Union 1998: Article 2). Therefore the measures announced in examples 29 and 30 would not come as a surprise to most employees working in the EU. Employees outside the EU, however, may perceive (29) and (30) as positive news.

As discussed above, many companies announced measures aimed to diminish the number of non-voluntary redundancies, help the affected employees to find new jobs or training and/or reduce the financial impact of the layoff on the employees. In many cases, if not in all, the measures announced are prescribed through legislation or by the company's own internal instructions or policies, and therefore the news value of the move may in many cases be relatively low. However, mentioning the measures, although vaguely, may help to promote a picture of a socially responsible company. In terms of language and style, the instances of Making amends move were mostly written using the same objective Reporter voice as in Elaboration move. Not even the instances which were embedded in a quote contained promotional language. All in all, only two promotional elements were found in Making amends move, equalling 0.06 PEs per sentence.

#### **7.2.6. Addressing customer needs**

Customers or customer needs were mentioned in eight (16 %) of the press releases in the corpus already in Summary move and 28 (56 %) of the texts contained a move in which customer needs were specifically addressed. There was considerable variation in the style and rhetorical strategies applied in the move. One obvious cause for the variation is that layoffs are carried out for different reasons and in different manners. For instance, if manufacturing of a certain product is discontinued because of low demand or high material costs, the company cannot claim that it continues to fulfil the needs of all existing customers, whereas in cases where the layoffs are performed in order to eliminate overlapping activities, for instance after a merger, such claim would be plausible. Also the product type may have an influence in whether and how customer needs are addressed: food, clothing and consumer products, which are relatively easy to replace, may require different kind of approaches than pharmaceuticals or products used as raw material in other branches of industry. Moreover, companies producing services may be keener to emphasize the quality of customer service than companies producing physical commodities.

The following rhetorical strategies for addressing customer needs were identified:

- A. Assuring commitment to customer satisfaction
- B. Emphasizing the role of customer care and innovation functions of the company
- C. Specifying projects or products on which the company will be focusing
- D. Notifying of the existence of substitutive products by other manufacturers (for discontinued pharmaceuticals)
- E. Stating that the actions announced will enable the company to better meet customer demand (This strategy can also be categorized as a part of Justification move.)
- F. Stating that the plan will be implemented in co-operation with customers.

Because of the diversity of strategies, I will not provide examples of all of them. Instead, I will look at four examples containing strategies A and / or B, which appeared in many of the texts analysed.

The simplest version of the Addressing customer needs –move in the corpus was a short statement attributed to the CEO applying strategy A, as in example 31.

- (31.) "I can also assure all of our customers that they remain our number one priority and I am certain that today's move won't affect the service we provide to them." (C18)

In example 31 the CEO is directly addressing customers (although with the third person pronoun *they*), to assure them that they continue to receive the same level of service despite the layoffs. However, no reasoning is provided to support the claim. The following example, which applies both strategies A and B, is more informative.

- (32.) "We continue to improve the customer experience and these improvements are reflected in much higher levels of satisfaction in customer surveys and in independent performance tests. Our commitment to quality will not change."  
<Company> has seen a notable reduction in calls per subscriber to customer care and increased customer satisfaction resulting from customer service improvements. The company is committed to these high standards of customer care and innovation. In line with

this commitment, the headcount reductions in these functions will be less than in non-customer facing groups. (C19)

In example 32, the author makes an effort to convince the audience that the layoffs will not affect the quality of the services. This is first done in a quote attributed to the CEO, who refers to verified improvement in customer satisfaction and makes a similar kind of claim as the CEO in example 31. After that, the semantic content of the quote is repeated in the body of text. Finally, a concrete justification for the claim is provided by announcing that customer care and innovation functions will be less affected by the layoffs than other functions of the company.

Contrary to example 31, which is directly addressing customers, example 32 is not explicitly targeted at any one stakeholder group. Although the information provided serves as an assurance of the quality of services to new and existing customers, it is also of interest to (potential) investors as well as the employees of the company. To investors, it is naturally important to learn that the company is committed to good quality customer service. Equally important is for investors to learn that the 'innovation function' (in most companies named as Research & Development, or R&D) will also be less affected by the layoffs, since an effective and competitive R&D function is often considered as a prerequisite for improved productivity (see e.g. Eickelpasch 2012).

Strategy B is applied also in example 33, which declares, similarly to example 32, that there will be less reductions in customer care and R&D than in other functions of the company. However, (33.) is more clearly targeted at (potential) investors.

(33.) "Expenses have been reduced in virtually all departments, levels and major geographies, but we have focused on limiting the impact on customer-facing and research and development functions, which are integral to our growth and diversification initiatives." (C48)

What is different in (33.), is that instead of naming commitment to good customer service as the reason for preserving the capacity of customer-facing and R&D functions, it states that those functions are essential to the growth and diversification

plans of the company. As this kind of focus is likely to interest investors, example 33 can be seen as addressing (potential) investors more than other stakeholder groups.

Even though there are differences in the information content and style between examples 31, 32, and 33, it can be concluded that they all aim at promoting the company by attempting to assure the target audiences that the actions announced will not result in lower customer satisfaction. The promotional aspect is visible in the semantic content of the examples rather than in the lexico-grammatical choices, although example 32 does contain two elements (*much* and *high*) which can be categorized as promotional. The following example, which applies the same rhetorical strategies, is more openly promotional as it contains six promotional elements (underlined).

(34.) <Company> is taking the initial steps announced today in a disciplined fashion to ensure it has appropriate resources to fully serve its customers with leading solutions and innovations.

"We remain deeply committed to our customers and are staffed to meet their needs as we take the necessary actions to strengthen the Company," said <Person>. "Throughout the process, we are committed to maintaining current high service levels and appropriate innovation investment levels to ensure best in class technology continues to be available to <Company's> global customer base." (C35)

Two of the PEs of example 34 appear in the body of text (*fully*, *leading*) and four in the quotation (*deeply*, *high*, *best in class*, *global*). The adjectives *high* and *global* as well as the adverbs *deeply* and *fully* can be removed without affecting the grammaticality or the interpretation of the sentences. The adjectives *best in class* and *leading* could be replaced with a semantically weaker adjective, such as *competitive*.

As can be seen from the examples above, there was considerable variation in the degree of promotional language applied in Addressing customer needs move. A few instances of the move, such as example 34, contained several promotional elements, while the majority were completely without PEs. The mean number of promotional elements per sentence was 0.31. Example 32, which is clearly aimed at (potential)

investors, shows that although the move addresses customer needs, it does not necessarily address customers.

### 7.2.7. Occurrence of promotional elements

As discussed in the preceding subsections, each of the moves, apart from Disclaimer, were analysed for occurrence of elements complying with Pander Maats's (2007: 68) definition for promotional elements. The findings of the analysis were discussed in connection with the linguistic analysis of each individual move. In this subsection, I will provide a summary of the occurrence of promotional elements in the corpus texts as well as discuss reasons for differences between individual moves in this matter. The occurrences of PEs in individual moves are presented in Table 7.

<b>Move</b>	<b>Sentences</b>	<b>PEs</b>	<b>PEs / Sentence</b>
Summary	<b>174</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0.10</b>
Elaboration	<b>251</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Justification	<b>140</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0.14</b>
Expressing sympathy	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Making amends	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.06</b>
Addressing customer needs	<b>84</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.31</b>
Company description	<b>141</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>0.74</b>
Disclaimer	-	-	-

**Table 7.** Occurrence of promotional elements in different moves.

The most openly promotional of the moves in terms of promotional elements was Company description, with 0.74 PEs per sentence. An obvious reason for the high occurrence of PEs in Company description is that the move is provided as background information for the journalists, and it is not intended to be included in the news article produced on the basis of the press release. Another factor contributing to the difference between Company description and the other moves is the fact that Company description is a boilerplate: the same piece of writing is typically used in all of the press releases issued by the same company, including e.g.

press releases introducing new products, in which the contrast between overtly promotional Company description and the rest of the press release is probably less evident.

In the move which addresses customer needs, the occurrence of promotional elements was also relatively high, 0.31 PEs per sentence, most likely because it was the part of the press release which typically aimed to assure the customers of the company that their needs continue to be fulfilled. However, it must be pointed out that the occurrences of promotional elements in Addressing customer needs concentrated in few heavily promotional examples, while the majority of the instances of the move did not contain any PEs. In the other moves, the occurrence of promotional elements was significantly lower, although some isolated instances showing heavy use of PEs was found also in Summary and Justification. The actual promotional effect of promotional elements is also questionable. For instance in Justification move, the same rhetorical strategy was used equally effectively with and without promotional elements.

As discussed in chapter 4, previous studies of corporate press releases have indicated that quote sentences are typically more openly promotional than the rest of the text (see e.g. McLaren & Gurău 2005: 26; Pander Maat 2007: 76; Catenaccio 2008: 23). In the present study, it was found that in moves which appeared partly in quotations and partly in the body of text, quote sentences did indeed contain more promotional elements. In Justification move the mean occurrence of promotional elements in quote sentences was 0.21 and in the rest of the sentences 0.07. In Addressing customer needs move, the corresponding figures were 0.47 and 0.21.

## 8. Discussion

The goal of the present study was to contribute to our understanding of the genre of corporate press releases, and, in specific, press releases announcing reduction in workforce. In particular, the study aimed to find out what kind of communicative purposes and intentions press releases announcing workforce reduction carry, and how these purposes and intentions are realized through rhetorical move structure, strategies and lexico-grammatical devices applied in those press releases.

The theoretical approach chosen for the study was genre analysis in the domain of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The research method applied was Bhatia's (1993) method of genre analysis, which builds on Swales' (1990) definition of genre. All aspects of Bhatia's (1993) method were applied in the study. This included first looking at the history, conventions and audiences of corporate press releases as well as exploring the institutional context and genres which are related to press releases through intertextual and interdiscursive connections (see chapter 3). Previous linguistic analyses of corporate press releases were also studied (see chapter 4). The most important of the previous studies, concerning the present study, were the ones of Pander Maat (2007), McLaren & Gurău (2005) and Catenaccio (2008). Pander Maat's (2007) study was important, because it offers an easily applicable method for identifying promotional language in press releases. Although the method did not play a central role in the analysis part of the present study, it proved to be a useful tool in distinguishing differences in communicative intentions between different moves. The studies of McLaren & Gurău (2005) and Catenaccio (2008) provided valuable insight concerning the present study, because they both draw on Bhatia's (1993) and Swales' (1990) work on genre analysis, which also form the basis of the theoretical framework applied in the present study.

The empirical part of the present study consists of collection of the corpus texts, analysis of the situational context as well as linguistic analysis of the corpus texts. Because the subject of the present study was not the genre of corporate press releases in general, but press releases dealing with the topic of layoffs, the situational context was defined as the situation in which companies make the decision to reduce their

number of personnel. This situational context was analysed from two different angles: first, the potential effects of layoffs within different stakeholder groups were discussed. After that, an overview of different rules, regulations and ethical guidelines which govern the code of conduct in layoff situations was provided (see chapter 6).

When collecting the corpus texts for the present study, it became evident that, despite a large number of layoff news, press releases announcing workforce were not easily found. Also, many of the press releases that were found did not concentrate solely on the topic of workforce reduction, but discussed it as one of a series of actions included in the process of restructuring of the company. The analysis of situational context provides possible explanations for this phenomenon. A possible explanation for the low occurrence of press releases announcing workforce reduction in general is that since stock-listed companies are required to publish without delay information of any decisions or activities that are likely to influence the value of the security, organizing a press conference may be seen as the most effective way to make the actions known to all stakeholder groups simultaneously. In cases where press releases are issued, presenting workforce reductions as a part of a larger restructuring plan to improve the financial performance of the company serves the information needs of (potential) investors, and thus may help to prevent negative market reactions.

The linguistic analysis of the corpus texts was conducted by first identifying the features of press releases which were not meant to be reproduced in news articles. The process of identifying these features was not interpretative but based on distinction of visual aspects, such as typological differences, explicit sub-headings and the peripheral location of the features in relation to the body of text. The peripheral features included a declaration that the text is a press/news/media release, the company logo, contact details, description of the company and, in 60 % of the texts, a legal disclaimer. Of the peripheral features, only the description of the company and the legal disclaimer were analysed further in the study, as they consisted of clauses and sentences and were thus linguistically interesting.

In the majority of the press releases analysed in the present study, the structure of the core part followed the inverted pyramid structure of the news article: Summary move

typically contained the most essential information, which was then detailed in subsequent Elaboration and Justification moves. The last three moves, Expressing Sympathy, Making amends and Addressing customer needs, were typically placed towards the end of the press release, although customer needs were mentioned in eight (16 %) and compensation for the affected employees in three (6 %) of the texts already in Summary move. The fact that the last three moves were typically placed towards the end of the text and seldom mentioned in Summary indicates that the author had considered them less important than the first three moves.

As discussed in 7.1., the first three moves appear also in Catenaccio's (2008) interpretation of the rhetorical structure of the press release, although Catenaccio (2008) considers headline, summary and lead as individual moves. The first two moves, Summary and Elaboration, have also been identified by McLaren & Gurău (2005) as components of the press release. The most significant difference between the present study and previous studies concerning the rhetorical structure of press releases is that while previous studies have identified CEO's comments as a rhetorical move, in the texts analysed for the present study quotations can be seen more as a stylistic feature that enables the use of promotional language as well as expression of emotions or opinions. The obvious cause for this difference is that because all of the press releases analysed for the present study discussed the same topic, workforce reductions, it was possible to identify rhetorical moves on a more detailed level.

According to Bhatia (1993: 30), the communicative purposes of a genre are realised through rhetorical moves, so that each move serves a typical communicative intention, which in turn serves the overall communicative purpose(s) of the genre. Thus, after identification of the typical rhetorical structure of the corpus texts, the moves which appeared in the core part of the texts were analysed individually in order to find rhetorical strategies and lexico-grammatical patterns typical for the specific move. An attempt was made to explain the reasons for the use of the strategies and features of texts to establish the communicative intentions of each move. Previous studies of press releases and other corporate disclosure genres, especially the annual report provided valuable insight in this matter (e.g. Subramanian, Insley & Blackwell 1993; Thomas 1997; Clatworthy & Jones 2003;

Bhatia 2008b). In the analysis of Expressing sympathy, Goffman's (1967) notions of face and face-work were applied.

In the analysis of Summary move it was found that most instances of the move concentrated on objectively reporting of the main points of the actions the company was announcing. The headlines were typically constructed in the way that they reflected the semantic and lexical content of the lead paragraph, a feature which is also typical for news article summaries. However, approximately half of the instances of Summary move in the corpus contained features which indicated that the move was addressing investors in particular. These features included concentrating on the positive outcome of the actions, reference to restructuring or a strategy instead of layoffs and the use of economic jargon. Therefore it can be concluded that, although the main communicative intention of the move was clearly to provide information, the information provided had often be selected in a way that it promoted a positive image of the company. Also, the structure of Summary move can be perceived as promotional or persuasive: by following the formulation of a news article, it aims to persuade journalists to copy the text verbatim.

Elaboration move was typically written in an objective style similar to the impersonal Reporter Voice of hard news reports (see Iedema et al. 1994: 203). However, it was noticed that even though the move was a detailed account of actions the company was about to perform, the company was in the place of the syntactic subject only in one third (34 %) of the finite clauses. Another third (35 %) of the clauses were written in passive voice without the agent (*by*-phrase). For the sake of comparison, Justification move, which concentrated on explaining the causes and effects of the actions, was also analysed for the corresponding figures. In Justification move the proportion of passive constructions was significantly lower, 12 %, and the company appeared as the syntactic subject in 40 % of the finite clauses. As discussed in sub-section 7.2.2., heavy use of passive voice serves to distance the company from the actions. A similar tendency, as mentioned in 7.2.2., has been observed in CEO's letters to shareholders reporting of loss-making years by Subramanian et al. (1993) and Thomas (1997). Tendency to avoid using the company as the syntactic subject in active finite clauses appears to serve the same function.

On the basis of the analysis of semantic content, it can be concluded that the main communicative intention of Elaboration move was to provide more detailed information of the news announced in Summary move. This confirms to the findings of e.g. McLaren and Gurău (2005) and Catenaccio (2008). The aforementioned lexico-grammatical features which serve to distance the company from the actions, however, were most likely applied to alleviate or prevent angry reactions against the company from the part of the employees or affected communities. Investors, on the other hand, might prefer, as Subramanian et al. (1993: 59) suggest, “direct, clear and concise writing style that minimizes the use of passive voice, de-emphasis techniques, and long, complex sentences”. As discussed in 7.2.2., that kind of strategy was chosen by only few of the companies.

The main communicative intention of Justification move was found to be providing information about the causes and effects of the actions announced. The most typical rhetorical strategy was to imply or state that the situation in which restructuring of the company has become necessary has been caused by company-external factors, such as challenging market environment, and to express (strong) belief that success will be achieved through the active measures the company has taken or is about to take. The reason for companies to choose this kind of strategy is that attributing difficulties to company-external factors and claiming credit of future success may help to promote a positive image of the company. Also, the very act of justifying the actions can be perceived as promotional.

In the analysis of Expressing sympathy move, Goffman’s (1967) notions of face and face-work were applied in order to explain the choice of different rhetorical strategies, and, thus, to reveal the communicative intentions of the move. It was found that although the instances of Expressing sympathy move in the corpus were ostensibly sympathetic towards the employees, in only 29 % of them a face-saving strategy was used for protecting the face of the affected employees by praising their qualities and/or their contribution to the company. The majority of instances of Expressing sympathy move concentrated on using face-saving strategies designed to defend the public image of the company. The present study thus confirms Catenaccio’s (2008: 23) suggestion that the promotional purpose may be conveyed

through the use of face-saving strategies in press releases issued in crisis response situations.

In the instances of Making amends move in the corpus texts, companies announced measures aimed for diminishing the number of non-voluntary redundancies, assisting the affected employees in reemployment and/or reducing the financial impact of layoffs to the employees. However, in many of the texts the measures were somewhat vaguely defined; for example the coverage, intensity and expected results of the measures were left open. It was also found that in many cases, if not in all, the measures announced had already been prescribed through legislation or possibly by the company's own internal instructions or policies, and therefore the information value of the move in those cases may have been relatively low. In fact, the information content of the move could be compared to the instances of Elaboration move where the company mentions that the size and schedule of the layoff are subject to local laws and regulations and/ or negotiations with employee representatives (see 7.2.2.). However, mentioning the measures indicates that the company acknowledges its responsibilities, which may help to promote a picture of a socially responsible company to employees and socially conscious customers and investors. Hence, the communicative intention of the move is not easily defined: on one hand the move provides information about the actions the company is planning to perform in order to help the affected employees, on the other hand the reasons for providing this information may be entirely or partly promotional.

The last move, Addressing customer needs, was the most heterogeneous of the moves concerning rhetorical strategies, style and length of the move. As discussed in 7.2.6., possible factors contributing to the variation include differences in the circumstances in which the reductions were to be carried out as well as whether they included changes in e.g. production rates or customer service. Also the product type (i.e. services/ consumer products/ raw materials) was likely to have an influence in whether and how customer needs were addressed in the press release. However, since the variety of all these factors in the corpus texts was quite large compared to the relatively small size of the corpus, the assumed effect of the aforementioned factors could not be verified in the study.

In a detailed analysis of two of the rhetorical strategies applied in Addressing customer needs move, ‘assuring commitment to customer satisfaction’ and ‘emphasizing the role of customer care and innovation functions of the company’, it was found that in some cases the move was exclusively addressing customers to assure them that the layoffs would not affect the availability or quality of products. In many cases, however, the move was more informative and addressed other stakeholder groups as well. For instance, lower numbers of workforce reduction in customer-facing and R&D functions were often justified by stating that those functions are essential to the growth and diversification plans of the company. Although this kind of statement functions as an assurance of maintained service levels to customers, it is clearly addressing (potential) investors, who are likely to see the company’s plan for growth as positive news. At the same time it provides valuable information to employees, especially those working in customer service or research and development.

Because of the heterogeneous nature of Addressing customer needs move, the informative and promotional intentions were manifested in different ways in different instances of the move. Some instances were overtly promotional and included several lexemes that could be identified as promotional elements. In most instances, however, the promotional aspect was embedded in the informational message itself. Also, since customer satisfaction can be seen as one of the most important goals for companies striving for success, the whole act of acknowledging customer needs in a press release announcing workforce reductions can be perceived as promotional.

The present study confirms Catenaccio’s (2008: 27) suggestion that defining the communicative purposes of press releases is difficult, because the different purposes are often conveyed through the same cognitive moves and strategies. Apart from Expressing sympathy move, all moves of the core part of the press releases were found to carry both informative and promotional intentions. Expressing sympathy move was entirely promotional, but only in the sense that it aimed to protect the positive public image of the company by the use of face-saving strategies.

## 9. Conclusion

The goal of the present study was to find out what kind of communicative purposes and intentions press releases announcing workforce reduction carry, and how these purposes and intentions are realized through selection of moves, rhetorical strategies and lexico-grammatical devices. The main findings show that most of the moves applied in the corpus texts were carrying both informative and promotional intentions, which in turn served the overall informative and promotional purposes of the texts. The promotional purpose of the press releases studied was sometimes manifested through promotional language, but more often it was implicitly conveyed through different rhetorical and grammatical strategies. These strategies included selecting information which attracts the interest of specific stakeholder groups, focusing on future achievements, naming challenging market conditions as the cause for the present situation, using passive voice, avoiding the use the company in the place of the syntactic subject and using different face-saving strategies to protect the public image of the company.

The present study was exploratory in the sense that it explored the different ways communicative purposes can be realized in press releases announcing workforce reduction. The corpus used in the study served that purpose well because of its heterogeneous nature: the companies authoring the texts represented several different business sectors, product types and geographical locations. Also the basic reasoning of the announced workforce reductions varied from a need to discontinue a specific unprofitable product line to an attempt to resolve financial distress affecting the whole company. All these factors are likely to affect the selection of moves and rhetorical strategies applied in individual press releases. A comparative study using corpora which represent, for instance, two different business sectors or two different reasons for workforce reductions would enable defining the effect of one or two specific factors more conclusively.

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## Appendix 1: The corpus

<b>Company</b>	<b>Business sector</b>	<b>Head Office</b>	<b>Year of press release</b>
C1	Aerospace	North America	2009
C2	Information technology	Europe	2010
C3	Pharmaceuticals	North America	2010
C4	Technology	North America	2008
C5	Energy products	Europe	2010
C6	Electronics	North America	2009
C7	Banking	Europe	2009
C8	Banking	Europe	2008
C9	Information technology	Europe	2008
C10	Information technology	North America	2008
C11	Banking	Europe	2008
C12	Airline carrier	Europe	2009
C13	Automotive	Asia	2009
C14	Information technology	North America	2008
C15	Metals & Minerals	Europe	2009
C16	Defence	Europe	2009
C17	Information technology	Asia	2009
C18	Energy	Europe	2009
C19	Communications services	North America	2009
C20	Automotive	Europe	2008
C21	Electronics	Asia	2008
C22	Biotechnology	Europe	2008
C23	Banking	Europe	2011
C24	Science & Technology	North America	2011
C25	Mining	Australia	2009
C26	Chemicals	North America	2008
C27	Science & Technology	North America	2008
C28	Electronics	North America	2008
C29	Banking	North America	2008
C30	Mining	North America	2008
C31	Pharmaceuticals	North America	2011
C32	Information technology	Asia	2011
C33	Paper	Europe	2011
C34	Space technology	North America	2011
C35	Information technology	North America	2009
C36	Pharmaceuticals	North America	2011
C37	Pharmaceuticals	North America	2011
C38	Energy	Europe	2011
C39	Information technology	North America	2011
C40	Food products	North America	2011
C41	Information technology	Europe	2011
C42	Information technology	Europe	2009
C43	Paper	Europe	2010
C44	Food products	North America	2010
C45	Textiles	North America	2008
C46	Pharmaceuticals	Europe	2010
C47	Airline carrier	Australia	2011
C48	Technology	North America	2011
C49	Energy	North America	2011
C50	Wood & Paper	Europe	2011

## Appendix 2: Occurrence of moves in different press releases

	Summary	Elab.	Justif.	Sympathy	Making amends	Cust.	Comp. Descr.	Discl.
C1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
C2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
C3	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
C4	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
C5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
C6	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
C7	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
C8	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
C9	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
C10	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
C11	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1
C12	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
C13	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
C14	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
C15	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
C16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
C17	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
C18	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
C19	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
C20	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
C21	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
C22	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
C23	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
C24	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
C25	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
C26	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
C27	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
C28	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
C29	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
C30	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
C31	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
C32	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
C33	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
C34	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
C35	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
C36	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
C37	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
C38	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1
C39	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
C40	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
C41	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
C42	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
C43	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
C44	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
C45	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
C46	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
C47	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
C48	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
C49	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
C50	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>

## **Finnish summary – Suomenkielinen lyhennelmä**

### **Irtisanomisia koskevien lehdistötiedotteiden viestinnälliset päämäärät**

Lehdistötiedotetta voidaan pitää yhtenä tärkeimmistä yritysten PR-toimintaan liittyvistä tekstilajeista. Perinteisesti yritykset ovat lähettäneet lehdistötiedotteita toimittajille siinä toivossa, että ne julkaistaisiin mahdollisimman sanatarkasti uutisartikkelina. Siksi lehdistötiedotteet tyypillisesti muistuttavat jo valmiiksi sanomalehteä ulkoasultaan, tyylistään ja rakenteeltaan. Näistä ulkoisista yhtäläisyyksistä huolimatta lehdistötiedotteiden viestinnällinen päämäärä (*communicative purpose*) ei kuitenkaan ole pelkästään tiedottaminen, vaan niillä on myös promotionaalisia päämääriä ja intentioita.

Tämän tutkimus käsittelee kaupallisten yhtiöiden julkaisemia lehdistötiedotteita, joissa ilmoitetaan henkilöstövähennyksistä. Tutkimus pyrkii vastaamaan seuraaviin kahteen kysymykseen:

1. Minkälaisia viestinnällisiä päämääriä ja intentioita henkilöstövähennyksistä ilmoittavista lehdistötiedotteista voidaan tunnistaa?
2. Mitä retorisia strategioita ja kielellisiä keinoja lehdistötiedotteissa on käytetty kyseisten päämäärien ja intentioiden saavuttamiseksi.

Tutkimusaineistona käytettiin 50:tä vuosina 2008 – 2011 julkaistua englanninkielistä lehdistötiedotetta, jotka sisälsivät ilmoituksen henkilöstövähennyksistä. Aineisto kerättiin yritysten verkkosivuilta.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehityksenä käytettiin soveltavan kielentutkimuksen alalla erityisesti ammattikielentutkimuksessa (*ESP, English for Specific Purposes*) laajalti käytettyä Swalesin (1990) *genreä* koskevaa määritelmää ja Bhatian (1993) kehittämää generisen analyysin mallia, joka perustuu Swalesin (1990) määritelmään. Esittelen lyhyesti Swalesin (1990: 58) määritelmän keskeiset kohdat:

1. Genre koostuu joukosta viestinnällisiä tapahtumia, joilla on yhteiset viestinnälliset päämäärät (*communicative purposes*).

2. Viestinnälliset päämäärät muodostavat genren perustan, joka sekä määrää diskurssin skemaattisen rakenteen, että vaikuttaa tekstin sisältöön ja tyyliin.
3. Diskurssiyhteisön asiantuntijajäsenet tunnistavat genren viestinnälliset päämäärät.
4. Yhteinen viestinnällinen päämäärä on tärkein genreä määrittävä kriteeri.
5. Yhteisen päämäärän lisäksi samaan genreen kuuluvissa teksteissä on havaittavissa rakenteeseen, tyyliin, sisältöön ja kohdeyleisöön liittyviä yhtäläisyyksiä.
6. Yksittäistä tekstiä, jossa toteutuvat kaikki genrelle tyypilliset ominaisuudet voidaan pitää genren prototyyppisenä edustajana.

Swalesin määritelmästä diskurssiyhteisön asiantuntijajäsenten rooli viestinnällisten päämäärien tunnistamisessa on herättänyt eniten kritikkiä genreanalytikkojen keskuudessa. Swales onkin myöhemmin itse todennut, että asiantuntijajäsenet eivät välttämättä ole yksimielisiä genren viestinnällisistä päämääristä (Askehave & Swales 2001: 198). Bhatia (1993) puolestaan huomauttaa, että asiantuntijajäsenet saattavat käyttää hyväkseen genrejä koskevia sääntöjä ja konventioita omien yksityisten tarkoitusperiensä saavuttamiseksi (Bhatia 1993: 14). Viestinnälliset päämäärät voidaankin nähdä monimutkaisena kerrosteisena kokonaisuutena. Kaikki päämäärät eivät välttämättä ole instituution virallisesti tunnustamia, vaikka osa asiantuntijajäsenistä ne tunnistaisikin (Askehave & Swales 2001: 199). Tästä syystä, kuten Lassen (2006: 505) toteaa, genren viestinnällisten päämäärien tunnistamiseksi tarvitaan tarkka analyysi, etenkin koska kielellisen muodon ja viestinnällisen tarkoituksen välillä ei näyttäisi olevan suoraa yhteyttä.

Kuten aikaisemmin mainitsin, noudatan tässä tutkimuksessa Bhatian (1993: 22-36) kehittämää menetelmää genreanalyysille. Bhatian menetelmän etuna voidaan pitää sitä, että se on perusteellinen, mutta samalla joustava: vaikka se nostaa esille kaikki genren konstruktion vaikuttavat näkökohdat, se sallii menetelmän vaiheiden valikoivan soveltamisen esimerkiksi analyysin tarkoituksen tai tutkijalla valmiiksi olevan taustatiedon mukaan. Bhatian menetelmän mukaan ennen kielitieteellistä analyysiä tutkijan tulisi tarkastella tekstin tuottamiseen liittyviä institutionaalista ja tilanteeseen sidonnaista kontekstia. Institutionaaliseen kontekstiin liittyvät esimerkiksi kyseisellä alalla yleisesti sovellettavat implisiittiset tai eksplisiittiset

kielen käyttöön liittyvät säännöt ja normit. Tilannekontekstin analyysiin kuuluvat mm. tekstin kirjoittajan ja kohdeyleisöjen sekä näiden välisen suhteen määrittäminen. Tutkijan tulee myös tunnistaa aihe tai tekstinulkoinen tilanne, jota teksti pyrkii kuvaamaan, muuttamaan tai hyödyntämään (Bhatia 1993: 23). Kontekstien tarkastelun lisäksi tutkijan tulisi tutustua tutkittavaa genrejä ympäröiviin genreihin sekä perehtyä aiheesta aiemmin julkaistuihin kielitieteellisiin tutkimuksiin (ibid.).

Tutkimuksessa tarvittavan tutkimusaineiston koko on Bhatian mukaan riippuvainen tutkimuksen tarkoituksesta: Hyvin yksityiskohtaiseen analyysiin riittää yksi pitkä teksti, kun taas muutaman yksittäisen helposti tunnistettavan ominaisuuden tutkimiseen tarvitaan laaja tilastollinen otos (ibid.: 24). Kartoittavaan tutkimukseen (*exploratory investigation*), jollaiseksi katson tämän käsillä olevan tutkimuksen, soveltuu Bhatian mukaan muutamasta satunnaisesti valitusta tekstistä koottu aineisto (ibid.). Varsinaisen kielitieteellisen analyysin Bhatia (1993) jakaa kolmelle eri tasolle, joista tutkija voi hyödyntää joko kaikkia tai vain yhtä tai kahta. Myös hyödynnettävien tasojen järjestyksen tutkija voi omassa tutkimuksessaan valita tarpeeseen sopivaksi (Bhatia 1993: 40). Kielitieteellisen analyysin ensimmäisellä tasolla (Level 1) on leksikaalisten ja kielioppiin liittyvien ominaisuuksien analyysi, joka tyypillisesti toteutetaan tilastollisena analyysinä (ibid.: 25). Toisella tasolla (Level 2) on toistuvien kielellisten kuvioiden analyysi (*text-patterning*), jossa pyritään löytämään taktisia kielen käyttöön kyseisessä genressä liittyviä valintoja ja selittämään niitä (ibid.: 27). Kielitieteellisen analyysin kolmannella tasolla (Level 3) on tekstilajin kognitiivisen rakenteen tulkitseminen. Perusajatuksena tässä on se että genren viestinnälliset päämäärät heijastuvat sen kognitiivisessa rakenteessa (ibid.: 30). Jokainen tekstin vaihe (*move*) palvelee sille tyypillistä viestinnällistä intentiota, joka puolestaan palvelee koko genren viestinnällisiä päämääriä (ibid.).

Tässä tutkimuksessa tutkimusaineiston kielitieteellinen analyysi aloitettiin Bhatian (1993) metodin kolmannelta tasolta, eli tekstien rakenteen analyysistä. Apuna rakenteen tulkinassa käytettiin aikaisempia lehdistötiedotteista julkaistuja genreanalyysijä, erityisesti McLarenin ja Guräun (2005) sekä Catenaccion (2008) tutkimuksia. Aluksi teksteistä tunnistettiin ne osat, joita ei ollut tarkoitettu julkaistavaksi lehdistötiedotteiden pohjalta kirjoitetuissa uutisartikkeleissa. Näihin

osiin, joita Catenaccio (2008) nimittää perifeerisiksi ominaisuuksiksi (*peripheral features*) lukeutuvat lehdistötiedotetunniste, yhtiön logo, yhteystiedot ja kuvaus yhtiöstä. Lisäksi 60 % tutkituista teksteistä sisälsi vastuuvapauslausekkeen, jonka tarkoitus on suojata yhtiötä mahdollisilta juridisilta seuraamuksilta, mikäli lehdistötiedotteessa esitetyt tulevaisuutta koskeva ennusteet eivät toteutuisi. Koska perifeerisistä osista vain yhtiökuvaus ja vastuuvapauslauseke sisälsivät lauseita ja virkkeitä, muita perifeerisiä osia ei analysoitu kielen, sisällön tai intention osalta. Perifeeristen osien tunnistamisen jälkeen analysoitiin lehdistötiedotteiden ytimen (*core*) – eli sen osan, joka oli tarkoitettu sisällytettäväksi lehdistötiedotteen perusteella julkaistavaan uutisartikkeliin – rakenne. Ydinosa tunnistettiin kuusi tyypillistä vaihetta (*move*), jotka nimettiin seuraavasti: Tiivistelmä (*Summary*), Tarkennus (*Elaboration*), Perustelut (*Justification*), Myötätunnon osoitus (*Expressing sympathy*), Hyvitys (*Making amends*) ja Asiakastarpeiden huomiointi (*Addressing customer needs*). Alla olevassa taulukossa on luetteloitu edellä mainitut tyypilliset vaiheet siinä järjestyksessä kuin ne tavallisimmin esiintyivät lähdeaineistossa sekä eri vaiheiden prosentuaalinen esiintyvyys teksteissä.

<b>Irtisanomisista ilmoittavien lehdistötiedotteiden rakenne</b>			
	<b>Vaihe</b>	<b>Esiintyvyys</b>	<b>Sijainti</b>
1	Tiivistelmä	98 %	ydin
2	Tarkennus	96 %	ydin
3	Perustelut	100 %	ydin
4	Myötätunnon osoitus	48 %	ydin
5	Hyvitys	48 %	ydin
6	Asiakastarpeiden huomiointi	56 %	ydin
7	Yhtiökuvaus	72 %	reuna
8	Vastuuvapauslauseke	60 %	reuna

Rakenteellisen analyysin jälkeen kunkin vaiheen yksittäiset esiintymät koottiin yhteen siten, että jokaisesta vaiheesta muodostui oma tiedosto, joka sisälsi kyseisen vaiheen kaikki esiintymät. Näitä tiedostoja hyväksi käyttäen pyrittiin tunnistamaan kullekin vaiheelle tyypilliset retoriset strategiat sekä toistuvat sanastolliset ja kieliopilliset kuviot ja siten selvittämään kunkin vaiheen viestinnälliset intentiot. Lisäksi jokaisesta vaiheesta tutkittiin promotionaaliseksi laskettavien elementtien osuus. Promotionaalisten elementtien tunnistamisessa käytettiin Pander Maatin (2007) määritelmää. Pander Maatin mukaan tekstin elementtiä voidaan pitää promotionaalisena, jos se täyttää seuraavat kaksi vaatimusta: Ensiksikin elementin tulee vahvistaa esitettyä toteamusta (*statement*) siten, että toteamus muuttuu myönteisemmäksi sen esittäjää kohtaan. Toiseksi, elementin voi joko poistaa ilman että virke muuttuu kielioppisääntöjen vastaiseksi tai sen voi korvata semanttisesti heikommalla elementillä (Pander Maat 2007: 68).

Tiivistelmä-vaihetta analysoitaessa havaittiin, että kyseinen tekstin osa mukaili tyypillisesti sekä rakenteeltaan että tyylistään sanomalehti uutisen vastaavaa osaa, joka koostuu otsikoista ja johdantokappaleesta. Useimmissa tutkituista teksteissä Tiivistelmässä raportoitiin objektiiviseen tyyliin pääkohdat toimenpiteistä, jotka yhtiö tiedotteessa ilmoitti tekevänsä. Otsikot oli tyypillisesti konstruoitu niin, että ne sanomalehtiartikkelin tavoin heijastivat johdantokappaleen semanttista ja leksikaalista sisältöä. Noin puolessa tutkituista teksteistä Tiivistelmässä oli kuitenkin havaittavissa piirteitä, jotka viittasivat siihen, että kyseinen tekstin vaihe oli suunnattu erityisesti sijoittajille. Teksteissä saatettiin esimerkiksi keskittyä toimenpiteiden positiivisiin vaikutuksiin, puhua uudelleenorganisoinnista (*restructuring*) henkilöstövähennysten sijaan ja / tai käyttää liike-elämään liittyvää ammattisanastoa. Voidaankin todeta, että vaikka Tiivistelmä-osion päätarkoitus oli selkeästi tiedon välittäminen, joissakin tapauksissa välitettävä tieto oli valittu siten, että se korosti uutisen positiivisia аспекteja, ja siten auttoi ylläpitämään (positiivista) julkisuuskuvaa yhtiöstä.

Myös Tarkennus-vaihe oli tyypillisesti kirjoitettu sanomalehti uutisen objektiivista tyyliä noudattaen. Huomionarvoista kuitenkin on, että vaikka kyseisessä tekstin vaiheessa raportoitiin yhtiön suunnitelmista toimenpiteistä, yhtiön nimi, sen divisioona tai yhtiöön viittaava pronomini oli kieliopillisen subjektin paikalla vain

kolmanneksessa (34 %) finiittisistä lauseista. Suunnilleen yhtä suuri osa (35%) finiittisistä lauseista oli passiivimuodossa ilman agenttia (*by*-lauseke). Vertailun vuoksi samat ominaisuudet tutkittiin myös Perustelut-vaiheesta, jossa kerrottiin toimenpiteiden syistä ja odotettavissa olevista vaikutuksista. Perustelut-vaiheessa passiivirakenteiden osuus oli merkittävästi Tarkennus-vaihetta alhaisempi, vain 12 %, ja yhtiö tai siihen viittaava pronomini oli syntaktisena subjektina 40 %:ssa finiittisistä lauseista. Greenbaumin ja Quirkin (1990: 46) mukaan yksi syy passiivin käytölle ilman *by*-lauseketta on se, että kirjoittajat eivät halua määritellä tai ottaa vastuuta tapahtumista. Voidaankin todeta, että yhtiön nimen tai siihen viittaavan pronominin käytön välttäminen lauseen kieliopillisena subjektina ikään kuin etäännyttää yhtiötä toimenpiteistä, jotka ainakin joissakin kohdeyleisöissä koettaisiin negatiivisina. Vastaavanlainen tendenssi passiivin käyttöön on havaittu myös tappiollisista vuosista raportoivien vuosikertomusten toimitusjohtajan katsaus - osioissa (Subramanian, Insley & Blackwell 1993; Thomas 1997). Thomas (1997), joka tutki yhden yhtiön viiden vuoden aikana julkaisemia johdon katsauksia, havaitsi, että voittoa tuottaneina vuosina passiivia oli käytetty 10-15 prosentissa lauseista, kun taas tappiollisina vuosina passiivilauseiden osuus oli 20-21 % (Thomas 1997: 53-54).

Perustelut-vaiheen pääasiallisena intentiona voidaan nähdä toimenpiteiden syistä ja seurauksista tiedottaminen. Tyypillisin Perustelut-vaiheessa käytetty retorinen strategia oli ilmoittaa yhtiön nykyisen tilanteen aiheutuneen yhtiön ulkopuolisista tekijöistä, kuten suhdannetaantumasta, ja ilmaista vahvaa uskoa siihen, että yhtiön ilmoittamat toimenpiteet johtavat hyvään menestykseen. Koska yhtiö esitetään kyseisessä retorisessa strategiassa positiivisessa valossa, strategian käyttö saattaa vaikuttaa suotuisasti yhtiön julkisuuskuvaan. Siten voidaan todeta, että Perustelut-vaiheella on myös promotionaalinen intentio. Jo pelkästään se, että yhtiön toimenpiteitä perustellaan lehdistötiedotteessa tukee tätä promotionaalista intentiota. Myötätunnon osoitus -vaiheen retorisia strategioita analysoitaessa käytettiin apuna Goffmanin (1967) käsitteitä 'kasvot' (*face*) ja 'kasvotyö' (*face-work*). Analyysin tuloksena havaittiin, että vaikka kaikki kyseisen vaiheen esiintymät pintapuolisesti tarkasteltuina osoittivat myötätuntoa henkilöstövähennyksen kohteeksi joutuville työntekijöille, vain 29 % :ssa esiintymistä käytettiin strategiaa, jonka tarkoituksena oli suojella työntekijöitä kasvojen menetykseltä kehumalla heidän taitojaan ja/tai

työpanostaan. Suurimmassa osassa Myötätunnon osoitus -vaiheen esiintymistä käytettiin strategioita, joiden tarkoituksena oli yhtiön oman julkisuus kuvan suojeleminen. Tämä tutkimus vahvistaa siten oikeaksi Catenaccion (2008: 23) näkemyksen siitä, että kriisitilanteista raportoivissa lehdistötiedotteissa tekstin promotionaalinen intentio voi ilmetä erilaisten kasvojen säilyttämiseen (*face-saving*) tähtäävien retoristen strategioiden käyttönä.

Lehdistötiedotteiden Hyvitys-vaiheessa yhtiö kertoi toimenpiteistä, joita se aikoi tehdä vähentääkseen irtisanomisten määrää, auttaakseen irtisanottavia työntekijöitä uudelleentyöllistymisessä ja/tai lieventääkseen irtisanomisesta työntekijälle koituvia taloudellisia vaikutuksia. Ilmoitetut toimenpiteet olivat kuitenkin tyypillisesti epämääräisesti muotoiltuja, ja niiden kattavuus, intensiteetti ja odotettavissa oleva vaikutus oli jätetty avoimeksi. Useimmissa tapauksissa ilmoitetut toimenpiteet olivat laissa määriteltyjä tai todennäköisesti yhtiön sisäisten toimintasääntöjen mukaisia, jolloin niiden informaatioarvo saattoi työntekijän näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna olla vähäinen. Silti voidaan todeta, että kyseisten toimenpiteiden mainitseminen lehdistötiedotteessa osoittaa, että yhtiö tunnustaa vastuunsa työntekijöistään, mikä puolestaan edesauttaa sosiaalisesti vastuuntuntoisen kuvan muodostumista yhtiöstä esimerkiksi sosiaalisesti valvutuneiden asiakkaiden ja sijoittajien silmissä.

Asiakastarpeiden huomiointi -vaihe oli analysoiduista vaiheista tyyliltään ja sisällöltään heterogeenisin. Tähän vaikutti todennäköisesti se seikka, että tutkitavan aineiston sisältämissä lehdistötiedotteissa oli huomattavaa variaatiota koskien yhtiön toimialaa, henkilöstövähennysten perimmäisiä syitä (esim. päällekkäisten toimintojen purkaminen, kysynnän heikentyminen) ja toteutustapoja sekä tuotetyyppejä (raaka-aine / kulutustavara / palvelu), ja siten myös tarve huomioida asiakastarpeet lehdistötiedotteessa voi vaihdella. Kyseisten tekijöiden vaikutusta ei kuitenkaan juuri huomattavan vaihtelun vuoksi pystytty käytettävissä olevan materiaalin perusteella todentamaan. Tutkimuksessa analysoitiin tarkemmin kahta retorista strategiaa, jotka esiintyivät useassa tutkituista teksteistä. Ensimmäinen tutkituista strategioista oli yhtiön johdon antama vakuutus yhtiön sitoutumisesta asiakastyytyväisyyteen, ja toinen asiakaspalvelun ja tuotekehityksen merkityksen korostaminen. Tutkimuksessa todettiin, että monessa tapauksessa Asiakastarpeiden huomiointi -vaihe oli suunnattu erityisesti yhtiön asiakkaille, joille vakuuteltiin,

etteivät irtisanomiset vaikuta yhtiön tuotteiden saatavuuteen tai laatuun. Monissa tapauksissa kyseinen tekstin vaihe oli kuitenkin myös selkeän informatiivinen. Siinä voitiin esimerkiksi kertoa, että henkilöstövähennykset koskevat vähiten yhtiön asiakaspalvelu- ja tuotekehitysfunktioita, koska kyseiset funktiot ovat yhtiön kasvu- ja monialaistumissuunnitelmien kannalta tärkeitä. Vaikka edellämainittu toteamus toimii myös vakuutuksena asiakkaille totutun palvelutason säilymisestä, sen viesti on selkeästi suunnattu sijoittajille, jotka todennäköisesti näkevät yhtiön kasvusuunnitelmat positiivisena uutisena.

Kuten aikaisemmin mainittiin, tekstin vaiheista tutkittiin myös promotionaalisten elementtien osuus. Vain Vastuuvapauslauseke jätettiin analyysin ulkopuolelle, koska sen promotionaalisuus voitiin sulkea pois Vastuuvapauslausekkeen selkeän juridisen funktion sekä siinä käytetyn lakikielen perusteella. Tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että selkeästi eniten promotionaalisia elementtejä sisälsi Yhtiökuvaus, jossa keskimääräinen esiintyvyys oli 0,74 promotionaalista elementtiä virkettä kohti. Toiseksi eniten promotionaalisia elementtejä oli Asiakastarpeiden huomiointi -vaiheessa, jossa vastaava luku oli 0,31. Muissa tekstin vaiheissa promotionaalisten elementtien osuus oli selkeästi pienempi. Yksi todennäköinen syy Yhtiökuvaus-osion poikkeuksellisen promotionaaliselle kielelle on se, että kyseinen osio on tarkoitettu toimittajille taustatiedoksi eikä julkaistavaksi sellaisenaan. Toinen todennäköinen syy on se, että Yhtiökuvaus on ns. *boilerplate*-teksti, eli samaa tekstinpätkää käytetään tyypillisesti kaikissa yhtiön lehdistötiedotteissa. Esimerkiksi uusista tuotteista tiedottavissa lehdistötiedotteissa avoimesti promotionaalisen Yhtiökuvauksen ja muun tekstin välillä ei välttämättä ole tyylillistä eroa. Asiakastarpeiden huomiointi -vaiheen keskimääräistä runsaampaa promotionaalisten elementtien osuutta voidaan puolestaan selittää sillä, että kyseisen vaiheen varsinaisena kohdeyleisönä olivat useassa tapauksessa yhtiön (potentiaaliset) asiakkaat. On kuitenkin huomattava, että Asiakastarpeiden huomiointi -vaiheen promotionaaliset elementit keskittyivät muutamaaan vahvasti markkinointihenkiseen esiintymään, kun taas suurin osa kyseisen vaiheen esiintymistä ei sisältänyt lainkaan promotionaalisia elementtejä. Tarkennus- ja Perustelut-vaiheissa oli joitakin yksittäisiä esiintymiä, joissa oli promotionaalisia elementtejä. Niiden promotionaalinen vaikutusta voidaan kuitenkin pitää kyseenalaisena: Esimerkiksi

Perustelut-vaiheessa saatettiin samaa retorista strategiaa käyttää yhtä tehokkaasti sekä promotionaalisia sanoja käyttäen että ilman niitä.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, minkälaisia viestinnällisiä päämääriä ja intentioita henkilöstövähennyksistä ilmoittavista lehdistötiedotteista voidaan tunnistaa sekä mitä retorisia strategioita ja kielellisiä keinoja kyseisten päämäärien ja intentioiden saavuttamiseksi on käytetty. Tutkimuksessa todettiin, että vaikka lehdistötiedotteiden pääasiallinen tarkoitus oli yhtiön toiminnasta tiedottaminen, useimmilla tiedotteilla oli myös promotionaalisia intentioita. Nämä intentiot ilmenivät mm. pyrkimyksenä välittää mahdollisimman positiivinen kuva yhtiöstä ja sen toiminnasta eri kohdeyleisöille, erityisesti sijoittajille. Positiivisen kuvan välittämiseen käytettyjä keinoja olivat odotettavissa olevien saavutusten korostaminen, ulkoisten tekijöiden nimeäminen nykyisen tilanteen aiheuttajaksi, passiivin käyttö, erilaiset yrityksen julkisen kuvan säilyttämiseen pyrkivät (*face-saving*) strategiat sekä joissakin tapauksissa promotionaalisten sanojen ja ilmausten käyttö.

Tässä tutkimuksessa käytetty aineisto oli hyvin heterogeeninen siinä mielessä, että tutkittuja lehdistötiedotteita julkaisseet yhtiöt edustivat eri liike-elämän sektoreita ja erilaisia tuotetyyppejä ja niiden pääkonttorit sijaitsivat eri maissa ja maanosissa. Myöskin henkilöstövähennyksiin liittyvät perimmäiset syyt vaihtelivat tarpeesta sulkea yksittäinen tuotelinja vähentyneen kysynnän vuoksi yritykseen ratkaista koko yhtiötä koskeva taloudellinen kriisi. Nykyisen tutkimuksen eksploratiiviseen luonteeseen tällainen heterogeeninen aineisto soveltui erinomaisesti. Olisi kuitenkin mielenkiintoista myös selvittää joidenkin yksittäisten edellämäinittujen tekijöiden vaikutusta lehdistötiedotteiden rakenteeseen ja niissä käytettyihin promotionaalsiin keinoihin. Tällainen tutkimus voitaisiin toteuttaa vertailevana tutkimuksena, jossa käytettäisiin aineistoina esimerkiksi kahdelta eri liike-elämän sektorilta kerättyjä henkilöstövähennyksestä ilmoittavia lehdistötiedotteita.