

# **Does the discussion of results vary in its linguistic realization in professional vs. academic discourse?**

## **A comparison between CEO's Statements and marketing research article discussions**

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Vast, burgeoning and multi-sided research has focused on the two genres which the presentation will delve into: the Letter to Shareholders appearing at the beginning of the majority of company's annual reports (ARs), and the academic research article (RA).

In detail, Chairman's Letters and CEO's Statements, which often conflate into a unified section, have been agreed upon to represent one of the most significant textual portions of ARs (Hyland, 1998a; Yuthas, Rogers and Dillard, 2002; Garzone, 2005; Nickerson and De Groot, 2005). These statements are designed to achieve fundamental rhetorical and persuasive purposes, viz. to build credibility, to impart confidence, and to convince the audience (i.e. investors, shareholders, stakeholders...) that the company is pursuing effective strategies, and undertaking profitable performance.

Similar attempts made by researchers to gain readers' acceptance for their work and to persuade them of the truth of their statements characterize the other text type under attention, i.e. research article and in particular their discussion section. RA discussions are arranged by writers with the purposes in mind of summarizing conclusions, recapitulating the crucial points, highlighting theoretical implications and suggesting potential applications and possible lines of further investigation (Swales, 1990 and 2004; Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evans, 1994).

Similar rhetorical rationale and contents crop up being partaken by Letters to Shareholders and RA discussions, but how are results, findings and outcomes discussed by AR professional writers vs. RA academic authors? In other words, do CEOs and academics resort to the same rhetorical devices to mould readers' opinion in favour of their claims? The different discursive nature of CEO's Letters in comparison with RA discussions inspires a comparative examination of professional vs. academic discourse.

For this purpose, two small corpora have been created, the one including 83,000 tokens and 57 Letters to Shareholders and the other gathering 108,000 tokens and 62 discussion sections. On the one hand, the President's statements have been retrieved from a pre-existing corpus of annual reports which were published between 1995 and 2002 by some pre-eminent European Big Banks (e.g. HSBC, RBS, Barclays, Lloyds, DB, Banca Intesa...). On the other hand, RA discussions have been drawn from some of the articles published in three marketing journals in 2000 (Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly and Marketing Science), and included in the HEM (History, Economics and Marketing) corpus of academic texts compiled by a research group at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

With the support of corpus linguistic tools such as KWIC and keywords, quantitative and qualitative research will shed some light on the similarities and differences in terms not simply of propositional contents but also of the rhetorical features which the two sets of texts exhibit.

In order to pick out these tendencies, the paper will focus on and pinpoint the metadiscourse devices which are distinctive of the two corpora. In keeping with different metadiscourse taxonomies (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland, 1998b and 2005), some of the most striking both textual or interactive (such as frame markers, evidentials, code glosses...) and interpersonal or interactional (e.g. hedges, boosters, self mentions...) elements will be investigated. In a comparative vein, the analysis aims at suggesting the diverging and analogous metadiscourse elements which are utilized by professional writers of CEO's Statements (such as self mentions) and by RA authors (such as hedges) to make readers understand, agree upon and support their positions.

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